Devils In The Dark

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by Argyle_S
Summary

Fourteen months ago, an older version of Kara travelled back in time, and merged her consciousness with her younger self in an effort to prevent a nightmare future. Eight weeks ago, she came out as Supergirl, catching Alex’s plane as it fell from the sky. Since that time, the knowledge and skills she acquired in the future have allowed her to make a number of changes for the better, but those changes haven’t been without consequences.

Now, in the aftermath of a vicious attack, the tables are turned, and Kara is scrambling desperately to play catch up, but everything seems to be aligning against her. Her allies are starting to doubt her, she can’t seem to control her temper, she has to deal with a darker, more brutal version of Project Cadmus that seems hell bent on burning everything to the ground.

The pressure is mounting, and the only place she can find peace is in the presence of Cat Grant, but even that relationship might be doomed when a ghost from Kara’s past walks back into her life.

This story is the sequel to “The Shape of Things to Come,” and second in the Future Shock series. It does *not* stand alone.

Notes

For now, I will be posting one chapter a week. That may change depending on how far ahead I get with the story, but please understand that I have limited time to write, and if I post faster *now* that will mean longer, irregular gaps between chapters *later*. I'd rather be slow and steady because it keeps me motivated.

As I mentioned in the notes for "The Shape of Things to Come" if you are a Supercat shipper who can not stand to see Kara or Cat with anyone else, this is not a story for you. Supercat is end game, but Kara's relationship with Sara is a very large part of this story.

For Lena and Astra fans, if you can't stand seeing Lena with anyone other than Kara, or Astra with anyone other than Alex, this is *definitely* not your fic, because Lena ends up with someone who isn't Kara and Astra ends up with someone who isn't Alex.

Thanks to @ifourmindbeso for her great work as a beta. Any remaining mistakes are entirely my own.
CatCo Special Broadcast of President Marsdin’s Emergency Address to the Nation from The Oval Office

6:00 PM Pacific Standard Time, Friday November 27th, 2015

“Good evening. I know that it is traditional to begin addresses such as this with the words, 'My fellow Americans,' but tonight I will break with that tradition, because as recent events have reminded us, we are no longer alone in this universe, and in truth, we never have been. So, I will begin tonight with words that reflect that truth.”

“My fellow citizens of planet Earth, I stand with you tonight, looking on in shock and horror at the aftermath of a vicious attack on who we are, as well as who we aspire to be.”

“Just a few short hours ago, I proudly stood on stage with the young woman known to the world as Supergirl, and I proclaimed that we would heed the call she had made, the challenge she had set us, to put our best foot forward, to be our best selves, and to do better by our brothers and sisters who have arrived from beyond the stars to share this precious, beautiful world with us.”

“Just moments after I finished signing the new laws that were intended to set us on that noble path, the young woman who was both my inspiration and my call to action was brutally attacked, shot in the head as she and her cousin took to the sky in celebration of her accomplishments over the last few weeks. Like many of you, I have seen the footage of her being struck by a horrible weapon forged specifically with the intent to kill her. Like many of you, I watched as this young woman, a shining beacon of hope, courage and selflessness fell to Earth. And, like many of you, I have feared the worst. That this light was taken from us before her time.”

“I have spent the intervening hours in consultation with Director J’onzz of the DEO, along with my national security and homeland security advisors, trying to understand today’s events. At present, the DEO is on the scene and leading the investigation in partnership with local law enforcement. I have directed that the full resources of the federal government be made available for this investigation.”

“We are still learning the facts. This is an open investigation. We have reached no definitive answers on the motivations of the attackers. The DEO is appropriately investigating this as an anti-alien hate crime. We are sparing no effort to determine what, if any, association the attackers may have with known anti-alien organizations.”

“At this time, I regret to say we have more questions than answers. What is clear is that whoever carried out this attack is filled with hatred and lacks even the smallest measure of compassion. The nature of the attack, an ambush from the shadows, reveals the character of the attacker to be that of a coward, too craven to even face the young woman they so brutally tried to murder.”

“We know also that this is the second attempt to murder a young woman in as many days, and that both attacks were at least in part efforts to silence a voice calling for compassion and change in our world.”

“We know, also, that this day must seem especially tragic for our friends and neighbors who are alien, who are members of LGBTQ communities, who are immigrants, who are refugees, or who are
people of faith, as those communities took Supergirl into their hearts over the last few weeks, looking to her as a symbol of hope as much as a champion of their rights and freedoms.”

“Tonight, to those communities, to everyone who looked up to Supergirl not just as a woman who could catch a plane falling out of the sky, but as a champion of freedom, liberty and equality for all people, I say to you, have hope. This beacon, this shining voice, this clarion call of hope has only fallen silent momentarily. Your champion is safe in the care of those who know her and can help her best.”

“Tonight, I say to you, Supergirl lives.”

“Supergirl lives, and she will make a full recovery.”

“Supergirl lives, and she will take to the skies of National City again.”

“Supergirl lives, and the enemies of freedom, equality and hope have failed to silence her calls for justice and compassion.”

“And finally, tonight I say to the people who perpetrated this unprovoked attack on a hero who has worked selflessly for the betterment of all, be afraid. Even now, we are hunting you. We will find out who you are, we will find out where you are, and when we do, we will come for you, and you will pay for what you’ve done.”

“My fellow Citizens of Earth, Good Night, God Bless, and as my friend Supergirl would say, May Rao Light Your Way.”

10:22 AM Pacific Standard Time, Saturday, November 28th, 2015

Astra stood on the wreckage of the CatCo helipad, shattered chunks of asphalt from when Kal-El had been blown back into the surface surrounded her feet as she stared out over National City. Wind whipped by them, and back on Krypton it would have felt cold. Here, on this world bathed in the rich power of the yellow sun, she barely felt it. Instead she focused on the rage boiling inside her.

“Why here?” she asked.


Astra had to stop herself from turning around and striking him. He wasn’t one of her soldiers, or her followers. He was family, as much as that thought might burn in that moment. She wanted to hurt him. He’d failed to protect Kara, and only the fact that she knew how much it would upset Kara kept her from killing him and being done with it.

“Why attack her here?” she asked. “They went to a great deal of trouble to arrange the attack for this place. Why?”

“It’s symbolic,” Clark said. “She’s been associated with this place since she first went public. Cat gave her the name she uses. She gave Cat the first interview. Cat administers her social media presence. This is the place, more than anywhere else in the city, that people associate with her.”

“They attacked her in what the public perceives as one of her strongholds,” Astra said. It made sense. Her niece had been building a power base among the masses, using the reach afforded her by her ally, Cat Grant, to rally this world’s masses to her cause. To strike back here would be a strike against the source of her power.
“Yes,” Clark said, giving her confirmation she didn’t need. “The same thing has happened to me. Attacks at The Daily Planet.”

“They seek not only to kill her, but to make the other aliens afraid,” Astra said.

“Yes,” Clark said.

Astra took a deep breath and let it as she turned, taking in the entire skyline of the city. So like Argo. Vast, sprawling, bustling with activity as the people raced to and fro. Shining towers here, rankless slums there. Industrial parks, public works, libraries, markets, parks. Only the bay to the north was unfamiliar. Argo had been inland, a river city, and a hub of trade in days long past. The city of the long twilight. She ached for the long twilight of home, where she could sit and stare at the face of Rao sitting on the horizon for hours at a time.

She hated this world’s short day and night cycle. Hated the yellow star above her. Hated that she’d ever let Kara make her think that she could have a life here, on this alien world.

“I almost believed her,” she said, barely aware she’d spoken out loud until Kal-El answered her.

“Believed what?” he asked.

She turned to look at him. This failure who wore his father’s face. Kal-El, son of Jor-El.

“Kara almost convinced me we could build a life here. That we could live among them and co-exist.”

“You can,” Clark said. “I have. Kara has.”

“In secret,” Astra said. “Hiding who and what you are. This world has known her as she truly is for less than a single Kryptonian day, and its people have already tried to murder her.”

She watched him, the way he tensed, as if preparing to fight. The way he dreaded it, as if he, too knew that such a fight would destroy the girl they both loved.

“/kaozhanim udolkhehdia w ,kahl,ehl,/” Astra said. “I have given my word, and I will abide by it, until the day one of them kills Kara. On that day I will end these humans. On that, also, I give my word.”

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General Abraham Braxton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reached over and picked up the phone, answering it on the first ring without looking up from the report he was reading.

“Braxton,” he said.

“I have General Sam Lane here to see you, sir,” his secretary Phillip said.

“Send him in,” Braxton said, closing the report. He hung up without waiting for a reply. He sat up straight in his chair as the door opened and Lane walked into his office, coming to a stop and standing at attention in front of his desk.

“Afternoon, General,” Braxton said.

“Good afternoon, sir,” Lane said.

“General Lane, would you kindly explain to me what the ever-loving fuck you were thinking when you deployed a top secret anti-alien weapon prototype against Supergirl?” Braxton asked in a tone so
calm he might have been asking about the weather.

“I was thinking that Supergirl represents an enormous threat to national security,” Lane said.

“Really,” Braxton asked.

“Yes, sir,” Lane said.

“Hmmm… And tell me, General Lane, what’s the nature of this threat?” Braxton asked.

“Sir?” Lane asked.

“I think the question was clear enough,” Braxton said.

“She’s managed to build a massive power base in a short time, in terms of money, political influence, advanced technology, and with the pardoning of the Kryptonian terrorists, raw military power. She seems to exert an enormous amount of influence over the President, and there’s every possibility that someone on my staff may have warned her when we moved to take custody of the Fort Rozz prisoners, which means she’s suborned members of the US Military,” Lane said.

“Well, that’s certainly an accurate summation of the situation,” Braxton said. “However, it occurs to me, General Lane, that none of those things, with the exception of the possibility that she’s suborned a member of the US military, is actually illegal.”

“Sir-“

“Do you have any evidence that she’s suborned a member of your staff, General Lane?” Braxton asked.

“No sir,” Lane responded.

“It is not possible that someone at the DEO contacted her when you arrived to collect the prisoners,” Braxton asked.

“It’s possible,” Lane admitted.

“Do you know what actually is illegal, General Lane?” Braxton asked.

“No, sir,” Lane said.

“Withholding information vital to national security from a superior officer,” Braxton said. “I believe the usual charge is Dereliction of Duty, though Treason is also a possibility.”

“Sir-” Lane started.

“General Lane, I am very, very carefully not asking if you knew that the man in charge of the DEO for the past ten years was an imposter. Do you know why I’m not asking that, General Lane?” Braxton said.

“No, sir,” Lane said.

“I’m not asking, because if I don’t ask, I can honestly tell Congress that as far as I know, none of my subordinates knew that Director Henshaw had been replaced by one of the very aliens he was supposed to be protecting us from,” Braxton said. “Which is the same reason I am very, very carefully not asking if you met the test subject for the ‘Cyborg Superman’ project I signed off on.”
“When you and Secretary Lewis approached me about the possibility of shifting Cadmus off the books in the event that President Marsdin made the unwise decision to terminate the Project, I was more than happy to agree. I believe this country needs Cadmus. I believe that aliens are a clear and present danger to our nation, and the entire world. This is something we both agree on. However, General, I think, perhaps, you misunderstand the entire purpose of Project Cadmus. Would you explain to me what you think the purpose of Project Cadmus is?”

“Project Cadmus exists to study aliens and their technology to create a defense against hostile extraterrestrials,” Lane said.

“Very good, General Lane,” Braxton said. “Now, explain to me what, exactly, Supergirl has done to place her in the ‘hostile extra-terrestrial’ category?”

“Sir, she’s clearly got an agenda,” Lane said.

“Yes,” Braxton said. “Very clearly. She’s been quite open about it. Something you would know had you bothered to read her interview with Cat Grant, or any of her numerous social media posts. Or even listened to what she had to say at the CatCo Gala.”

“How do you know what she said at the Gala?” Lane asked.

“I know, because I’ve very good at my job, and because the DEO had the entire place wired for sound. There might be all of two words spoken by Supergirl that evening that haven’t been transcribed and dissected by five different intelligence agencies, including your own. Tell me, General Lane, did you even bother to read those reports?”

“No, sir,” Lane said.

“That, General, is because you’re a close-minded bigot who imagines himself an insightful and educated man,” Braxton said. “Sadly, as it happens, you are not easily replaceable, for the simple fact that if I replaced you, I would have to explain *why*, and if I do that, we’d both go to jail for treason. So, I want to be perfectly, crystal clear, General. First, if you are aware of *any* intelligence that I should have, I expect it on my desk by tomorrow morning. Second, Project Cadmus is to take no direct action against Supergirl, until and unless she takes overtly hostile action against civilians, law enforcement, the military, or the government. Is that clear?”

“Yes sir,” Lane said.

“Oh, and Lane,” Braxton said. “You keep Lillian Luthor on a god damned leash, or I will have your balls mounted on my wall. Are we clear?”

“Crystal, sir,” Lane said.

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“The sound made Sara wince as it lanced through her head like a barbed arrow. She slowly forced her eyes open, the faint green glow of the temporal zone feeling like an ice pick driven into her eye socket. She closed her eyes for a moment, letting the pain recede. When she opened them again, it still hurt, but not nearly so much.

“Here,” she said.

“Thank god!” Jax replied.
A beam of light found her, making her squeeze her eyes shut as she lifted the harness that held her in the captain’s chair.

“Gideon,” Sara said, frowning when there wasn’t a response.

“Power’s off line,” Jax said. “No Gideon right now.”

“What the hell happened?” Sara asked.

“I was hoping you could tell me,” Jax said, taking her hand and helping her up. She got her first good look at him then. The left side of his face was covered in blood, and a long cut across his forehead was partially crusted closed but oozed a bit in places.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

“Hit my head on the galley table when the ship got hit by… whatever hit us.”

“Time quake,” Sara said.

“What?” Jax asked.

“Temporal shockwave caused by a large change to the timeline,” she answered.

“How do you know that?” Jax asked.

Sara thought about it for a moment, not sure herself, before she remembered the fight on Apokolips. Sailing out of the boomtube like a bat out of hell. Her desperation when the Temporal Displacement Manifold blew out of the side of the ship before it could rip Apokolips out of the time stream. Parademons tearing their way through the hull. One driving a sword through Thea’s heart while Sara plugged an Omegahedron directly into the Hyper-Temporal Delineator. The searing pain as the hyperchronoton backwash tore her apart at the subatomic level.

“Sara?”

Sara looked up at Jax, the memory already dim and distant, more a collection of disjointed images than connected events, but she knew that they needed to get Gideon back on line.

“Where’s Rip?” she asked.

“Trying to restore power,” Jax said. “He thinks the impact damaged the feed lines for the reaction mass.”

“That’s because he’s an idiot,” Sara said. “I threw the feed lines into breach protocol the moment we broke through into the Vanishing Point. I was afraid the impact would split the lines and flood the ship with hydrogen.”

“We’re in the Vanishing Point?” Jax asked.

“Only place I could think of that would be insulated enough from the time quake to keep us from being smashed to pieces.”

“Makes sense,” Jax said, “except, how’d you know it was coming?”

“I don’t know,” Sara said. “I just had this gut feeling that something was off.”

“Well, your gut feeling just saved our lives,” Jax said. “Come on. Let’s go find Rip.”
Sara nodded, and let Jax lead the way as she did her best not to think about the moment where the boundaries between timelines had seemed to melt away, and she could see all her possible pasts and futures. Just like she tried not to think about the fact that something was horribly, unutterably wrong.

Susan stopped at the doorway to the breakroom, unable to keep herself from smiling at the sight that greeted her.

“Still working on it?” she asked.

Leslie looked up from the map she had spread out over one of the tables, the usual sneer missing, replaced with a look of concentration. “We found another repeater,” she said, tapping one of the buildings on the map. “That puts the signal in range of both TychoTech and Lord Technologies.”

“That’s good news,” Susan said, walking over to look at the map.

“It would be, if we could prove which one put the repeaters in place. Problem is, they’re off-the-shelf parts. I could buy the stuff to build them off Amazon.” Leslie sighed and leaned back, frustration written in every move.

“Hey, you’re doing fantastic,” Susan said, sitting down next to her. “Especially considering this is your first crime scene.”

“What I’m doing is wasting time,” Leslie growled. “I should be out there, looking for this son of a bitch.”

“Leslie, I know you’re angry about what happened, and we really appreciate the help, but this guy is dangerous, and you’re not a soldier,” Susan said.

“I know, but I don’t care,” she said. “I *need* a piece of this motherfucker.”

Susan frowned as she thought of the ‘revenge’ version of Livewire from the other timeline that Kara had described. That woman had destroyed her own life out of anger and rage, but from everything Kara said, she’d ended up a hero. Susan didn’t know that Leslie, and truthfully, she didn’t know this one very well either, but she had seen the way Leslie had reacted when she’d found out about Kara. For some reason, it had hit her hard.

Leslie took a deep breath and leaned over the map again.

“Where did you learn all this, anyway?” Susan asked.

“College,” Leslie said. “I went to school to be a broadcast engineer.”

“Really?” Susan asked.

“Yeah,” Leslie said. “I was the engineer for the late-night show at the college radio station. Senior year, the DJ came down with laryngitis, so I took over the show for a few weeks. The station manager liked me better than the guy who normally did the job, so she kept me on. When I graduated, this station in Nevada hired me to cohost the morning show, and the rest is history.” She sat up and looked over at Susan again.

“Wanna know the fucked-up part?” Leslie asked.

“Sure,” Susan said.

Leslie waved a finger in the direction of the map. “I actually like doing this more than I ever liked
being a DJ,” She said.

Susan smiled, and looked over at the map, which had the location of the missile launcher and the radio receiver they’d found hooked to it marked, along with the two dozen signal repeaters Batman and his crew had found, all leading out to the industrial parks where Lord Technologies and TychoTech had their headquarters. Each repeater was circled with a line indicating its effective range. There were two separate lines of repeaters, presumably to give redundant coverage, but both Lord Technologies and TychoTech were in the overlap of the two devices.

“Legally Short and Dimples both say a judge won’t sign off on a warrant until we can narrow it down to one of them,” Leslie said.

Susan couldn’t stop herself from laughing at the nicknames, and when she glanced over, Leslie was grinning. She turned and looked at the map again.

“Try plotting the area that would have a repeater in range of one building, but not the other,” Susan said. “Then, we can check those areas, and if we find a repeater, we’ll be able to get a warrant.”

“Damn,” Leslie said. “Why didn’t I think of that?”

“How long since you slept?” Susan asked.

Leslie shrugged as she reached for a piece of paper and a ruler. “Whatever time Supergirl woke me up Friday morning,” she said.

“Uh huh. Okay then. As soon as you send out the new search grid, you’re going to bed.”

“I don’t understand how anyone gets anywhere in this town,” Damian muttered.

Dick turned and looked at him, trying to keep the indulgent smile off his face. “I imagine they use cars, like normal people.”

Damian gave him an annoyed look, but Dick could see the struggle to keep the corners of his mouth from turning up in a smile.

Dick turned back to the tablet he’d been working on, trying to hack into the security feeds of the building they were currently perched on. He’d been at it for about ten minutes when he heard a faint, but distinctive thump, and glanced up to see Kate walking towards him.

“Batman should have split the two of you up and paired you with Red Robin and Batgirl,” she said, holding out her hand for the tablet. “Neither of you can hack worth a damn.”

Dick rolled his eyes and passed over the tablet. “I’m usually pretty good,” he said. “Security on this place is tighter than a duck’s ass.”

Kate looked down at the tablet and started entering commands. “Comments like that make me concerned about Penelope’s virtue,” she said in a complete deadpan.

“Hey, Jason, Duke, Stephanie and I are the ones in this chicken shit outfit who don’t have fursonas,” Dick said.

“Just because Nightwing is Kryptonian, doesn’t mean you aren’t going to furry hell with the rest of us,” Kate said as she passed the tablet back to Dick. “Besides, the little creeper over there inherited his fursona from you.”
“Would you two knock off the furry jokes,” Damian said. “It really wasn’t funny the first five hundred times.”

“It’s funny,” Kate said, “and when you’re old enough that your voice stops cracking every five minutes and half your utility belt isn’t filled with spare pimple cream, you might develop a sense of humor and realize it.”

Dick smiled as he accessed the now thoroughly rooted computers in the building below and dumped the last months’ worth of security footage onto the tablet.

“How’d you do at the other locations?” Dick asked, watching as Damian went through about thirty different rude hand gestures directed in Kate’s direction.

“We struck out,” Kate said. “Cadmus had cleared all the locations on the list J’onn gave us days ago. We got some security footage of moving vans being loaded but the plates were obscured, and they all headed out of the city, so we lost them once they got beyond the traffic cams.”

“I hate dealing with professionals,” Dick said. “Any sign of Jeremiah Danvers?”

“Maybe,” Kate said. “They took more than a few cages out of a couple of locations. It’s possible he was in one. There were also stasis tanks and even a few cloning tanks.”

“Wonderful,” Dick said as he turned off the tablet and slipped it back into its pouch. “I hate this.”

“How do you think I feel,” Kate said. “I *just* found out she’s gay and hadn’t even had the chance to ask for a date. I’m definitely taking that shit out of someone’s hide.”

Dick looked over at Damian and rolled his eyes. “Stop it, you little shit. It’s not like you’d have had a chance, even if she was straight.”

“Asshole,” Damian muttered.

“Watch it, half pint.” Kate said. “I’m pretty Batman wouldn’t even notice if there was one less kid running around.”

“If it makes you feel better, I don’t think you stood much of a chance, anyway,” Dick said.

“Why not?” Kate asked.

“You’re not blonde enough for her,” Dick said.

“You have seen her, right? Seriously, I’d buy some bleach,” Kate said.

“Can we go now?” Damian asked.

“Shut up,” Dick and Kate both shouted.

“How is she doing?” Jackson asked as Winn walked into the kitchen.

“Well, she hasn’t kicked us out yet, so I’d say not good,” Winn replied. “I think having Carter here is helping. She’s forcing herself to function for him. With a little luck, that will last until Kara’s back on her feet.”

“That’s can’t be healthy,” Jackson said.
Winn shrugged as he opened the refrigerator and pulled out two bottles of water. He handed one to Jackson as he sat down across the table from him. “It’s not, but sometimes healthy is a bit ambitious and you just gotta get through the day.”

Jackson twisted the top off his water. “Now that is something I can understand,” he said. He took a pull off the water, and Winn had to look away to keep from staring at his throat as he swallowed.

“You knew how to handle her panic attack,” Jackson said. “Experience?”

“Yeah,” Winn said. “I spent some time in foster homes. Not something I’d recommend. One of the girls in one of the homes with me was gay. Word got around at school and things got bad for her. She started having them. Sometimes two or three a day. I learned how to take care of it. What worked for her, what didn’t. It varies from person to person. You learn how to watch for their triggers and help the person avoid them. I’ve never seen Miss Grant have one before, so I just started with the basics. Control her breathing so she doesn’t hyperventilate, provide reassurance, reduce stimulus, keep her grounded, don’t leave her alone. Punch James Olsen in the face next time I see him.”

“I don’t think he meant any harm,” Jackson said.

“I know he didn’t, and it probably wouldn’t have caused her to have an incident if she didn’t know Supergirl was Kara,” Winn said. “But it’s been pretty obvious since the interview that Cat knows.”

“I knew Kara had feelings for Cat,” Jackson said. “That much was obvious when she recruited me. It took a while longer for me to realize that it’s mutual. I don’t believe James has the advantage of our perspective.”

“James misses a lot of things,” Winn said. “What about you, though? I mean, if you don’t mind. It’s pretty obvious you’re not *just* an assistant.”

“I was King Orin’s body guard,” Jackson said. “After his brother attempted to assassinate him, the elders of Atlantis would not allow him to leave the city without one, so I was chosen.”

“King Orin? Like, Aquaman? You mean you were Aquaman’s bodyguard?” Winn asked.

“Yes,” Jackson said.

“And you gave that up to guard Cat?”

“No. The King… I found out something that made it impossible for me to remain in the King’s service. When Kara found me, I was working on a small fishing boat in Alaska.”

“I’m sorry,” Winn said. “It sucks when you find out the people you looked up to aren’t what you thought. Especially if you lose your home in the process.”

“Sounds like you speak from experience,” Jackson said.

“Yeah. My dad’s in prison, and he really deserves to be,” Winn replied.

“My father is not in prison, but he most definitely deserves to be. You have my condolences as well.”

Winn held out his water bottle, tapping it against Jackson’s. “Here’s to us,” he said.

Jackson smiled. “To us.”
“Alright,” James said, “we’ll go with the timeline format for the Supergirl article, but I want a list of known anti-alien extremist groups with a brief as a sidebar on that page, with a link to the full article.”

“What about the profiles of anti-alien politicians?” Vicki asked. “You still want to go with that?”

“Definitely,” James said. “When it goes up on the website, I want each one to have a clip featuring sound bites from anti-alien speeches they’ve given. I want those same sound bites as pull quotes in the magazines version of the article.”

Vicki nodded. “That only leaves the feature on the attack itself. Obviously, we’re including the full video with a violent content disclaimer on the website, but how do you want to handle the layout for the magazine article?”

“We’ll use four pictures,” James said. “We’ll use a large blow up of the moment just before the missile hit as the main image, then will use inline images of her falling, of her laying on the pavement, and another large blow up of the moment where Superman is holding her in his arms but hasn’t taken off yet as the top half of the last page of the article.”

“That’s a good image,” Vicki said. “Powerful. Some might even say iconic. But are you sure that’s how we want to spin it?”

“What do you mean?” James asked.

“Well, it just seems more focused on Superman’s reaction, than what actually happened to Supergirl. It’s very ‘damsel in distress’,” Vicki said.

“Huh,” James said. “I hadn’t really thought of it that way.”

“Really?” Vicki asked. “I never would have guessed.”

James bristled a little at the tone in Vicki’s voice. “Well, what do you suggest?”

“Go with the pre-impact shot, then her hitting the CatCo sign, then her falling, and do the half page of her laying on the ground,” Vicki said. “It keeps the focus on Supergirl, rather than making it about her cousin.”

James frowned. “It feels like leaving out part of the story,” he said.

“Not leaving out,” Vicki said. “We’re already including it in the text. We’re simply not choosing to highlight it in pictures. The point of the entire special section is to examine the attack and its impact. Who might be behind it, why Supergirl was targeted, how it’s impacting National City, how it’s impacting aliens and the alien rights movement. Yes, Superman is part of the narrative leading up to the attack but using that picture in that place is like giving a quarter of the article space over to talking about the EMT who loaded someone into an ambulance.”

James wanted to argue with her, wanted to say that Clark was part of the story, but he knew she was right, and he knew it was what Cat would do. If it were his magazine, he might make a different decision, but he was just filling in until Cat came back, so he just nodded.

“You’re right,” he said. “We’ll do it your way.”

Vicki nodded. “Any word on Cat?” she asked.

“Jackson said she’s doing well,” James replied. “She’s got her son with her.”
Vicki nodded, and stood up. “I’m going to go light some fires under some asses, and see if we can get any more info on what’s going on.”

“Oh, James said.

“And James,” Vicki said.

“Yeah?”

“Next time you talk to Clark, tell him I said I hope Kara’s okay,” Vicki said.

“How did you know?”

“I dated Bruce Wayne for years, James,” she said. “None of them are as good at hiding it as they think they are.”

James watched as she left, then looked over at the crate sitting in the corner. The one Kara had given him. The one with the Guardian armor from the other timeline. Or, a version of it, anyway. This one was lighter and more durable that the original, at least accounting to the information included. It was made of the same Kryptonian barrier fabric as Kara’s suits, but included hard armor segments that could shrug off even more damage.

He felt torn. On the one hand, he desperately wanted to be out there, doing something about what happened. On the other hand, he felt like he needed to be here, because he felt responsible for Cat not being here. An opinion that Wynn had seemed to share. He wasn’t sure how he was supposed to know that Cat would have such a strong reaction to what happened though. He knew that Kara cared about Cat. That much was plain to see. He could even tell that Cat had a bit of a soft spot for Kara. But he’d know Cat for years, and she’d always been unshakeable.

Surprise or not, he’d done the damage, and someone had to keep Cat’s company together while she was out of it. He might be new to CatCo, but he had more experience that pretty much anyone on staff, other than Vicki, and Vicki was too busy running the investigative reporting team, which was critical right now. That left James in charge, which he couldn’t ignore. Not just because of Cat, but because he knew Kara would never forgive him if he did.

Which meant that Guardian would have to wait.

“You know, it’s not too late to reconsider,” Sam said as she followed Lena and two US Marshals into the Cabin of the Gulfstream 650ER, while two more Marshals followed her.

“You don’t have to come with me,” Lena said as she took one of the seats near the bulkhead.

“Like I’d let you walk into the middle of a war zone without me,” Sam replied, rolling her eyes as she sat down facing Lena across a work table.

“I’d hardly call National City a war zone,” Lena said. She reached down and buckled her seatbelt as Sam did the same.

“Did you miss the part where someone shot Supergirl in the head with a missile, right outside the same building where this woman apparently works?” Sam asked.

“No, I didn’t, and if I was trying to get a meeting with Supergirl, I’d be worried. But I’m trying to get a meeting with Kara Danvers,” Lena said.
“Who just so happens to run Supergirl’s social media accounts,” Sam replied. “You might not be jumping into the fire, but I think this is definitely frying pan territory.”

“What else can I do?” Lena asked. “I’ve tried calling, I’ve tried emailing, I’ve tried having letters couriered over, I’ve even tried private messages on her facebook profile. At this point, it’s either go in person and hope she’ll meet with us, or take out a personal ad on Craig’s List, and I don’t think they have a CEO’s seeking CEO’s section.”

“Well, if the corporate gossip is anything to go by, we could try getting ahold of Cat Grant,” Sam said.

“I already tried. Jess has been calling non-stop,” Lena said. “Grant’s assistant is stonewalling. I’m not sure if Danvers is chucking her out along with the board, or if Grant’s just hunkered down waiting for the shitstorm to pass.”

“If the gossip is anything to go by, Grant might be hunkered down in Danvers’ bedroom.”

“You listen to too much gossip,” Lena said.

“You don’t listen to enough,” Sam replied. “How long is this flight, away?”

“The same amount of time it was the last time you asked. Four hours and forty minutes.”

“You’re going to get us both killed,” Sam said.

“You can still get off the plane,” Lena replied.

“Ruby would never forgive me if I let her aunt Lena get killed without me,” Sam shot back.

“No one is getting killed,” Lena said. “We’re just going to go to National City, have a nice talk with this Kara Danvers and come right back home. We won’t go anywhere near this mess with Supergirl, and we’ll be back by the end of the week.”

“You realize you just jinxed it, right?” Sam asked.

Lena shook her head and reached for her tablet. “I really thought chartering a jet would be more peaceful than flying commercial.”

“How did you talk them into letting you do this?” Sam said, pointing to the four US Marshals in the Cabin.

“I told them I was going, with or without them,” Lena said. “They’re here to protect me, not arrest me.”

“They could protect you better in Metropolis, where it’s nice and safe,” Sam said.

“Yes, because we’ve gone a whole two weeks without a Supervillain attack,” Lena said. “Completely safe.”

“If you die, I’ll never forgive you,” Sam said.

“I’m fine with that,” Lena said.

“If I die, I’m going to haunt you,” Sam said.

“You do that,” Lena said.
Translated from the Kryptonian:

kaozhanim udolkhehdia w ,kahl,ehl,
*Do not be afraid, Kal-El*
The Hair Didn’t Make It

Chapter Summary

Kara wakes up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“../rao, kheht, pahdh sokaoewushodh w gehd.sem :dhehrivodh/” She slowly forced herself up into a sitting position. “/?tafadahzh rrehd w khap/”

“You were struck by a modified TOW Missile fitted with a Nth Metal projectile,” Kolex said. “/zha ulahdho/” Kara said, clutching her head. She winced slightly at a pinching feeling in her neck, but almost instantly the pounding went away. “/.:divilusi ,rao, w rraop osh/”

“You’re awake,” Alex said.

Kara turned her head towards the sound, smiling weakly as she saw Alex standing in the door to the medlab. “I wish I wasn’t,” she said. “Wait,” she said, as what Kolex said started to sink in. “I got shot with an anti-tank missile?”

“No,” Alex said as she walked towards Kara. “You got shot in the head with a magic anti-Kryptonian missile.”

“I’d pretend I was shocked, but the way this week has been going, I’m more surprised I’m alive than anything.”

“You can thank Zatanna for that,” Alex said. “Her wards are the only thing that kept the Nth Metal from taking your head off.”

“Oh,” Kara said. “Well, remind me to introduce her to Kate Kane then.”

“Bruce Wayne’s cousin?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“Well, aren’t you just a one-woman match making service,” Alex said.

“I don’t see you complaining,” Kara said, grinning.

“I wouldn’t be, if I’d seen my girlfriend in the last two days.”

“Two days? But… How long was I out?” Kara asked.

“Let’s see,” Alex said. “You got shot around 2:00 PM Friday afternoon, and it’s about eleven AM on Sunday, so about forty-five hours.”

“Oh, crap,” Kara said. “Did you tell Cat I’m okay?”
“Yeah,” Alex said, laying a hand on Kara’s shoulder. “Winn is staying with her.”

“Winn?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Look, Kara, she didn’t take what happened well at all. James said she had some sort of panic attack, and Winn was the only one who could calm her down.”

“Help me up,” Kara said, trying to lift herself off the bed.

“What? No! Kara, the regeneration matrix had to rebuild half your damn spine.”

“I can’t-” She didn’t finish her sentence, because her arm gave out and she dropped back onto the bed.

“Look, Kara, Kolex says the light in here is helping feed your powers, but without the regeneration matrix, they would have taken months to restore the damage. You need a few more hours.”

“/shisir/” Kara spat, slamming her hand down on the bed.

“Feel better?” Alex asked.

“No,” Kara said.

“Then now’s probably a good time to mention the hair,” Alex said.

“What?” Kara said, as she reached up to check on her hair, most of which was missing. “Oh.”

Alex gave her a sympathetic look. “Your hair got tangled up with molten Nth metal,” she said. “Clark tried to melt it out, but he ended up trashing your hair, so I had Kolex cut it.”

“Kolex, mirror protocol,” Kara said, and a hologram of herself appeared in front of her. She reached up and made a small gesture which caused the hologram to rotate around. “I have a crew cut.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “It’s very ‘Legend of Billy Jean’.”

Kara sighed. “End mirror,” she said, and leaned back. “I’m alive, so I can’t complain too much.”

Alex reached up, putting a hand on Kara’s shoulder. “Everyone is out there looking for who did this,” Alex said.

“Lillian Luthor, Sam Lane, and Simon Tycho did this,” Kara said.

"You sound pretty sure of that," Alex said. "Did this happen before?"

"No," Kara said. "The first we heard of Cadmus in the other timeline was when Jim Harper showed up to investigate who knew about J'onn before the Red K incident."

"Right," Alex said. "That's when J'onn and I went on the run?"

"Yeah. You're a terrible fugitive, by the way. You ran straight home to Midvale."

Alex winced. "That does sound bad."

"Did you catch the shooter?" Kara asked.

Alex shook her head. "The shooter was long gone. They'd rigged the launched for radio control and strung a line of repeaters across the city. We've traced them to the industrial parks, but both Lord
Technologies and TychoTech are in range of the last repeater in the string, and since we're now a legitimate law enforcement agency... Thanks for that... we can't do shit without a warrant.

"That doesn't make sense," Kara said. "We didn't announce the press conference until the last minute, and something like that would take hours to set up."

"Yeah," Alex said. "J'onn thinks we have a leak, but even with all the secrecy, we're not sure if we should be looking at CatCo, the President's security detail, or the DEO."

Kara frowned as Alex's words tickled some memory in the back of her brain. Something to do with Lillian Luthor.

"Kolex, search the data archive. Key words Cadmus, security breach, traitor, double agent," Kara said.

"Working," Kolex said.

"Kara?" Alex asked.

"Cadmus was a long time ago," Kara said. "Ten years at least by my personal timeline. Some of the details are fuzzy, and there's almost five hundred zettabytes in the archive."

"Search complete. Twelve thousand, four hundred sixty-two primary incidents found."

"Oh, fuck me sideways," Kara muttered.

"Kara?" Alex asked, taking a small step back from the shock of hearing Kara actually curse in English.

Kara ignored her. "Kolex, exclude results from Earth Zero prime timeline."

"Search complete, one primary incident found, seven related reports. Reporting agents, Danvers, Alex; Schott, Winn; J'onzz, J'onn; Vasquez, Susan; Danvers, Kara; Copeland, Michael; McGill, Steven. Related incidents, Metallo, Kryptonite shipment Kilo Alpha Zulu one nine five."

"McGill," Kara said. "Alex, I completely forgot. I'm sorry."

"McGill? Agent McGill? He's the mole?" Alex asked.

"He's been working for Cadmus," Kara said. "A few months from now he would have diverted a Kryptonite shipment to them."

"And you forgot?" Alex said.

Kara shook her head. "It was like, a week after Myriad," Kara said. "The whole Metallo thing."

"Metallo? The cyborg with the Kryptonite heart? That Metallo?"

"Yeah. John Corben," Kara said, stopping when she saw all the color drain from Alex's face. "What?"

"John Corben is the man who tried to kill Maggie."

"Kolex," Kara said, "Get J'onn on the line!"

There was a moment of silence, before J'onn's voice filled the room. "Supergirl, how are you
feeling?"

"Terrible, J’onn. Are any of the Kryptonians in the field?"

"Just Superman and your aunt."

"Pull them back!" Kara said. "Pull them back now!"

"Why?" J’onn asked.

"Just do it, sir," Alex said. "Code word, adult supervision."

"Understood!" J’onn said. The line was silent for a moment. "They are on their way back now, and we’re on a private channel."

"J’onn, do you remember me describing Metallo?" Kara asked.

"Cyborg with a Kryptonite heart," J’onn asked. "Got blown up when Lillian tried to fuel him with synthetic Kryptonite."

"His real name was John Corben," Kara said. "Cadmus modified him after he was killed during a failed assassination attempt."

"John Corben? As in the man who tried to kill Agent Sawyer?" J’onn asked.

"Yes," Kara replied.

"You think Metallo is active?" J’onn asked.

"I don’t know," Kara said. "It took almost a week for him to show up in the old timeline, and Corben’s only been down two days."

"But it’s still not worth the risk," J’onn said.

"Not until we have everyone outfitted with Kryptonite shields and war suits." Kara said.

"Are you sure you want to take that step?" J’onn asked.

"Yeah," Kara said. "And J’onn, there’s one more thing. Agent McGill is working for Cadmus."

"You're sure?" J’onn asked.

"Yeah," Kara said. "In the other timeline he was stealing Kryptonite for Cadmus and led Alex into a trap so Lillian could try to recruit her."

"You’re just telling me this now?"

"I know, J’onn," Kara said. "I’m sorry. For me, this was all more than a decade ago. There are things I just don’t remember. I tried going through the old mission reports, but there are five-hundred zettabytes of data in the archive I brought with me. I’ve tried having Konex and Kolex go through it, but as good as they are at data analysis, they just aren’t built for that kind of predictive intuition. If I don’t tell them what I’m looking for, they’re not going to point something like this out to me. The thing with McGill never stuck in my mind. It was minor at the time. Lillian Luthor murdered him before Cadmus was declared a rogue organization by the government, so they were still getting most of their intel by reading our reports. He was just diverting the odd shipment. By the time I even found out about it, he was dead, and I was too busy protecting Alex from a Cadmus goon squad to
“Understood. I’ll take care of McGill, but we’ve got to find a way to start making that data work for us before something like this bites us in the ass again.”

“I know,” Kara said. “We need a better AI to process the data.”

“What about the AI your mother sent along with you?” Alex said. “Could you hook that into the systems here?”

“Yes, but it’s actually dumber than Konex and Kolex,” Kara said. “Besides, I loved my mother, but I don’t trust her. Even if I could take the imprint from the AI she sent along and lay it over a better AI substrate, we can’t be sure it would be honest with us.”

“Then what do you suggest?” J’onn asked.

“We need at least a tier nine AI,” Kara said. “Ideally, I’d rip the computer core out of a Time Master’s ship, but that would cause all sorts of problems.”

“You can’t just have Kolex build one?” Alex asked.

“Kryptonians hired Coluans for anything tier eight or above,” Kara said. “The Sanctuary Sunstone doesn’t have patterns in the fabrication matrix for anything higher than tier seven. Short of asking one of the Green Lanterns to pick something up the next time they are off world, which we will *not* be doing, I don’t know any way we could get one. I only know of two systems with the level of processing power we need. The Gideon aboard the Waverider and the Gideon… Oh.” Kara stopped. “Yeah. Yeah, that might actually work, and it would save me a lot of trouble later.”

“Care to share with the class, Ms. Danvers?” J’onn said.

“I know where there’s a level twelve AI. The person who owns it wouldn’t let us have it, but I think I can convince him to let me pull a copy of the AI substrate, and do a detailed enough hardware scan that Kolex could build a copy of the hardware. Can you spare me, Alex and Maggie for a few hours?”

“Why do I get the feeling I’m not going to like this plan?” J’onn asked.

“Because it involves breaching to a parallel universe and asking someone who hasn’t met me yet to borrow a computer he won’t invent for ten years?”

“Yeah. That sounds like one of your plans. J’onzz out.”

Kara looked at Alex. “You think he’s upset?”

“Hard to tell with him.”

Kara laughed and shook her head. “Kolex given you a tour of the place?”

“He offered,” Alex said, “but I didn’t want to get too far away from you.”

Kara smiled and reached out, taking Alex’s hand. “Still taking care of me?” she asked.

“Always,” Alex said. “Next time, though, dodge the missile.”

“I’ll try,” Kara said. “Kolex, get me a float chair.”
“Yes, lady Kara.”

“Kara, you need to stay in bed,” Alex said.

“Even if I want to show you the armory?”

“Okay, but not one foot out of that chair young lady,” Alex said.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015

Good news everybody. My head is harder than tank armor. @VickiVale @LoisLane any advice on getting bombs stains out of hair? #supergirllives

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 29 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl I feel so called out right now. I’m glad you’re okay, sweetie. Try tea tree oil deep cleansing shampoo for the hair, unless @LoisLane has any ideas. #supergirllives

Lois Lane @LoisLane 29 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl Activated charcoal shampoo. It works miracles. #supergirllives

President Marsdin @POTUS 29 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl Welcome back, Supergirl. Glad to hear you’re okay. #supergirllives

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015

@POTUS Thank you, President Marsdin. Back in action in a day or two. Just waiting for my tailor. #thesuitdidntmakeit #supergirllives

Cat Grant @CatGrant 29 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl If you need a new suit, call me. I know people. #thesuitdidntmakeit #supergirllives

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015

@CatGrant Thanks for the offer, but I’ve got it covered. I might need a recommendation for a good stylist though #thesuitdidntmakeit #supergirllives #thehairdidntmakeiteither

Cat Grant @CatGrant 29 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl How bad is it? #supergirllives #thehairdidntmakeiteither

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015

@CatGrant Invincible by Pat Benatar has been on loop since I woke up #supergirllives #thehairdidntmakeiteither
Cat Grant @CatGrant 29 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl I’m afraid to ask how you know that movie #supergirlives #thehairdidntmakeiteither

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015
@CatGrant I spent my teen years in the house with a Helen Slater fan #supergirlives #thehairdidntmakeiteither #patbenatarisawesome

Benatar and Giraldo @benatargiraldo 29 Nov 2015
@ SupergirlZorEl Thank you, Sweetie! I’m flattered. Sorry about the hair. #supergirlives #thehairdidntmakeiteither #patbenatarisawesome

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015
@CatGrant @benatargiraldo I’ll get used to it. I’ve just never been butch before #supergirlives #thehairdidntmakeiteither #gonnaneedmoreflannel

Cat Grant @CatGrant 29 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl If you show up wearing flannel, I will light it on fire

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015
@CatGrant You’d really set me on fire?

Cat Grant @CatGrant 29 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl No, I’d set the flannel on fire. You’re fireproof, remember.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015
@CatGrant You’re no fun. How am I supposed to be butch without flannel? #butchofsteel

Rachel Maddow @maddow 29 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl I can make some suggestions #butchofsteel

Cat Grant @CatGrant 29 Nov 2015
@maddow Get your own Superhero. If @SupergirlZorEl wants a butch look, I have an entire fashion department that can help.
Better not risk it. @CatGrant is the jealous type. She scares off all the girls.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 29 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl Shouldn’t you be saving kittens?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015

@CatGrant My hair dresser says no flying for at least 48 hours after taking a missile to the hair. The tailor says no flying without a suit. I think the tailor has a better argument, but the hair dresser is hotter.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 29 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl That one wasn’t funny

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 29 Nov 2015

@CatGrant let me have this one. Laughing and crying are my only options, and there aren’t enough tears in the world.

Sara watched as Rip paced back and forth across the galley. The other five members of the team were perched around the room. Jax and Martin were sitting together next to her. Ray was sitting at another table, tinkering with a piece of the Atom suit, while Mick and Leonard stood together, leaning against the counter.

“So, walk me through this again,” Rip said. “You have been experiencing trans-temporal memories for almost three years.”

“Longer if you count the year I was dead,” Sara said in an annoyed tone.

“And Gideon knew about it?” Jax asked.

“I did,” Gideon said.

“So, Sara can remember the future?” Jax asked.

“Or possibly an alternate timeline,” Martin supplied helpfully.

“Except Sara has only been a time traveler for six months,” Leonard said.

“Two years and six months,” Ray said. “You forgot about the two years we got left in the fifties.”

“I wish I could,” Sara said, doing everything she could not to stare at Leonard, only half sure he was actually there, and wondering why no one else seemed to remember him dying to destroy the Oculus.

Of course, that was part of problem. Sara remembered it both ways. She remembered him dying to save his friend, and she remembered pulling a self-fusing binding clamp out of the small arsenal that came with her war suit and using it to fix the Oculus so it would blow up without them there.
“I don’t get what the big deal is,” Jax said. “This trans-temporal memory stuff just saved our asses in a big way.”

“It’s a big deal, Mr. Jackson, because it’s almost unheard of for a time traveler to experience trans-temporal memory *before* they enter the temporal zone for the first time,” Rip said. “But it’s also relevant to our current dilemma.”

“The only dilemma I see is that this is boring, and I’m hungry,” Mick said.

Sara fingered the war suit cuff wrapped around her wrist, tracing over the geometric symbols that encircled the canary engraved into the metal. Symbols which spelled out the words /.:zhao zhindif w rrip i khehsptom/. Words which meant, ‘I will always love you, my Captain’ in a language Sara shouldn’t know, but could not only read, but spoke with what she knew was a fairly thick accent. One she could remember being gently teased about as soft hands roamed her body in the night.

“Well, Mr. Rory, I’m more concerned with the fact that there has been an enormous change to the timeline,” Rip said. “One so massive the temporal shockwave very nearly destroyed the Waverider.”

“Have we made any progress on figuring out what the disruption to the timeline was?” Martin asked.

“Negative, Dr. Stein,” Gideon said. “However, I have managed to locate the origin of the disruption.”

“Excellent, Gideon,” Rip said. “Set a course.”

“There is a problem, Captain Hunter,” Gideon replied.

“What is it?” Ray asked.

“The source of the disruption isn’t located in this universe.”

“What?” Jax and Ray both asked at the same moment.

“The disruption originated in a parallel universe.”

“There are parallel universes?” Ray asked excitedly, which seemed incongruous, because Sara remembered them sitting in the same galley, having an argument over which universe had the best coffee.

“Unfortunately,” Rip said. “Gideon, which universe?”

“Universe Thirty-Eight, I believe,” Gideon said. “The specific source of the time aberration is difficult to pinpoint, but I believe it occurred sometime around November 30th, 2015.”

“Well then, Gideon, set a course,” Rip said.

Rip marched out of the galley and headed for the bridge, as everyone else stood up to follow him, but Sara lingered, rubbing the war suit cuff. She remembered things both ways. She remembered returning home to find that Damian Darhk had killed her sister and she remembered returning home and spending hours sitting on a couch, heaping abuse on the name of Oliver Queen after Laurel told her he had a son even before he and Laurel had started dating.

She didn’t know what the time aberration was, but she knew that whatever happened, there was no way in hell she was letting Rip fix it.
Translated from the Kryptonian:

,rao, khehth , pahdh sokaewushodh w gehd
Literal: Honored Rao please make it stop
Semantic: Dear God, please make it stop

sem :dhehrivodh
I want to die.

?tafadahzh rrehd w khap
What hit me?

zha ulahdho
Literal: no noise
Semantic: Shut up!

:divilusi ,rao, w rraop osh
Literal: May Rao shine light on/for you
Semantic: God bless you.

!shisir
God damn it!

.zhao zhindif w rrip i khehshtom
I will always love you, my captain.
Visitation

Chapter Summary

Cat, Max, M’gann, and Eliza all have visitors...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Cat looked up from her computer at the sound of gentle tapping on the sliding glass door that lead out to the balcony, not at all surprised to see Kara standing there. Not surprised, but so, so relieved. She stood up and crossed the room, unlocking the door and sliding it out of the way.

“Hey,” Kara said. “I-”

Cat cut her off by pulling her into a hug, and as Kara’s arms enclosed her, she took her first unlabored breath in two days. “Thank God,” she said.

Kara squeezed her a little tighter. “I’m sorry,” she said. “I’m so sorry you had to see it.”

“It was awful,” she said. “I thought…” She couldn’t bring herself to say it. She tried, but the words caught in her throat, her body rebelling at the idea.


Cat cringed, and pulled back, wiping at the tears threatening to spill from her eyes. “You must think I’m a helpless old fool,” she said.

“No,” Kara said, giving a gentle shake of her head. She reached up, brushing Cat’s cheek with her thumb. “I understand completely.”

Cat looked up into those beautiful blue eyes, seeing the infinite well of sadness behind them, and realized that if anyone understood, it would be Kara.

“I can’t stay,” Kara said. “I wish I could, but-”

“I know,” Cat said. “But please, be careful.”

“I will,” Kara said, as she stepped back from the door, and Cat finally took in Kara’s appearance. The crew cut wasn’t a surprise, and didn’t even seem out of place, given how often Kara wore her hair pulled up in a bun, or back in a ponytail. But what she was wearing was shocking. Gone was the blue top and the red skirt. In its place was a black, high necked body suit, with an almost plastic sheen and a raised, interlocking texture than reminded Cat of chainmail. The House of El coat of arms was embossed on the outside of each shoulder. Her chest bore the same emblem as her old suit, though the red was darker, and the yellow more muted in tone. The boots were black with a yellow-edged red band at the top, the cape had a yellow border around the edge, the forearms were wrapped in heavy bracers, and as Cat watched, the fabric seemed to flow down, covering Kara’s hands which had been bare a moment ago.

Kara wasn’t wearing a costume anymore. She was wearing a uniform, and she looked like someone
who’d been born to lead armies.

“/.kehpes shahrrehth , eh ,kat,grant, .nim gehduju w voi .fidh khuhp nim vrrahdh w gehd/”

Cat didn’t know what the words meant, but she could see their meaning in Kara’s face. The reassurance and the determination told the entire story. Everything would be okay, because Kara was going to make it that way. Cat felt the smile spread across her face, felt the surety of Kara’s words in her bones, and she nodded. Kara smiled at her, and lifted into the air, turning and shooting off into the night sky.

Cat took a deep breath, and squared her shoulders, deciding it was past time to get rid of those two freeloaders sitting in her kitchen, drinking her bottled water.

Max walked into his office and flipped the light switch, frowning in annoyance when nothing happened. His first impulse was to fire everyone in building maintenance, but for once, it probably wasn’t their fault. Instead, he made a mental note to add the cost for fixing whatever was wrong to the amount he sued the city for once the charges had been dropped, assuming Lillian Luthor could deliver on that particular promise.

He stepped into the office, moving carefully as his eyes adjusted, hoping the desk lamp would work and provide enough light for him to see what the problem with the overhead was. He was so focused on navigating across the room in the dark, he never noticed the figure moving behind him, not until fingers twisted in his hair and shoved him forward. The edge of the desk slammed into his thighs and he slammed down face first onto the hardwood surface.

“Ever been to Gotham, Max?” a distorted voice asked.

“More of a Metropolis boy,” Max said. He had a pretty good idea who was holding him down, and why, and he’d be damned if he was going to cave to some idiot in a Bat costume.

“Then let me explain how this works,” the voice said. Pain exploded in Max’s shoulder as the person behind him twisted it sharply, and Max couldn’t stop himself from screaming as he felt the joint separate. “I’m going to ask you a question. If you don’t answer me or you lie to me, I’m going to make you regret it. If you piss me off, only one of us is walking out of this room.”

Max let out a pained laugh. “Everyone knows Batman doesn’t kill.”

Max felt himself being jerked up off the table and found himself face to face with a pair of white lenses staring out of a red mask.

“Shit!” Max said, trying to back away, fear starting to sink in.

“You know who I am, Max?” the voice said.

“Yes,” Max said, hating the tiny quiver of fear in his voice. “You’re Red Hood.”

“Good, Max. That’ll save you a kneecap or two.”

“What do you want?” Max asked.

“What do I want?” Red Hood asked. “Max, you’re gonna disappoint me, aren’t you?”

“No,” Max said, backing away even further.

Red Hood reached under his jacket and pulled out a Glock pistol. One Max recognized. It was the
one he’d been inching towards. The one that should have been in his desk drawer.

“You people are so stupid,” Red Hood said. “You look at someone like Supergirl, and say ‘she can lift buildings, she must be a threat.’” He dropped the magazine out of the Glock, and then worked the slide, ejecting the round from the chamber. “You never realize that if someone like her was a threat, the first you’ve see of them is when buildings start falling down.”

“Please,” Max said, the word coming out almost involuntarily.

Red Hood ignored him, as he pulled the trigger on the Glock, then inched the slide back just enough to be able to work the takedown switch.

“See, the thing is, Max, Supergirl wants to help people.” He pushed the slide forward, taking it off the lower receiver. “She’s kind.” He tossed the lower receiver aside. “She’s gentle.” He popped the recoil spring out of the slide and threw it over his shoulder. “She cares about people, Max.” He pulled the barrel out of the slide. “Even when she probably shouldn’t.” He tossed the barrel and the slide in opposite directions. “And those people she cares about,” he said as he took a step towards Max. “The ones she shouldn’t.” Another step. “How do you think they are going to react when someone tries to murder her?”

Max tried to step back, but Red Hood grabbed him by the lapels and dragged him forward, until the front of his mask was barely an inch from Max’s nose.

“I didn’t have anything to do with that,” Max said.

“Oh, I know that, Max,” Red Hood said. “That’s why you’re still breathing.”

“Then what do you want?” Max asked.

“Cadmus.”

“I don’t know what that is!”

“Oh, Max, I told you what would happen if you lied to me.” He let go of Max’s suit, but before Max could back away, Red Hood grabbed his head, covering Max’s eyes with his thumbs. “I’ll start with your eyes. You don’t need those to answer questions.”

“WAIT!” Max screamed.

“Cadmus, Max,” Red Hood said.

“I don’t work with them” Max said, “not directly.”

“Who does?” Red Hood asked.

“They’ll kill me,” Max said.

“Maybe,” Red Hood said. “But that’s tomorrow, Max. I’m here now.”

Max felt Red Hood’s thumbs start pressing into his eyes, and almost before he could stop himself, he shouted the name. “Sam Lane!”

The pressure on his eyes eased up.

“General Sam Lane?”
“Yeah,” Max said. “He’s my contact. He brings me tech, and I reverse engineer it. Stuff he doesn’t want Tycho to know about.”

“Simon Tycho?”

“Yeah. Simon’s neck deep in Cadmus, but Lane doesn’t trust him or Luthor.”

“Lex Luthor?”

“No. Lillian. Lex was never involved with Cadmus. It was always Lillian’s baby. Lex thought it was too slow. He wanted to go after Superman directly. But Lillian hates *all* aliens. Not just Superman.”

“Who else?”

“Henshaw,” Max said. “Lillian needed help designing the cybernetics for Henshaw.”

“Who else?”

“I don’t know,” Max said. “Those are the only ones I ever met.”

“Sam Lane. Simon Tycho. Lillian Luthor. Hank Henshaw.”

“Yes,” Max said.

“What else do you know?”

“Nothing!” Max insisted.

Red Hood’s thumbs dug into his eyes again.

“Brain!” Max shouted.

“What?” Red Hood asked.

“It’s why Lane didn’t trust Luthor and Tycho anymore,” Max said. “Some sort of weapon. Alien tech. I don’t know. I just overheard a part of a conversation. It scares Lane out of his mind.”

“Thanks, Max.”

Red Hood let him go, and by the time Max opened his eyes, he was already across the room, but he stopped before he got to the door.

“You should really have that shoulder looked at,” Red Hood said, but before Max could say anything, Red Hood raised his hand, showing off a small remote. He hit a button on it, and incandescent pain flooded through Max, knocking him off his feet, and leaving him on the floor, writhing until he couldn’t take it anymore and unconsciousness swallowed him.

Kara dropped out of the sky and landed in front of the door to the bar with enough force to announce her arrival. A moment later, there were two more thumps in the alleyway behind her. She glanced back, taking in the sight of Astra in a full Kryptonian war suit like the one she was wearing. The color scheme was different. Where Kara wore the red and yellow of the House of El, Astra wore the White and red of the House of Ze, the red-trimmed white band around the top of her boots, her coat of arms and her cape standing out like beacons in the dark. Astra looked every bit the general. Beside her stood Fendra Kem-Kann, her suit detailed in blue trimmed silver.
“/ehworu khuhp w kryp osh . kaorrivodh w gehdahjah ;zehz ehworu khuhp w rraop/” Kara said.

“/zhi ,kahrah,/” Astra replied.

Kara turned and walked up to the door of the bar, and gave a single knock, ringing the metal door like a gong. The slit opened-

“Jolene,” Kara said.

The bouncer stared for a moment, and Kara could see the fear in his eyes. He glanced back into the room, then turned to look at her for another moment before finally opening the door. Kara took did not hesitate. She walked into the bar, doing her best impression of Cat striding into a staff meeting.

M’gann was standing in the middle of the room, waiting for her. But not her human form. This was M’gann in her Green Martian form. Kara ignored her, and looked around the room, taking in every face she saw. Some of the aliens would be confused but there were enough who would understand. They would explain to the ones who didn’t, and word would get around.

“I am Kara Zor-El, Chatelaine of the House of El, daughter of Zor-El and Alura In-Ze, and by inheritance and right Head of the ruling council of Krypton. Doubt my claim at your peril. I have been attacked, viciously and without provocation, and I call this an act of war. Doubt my anger at your peril. I was attacked from ambush. The act of a coward. Doubt my rage at your peril. I will find those who attacked me and my House, and I will see justice done. Doubt my resolve at your peril.”

“I name my enemy Cadmus. Give them no aid. Give them no comfort. Give them no shelter. Give them only a warning. I am coming for them, I will find them, and they should fear me.”

She looked around the room again and saw understanding in more eyes than she expected. Even the ones who weren’t old enough to have heard the forms before knew a declaration of war when they heard one.

Kara turned to M’gann. “Be at ease, daughter of Mars. My enemies are not in this room.”

She could practically feel everyone relax, just the slightest bit. There was still tension. Even in a room full of aliens, Kryptonians were still something to be feared. She turned from M’gann back to the crowd.

“The House of El wishes no harm on the innocent, so we say this. Any attack on any alien who has committed no crime will be treated as an attack on the House of El and dealt with accordingly. If you need help, if you know of someone who needs help, come to the DEO, and you shall have it. Our enemies are not so benevolent, so I beg you to look to the safety of you and your loved ones first. But remember also that the House of El is generous to our friends. If any of you know anything about Cadmus, you will be rewarded if that knowledge reaches my ears.”

She turned back to M’gann.

“Until this is done, we will not return. I will bring no war into your house.”

Kara bowed, then turned and headed for the door, pausing only to make sure Astra and Fendra were with her before she shot into the sky.

“That was well done, Little One, though I still don’t know what you hope to gain from it.”

“I’m letting the aliens know that we will protect them the same way I will protect the humans,” Kara said.
“You think that will make a difference in this war with Cadmus?” Astra asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I don’t expect this war to last long enough for that. It’s the next war I’m worried about.”

“With the Oans?” Astra asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I’ll take that war to the Oans. But Darkseid is coming, Myriad or no, and *that* war I am afraid of.”

Alex stepped through the door of Kara’s loft with a mix of relief and dread. Relief because this was the first normal moment she’d had since Kara had disappeared to answer a text from Cat four days earlier. Dread because she knew Eliza must be an absolute mess.

“Alex?” Eliza asked, turning around on the couch to look at her. “Where’s Kara?”

“I’m not sure, exactly. She had two stops she needed to make, but she has Astra and one of the other Kryptonians with her.”

Eliza frowned. “What’s going on?” she asked.

Alex crossed the room and sat down next to Eliza. “A lot,” Alex said. “Where’s Lois?

“She went back to the hotel,” Eliza said. “She’s coming back in the morning.”

“That’s good,” Alex said. “It means we can talk.”

“Talk about what?” Eliza asked.

Alex took a deep breath. “Did you see the press conference?”

“Yes,” Eliza said.

“J’onn wanted to come,” Alex said. “Wanted to tell you himself. He feels responsible. But too much is going on right now. It’s a miracle I was able to get away.”

“Honey, you’re scaring me,” Eliza said.

“I’m sorry,” Alex said. “This is hard for me. The mission where Hank Henshaw disappeared. That was Dad’s mission. Henshaw stabbed Dad because he was trying to protect J’onn.”

Eliza closed her eyes. Alex could see the pain written on her face, and reached out, taking her mother’s hands in her own and squeezing them.

“That sounds like something your Dad would do,” Eliza said.

Alex laughed, tears welling in her own eyes. “Doesn’t it?”

Eliza opened her eyes, and Alex felt Eliza squeeze her hands. “That’s when J’onn took over the DEO?”

“He did it to honor Dad’s memory,” Alex said, “and so he could watch over us. Keep Kara off the radar of people like Sam Lane, Simon Tycho, and Lex and Lillian Luthor.”

“That didn’t work out so well, did it?” Eliza asked.
“Better than you think,” Alex said. “Mom, Kara and I have to go somewhere. We won’t be gone long. A day, at most. But there’s something I need to tell you before we go.”

“What is it?” Eliza asked.

“We think Dad might be alive,” Alex said.

“What?” It wasn’t quite a shout. Her Mom never really shouted, but Alex could hear the shock, anger and disbelief in her voice. She could hear the hope, too.

“I can’t tell you why,” Alex said. “Not yet. There just isn’t time, right now. But Kara’s known for a little while. She told me about a few weeks ago. We couldn’t mount any sort of rescue until the situation with Astra was dealt with, but now it is.”


“We’re not sure,” Alex said. “It’s complicated, and I don’t have time to explain everything. But we think the people who have him are the same people who attacked Kara.”

“I though Henshaw was behind that,” Eliza said.

“He’s involved. Have you ever heard of Project Cadmus?” Alex asked, but she didn’t need her Mom to answer. The way the color drained from Eliza’s face with answer enough. “We think they’ve had him since Peru.”

“Is that where you and Kara are going? To rescue your father?” Eliza asked.

“No,” Alex said. “Not yet. Kara gave all the information she had on Cadmus to Clark weeks ago, and Clark passed it on to Batman, which sounds ridiculous, but Batman has checked all the places Kara knew about and hasn’t found anything that looks active. We’re going to get some equipment that Kara thinks can help us find where Cadmus is currently hiding. When we get back, we’re going to her Fortress to set it up. If it works, we’ll find out where Dad is, and we’ll go after him.”

“Alex, I know how much you love your Dad, but I don’t want you or Kara to take any risks trying to chase down a rumor. Your Dad would never want you to put yourselves in danger.”

Alex squeezed Eliza’s hands again. “It’s a little late for that,” she said. “But Cadmus is the one in danger. Kara and I have thirty very angry Kryptonians, an Amazon Princess, and a pissed off Martian on our side. Plus, I’m pretty sure the entire bat population of Gotham is in town, ready to throw down with whoever hurt Kara. We’ll be okay. But if Dad’s alive, we’ll bring him home. And when we do, Kara and I will explain everything.”

“Alex, please-”

The alarm on Alex’s phone went off. She squeezed Eliza’s hands again, then let go and reached into her pocket, deactivating the alarm. She stood up and pushed back the sleeve of her jacket, revealing an iridescent blue metal cuff bracelet on her right forearm with the El coat of arms embossed into it.

“I have to go,” she said, and activated the bracelet. The iridescent blue surface shimmered for a moment, then spread out, quickly enveloping her from the neck down before solidifying. The suit wasn’t anywhere near as sleek as the one Kara wore. It was thick, with ridged armor plates set into it. More like Batman’s suit that Kara’s. The House of El Coat of Arms was smaller, making room for the DEO emblem worn on the upper left of her chest. “Konex.”

“Yes, Lady Alex?” he asked from his normal hiding spot in the corner.
“Initiate transmat,” she said. A moment later, light surrounded her, and she was gone.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

.kehpes shahrrehth , eh ,kat,grant,
Have hope, Cat Grant

.nim gehduju w voi
All will be well

.fidh khuhp nim vrrahdh w gehd
Literal: I will make it thus.
Semantic: I will make it so.

.ehworu khuhp w kryp osh
I will speak for us.

. kaoorrivodh w gehdahjah ;zehz ehworu khuhp w rraop
Do nothing unless I tell you

.zhi ,kahrah,
Yes, Kara.
Two Earths

Chapter Summary

Kara, Alex and Maggie take a trip to Earth One

Chapter Notes

I know it's not Saturday, but... I do what I want.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You sure about dropping in unannounced?” Maggie asked.

Kara smiled as she sat the last crate down on the hover cart. “They don’t have the tech yet for transdimensional phone calls, so, I can’t really announce our visit.”

“I think she means breaching right into their headquarters,” Alex said.

“Considering the fact that the contents of this cart could shift the balance of power on any number of worlds if we were to lose so much as one case, I’ll take that chance,” Kara said. She gave Maggie and Alex one last once over, smiling at the House of El’s Coat of Arms on both their chests. She’d never had any doubt that Alex would wear it. They were family. She’d worried that Maggie wouldn’t though. She would have understood. Wearing that symbol was a sign of allegiance to a House that had just declared war. Something Kara had been very careful to explain. Maggie hadn’t hesitated for a moment, and now, she and Alex stood there in matching powered war suits.

“Ready?” she asked them.

“Yes,” both of them safe.

Kara activated the breach generator, the grabbed the cart and rushed through, arriving in the cortex almost instantly. Alex came through a moment later, just as the alarm was sounding, with Maggie bringing up the rear. Both of them had their slaver pistols ready. Kara closed the breach and tucked the generator away as she walked over to the control console, and fired up the system, keying in the override code to shut down the alarm and reassigning control of the system to herself, just as a red and yellow streak burst into the room.

“Hey Barry,” Kara said as she pulled up the internal security grid.

Barry came to a dead stop at the sound of his name, looking back and forth between Alex and Maggie who both had slaver pistols trained on him, and Kara who was still working on the computer.

“Do I know you?” he asked.

“Not yet,” Kara said. “Alex, Maggie, you guys can lower the guns. This is Barry. He’s one of the good guys, when he’s not doing incredibly stupid things like going back in time and altering the
“Not yet?” he asked. “Are you from the future?”

“You know, it’s kind of disturbing that time travel is the first place his mind goes,” Alex said as she and Maggie holstered their guns.

“You get used to that with speedsters,” Kara said. “They can’t help themselves.” She looked up at Barry and smiled. “Yes, I’m from the future. Sort of. Technically, I would qualify as a time remnant. Sort of. I’m not sure you know about those yet, because I’m a little fuzzy on your timeline before we met in my original timeline, which would have been towards the end of March. Also, time travel is unnecessarily complicated and gives me a headache.”

“I’m Kara Zor-El Danvers of the House of El. I’m an alien refugee from the planet Krypton. On my Earth, Earth thirty-eight, I’m a Superhero who goes by the name Supergirl. In the original timeline we would have met next March and been really good friends for about five years, until you died. This is Special Agent Alex Danvers, my adoptive sister and our friend Special Agent Maggie Sawyer. We work for the Department of Extranormal Operations. Well, technically, they work for, and I work with. It’s complicated, like this entire situation.”

“Alex, Maggie, this is Barry Allen. He’s the head of the crime lab here in Central City, and a Superhero called The Flash. Also, a surprisingly good singer and dancer.”

“You’re aliens?” Barry said, looking back and forth between them.

“No,” Kara said, “I’m an alien. Alex and Maggie are both humans.”

“Okay, and you’re from Earth thirty-eight,” Barry said. “And we would have met next March, but you’re here changing the timeline.”

“Right,” Kara said. “You accidentally breached yourself to my Earth testing out a tachyon enhancement module for your suit. Then, about a year from now, you and Cisco come back to Earth thirty-eight to get me, so I can help fight off a Dominator invasion. That’s how I know all the override codes for your systems.”

“Wait, what are Dominators?” Barry asked.

“Really annoying telepathic aliens bent on wiping out all life in possession of the meta gene,” Kara said. “It’s a thing. We kicked their ass. Keep in mind Alex, Maggie and I police aliens professionally. We’re here tonight to, among other things, help you defeat Zoom before he can hurt anybody else on either Earth. Also, Harrison Wells is running down the hall with a really big gun.”

Maggie and Alex both drew their guns again as Barry turned towards the door to the Cortex. The room was quiet for a good thirty seconds until Harry came around the corner with a huge silver rifle covered in glowing blue components.

“Nobody shoot!” Barry said.

Harry stopped, rifle half raised. “Who are they?” he asked.

“Friends,” Barry said. “I think?”

“It’s complicated,” Kara said. She looked over at Barry. “Can we hold off on the rest of the explanations until Cisco, Caitlin, Iris, Joe and Wally get here?”
“Wally?” Barry asked. “Who’s Wally?”

“Um, Wally West,” Kara said. She held up a hand. “So tall, Iris’s younger brother, is way too obsessed with George Michael to be as straight as he claims to be.”

“First, Iris doesn’t have a brother,” Barry said. “And how do you know Iris?”

“What do you mean, Iris doesn’t have a brother? This is Earth One, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Barry and Harry both said.

Kara frowned and dug out the breach generator, checking to make sure they were on the right Earth.

“Are you sure we got the right alternate universe?” Alex asked.

“The quantum resonance frequency matches,” Kara said.

“You’re sure?” Alex said.

“According to the breach generator,” Kara said. “There is one way to find out for sure.” Kara walked over to Barry and lifted her right hand. The glove of the war suit peeled away, flowing back into the bracer. “Can I touch your face?” Kara asked.

“Okay,” Barry said. “A little weird, but okay.”

“I know it’s a bit creepy,” Kara said as she pressed her hand to his cheek, “but I had a girlfriend from Earth One for a long time, and I learned to recognize the quantum resonance by touch.”

“That’s not possible,” Harry said.

“Yeah, normal rules don’t apply when Kryptonians are involved,” Alex said.

“This is definitely the right Earth,” Kara said, taking her hand away from Barry’s face. She looked over at Alex. “I don’t know why Wally is missing. I know he was around before Flashpoint, so it’s not a product of Barry messing up the timeline, but I was always shaky on the timeline before Barry visited Earth thirty-eight.”

“You’re from earth thirty-eight?” Harry asked.

Kara sighed. “Barry, I really don’t want to go through the explanations more than once,” she said. “It’s a long story, and not a fun one. Can we maybe just all put the guns down, and wait for everyone to get here? I promise, I am here to help.”

“Okay,” Barry said. “We’ll wait.”

As it turned out, Cisco, Iris, Caitlin and Joe arrived together about ten minutes later.

“Woah,” Cisco said as they walked in. “Who are you ladies?”

Kara snorted, then broke out laughing as Caitlin, Iris and Joe all turned to give Cisco a look.

“Really?” Caitlin asked.

“What? No, I wasn’t… I think that came out wrong.”

“It’s okay, Caitlin,” Kara said, trying and failing to contain her mirth. “He’s barking up the wrong
tree."

Caitlin turned to look at her, confusion written on her face. “Um… who are you, and how do you know my name?”

“Guys, this is Kara,” Barry said, “that’s Alex, and that’s Maggie. They’re from Earth thirty-eight. Sort of.”

“Earth thirty-eight?” Joe asked.

“Sort of?” Cisco asked.

“It’s complicated,” Kara and Barry both said at the same time.

Kara and Barry looked at each other.

“Do you wanna go first?” Kara asked.

“No, no,” Barry said. “You know more about this. You should go first.”

“Okay,” Kara said. She turned back to the new arrivals. “Everybody get a chair. This is going to take a while.”

“How long is a while?” Joe asked. “I got work in the morning.”

“There’s time travel involved,” Kara said.

The four of them looked at each other.

“I’ll get the chairs,” Joe said, heading for the break room.

“I’ll get the beer out of the fridge,” Iris said, following her dad.

“I’ll get some aspirin for Joe,” Caitlin said, heading for the medlab.

“I’ll order pizza,” Cisco said.

“Oh,” Kara said. “Can we order from that place on the corner of Miller and Franklin that does the double fudge brownie dessert pizzas?”

Barry’s face light up. “Is that one next to the donut shop?”

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“And suddenly, I know why they were friends,” Alex said, a smile spreading across her face.

“Shut up,” Kara said. “It’s not Barry’s fault he needs ten thousand calories a day.”

Kara turned back to Cisco as he let out a long-suffering sigh. “How many do you want?” he asked.

“Six extra-large Hawaiian and an extra-large brownie for me. A large pepperoni and sausage, and a small brownie for them.”

“Barry, your usual?” Cisco asked.

“Get me some wings, too,” Barry said.
“Oh! Can I get some wings too?” Kara said.

“Six pizzas and wings?” Cisco said looking at Kara, he turned to Barry. “You should ask her out.”

Kara glared at him for a moment, then looked over at Maggie. “I thought the crew cut would do it,” she said. “Now I’m really considering the rainbow cape.”

“I’ll get you a ‘No one knows I’m a lesbian’, t-shirt for Christmas,” Maggie said.

“I’ve already got three,” Kara said.

“It’s true,” Alex said. “Eliza, Winn and I all had the same idea last Christmas.”

“Okay,” Cisco said. “I’m going to shut up before I embarrass myself further.”

“So, let me make sure I’ve got this straight,” Joe said. “The guy claiming to be Jay Garrick is actually Zoom. Zoom’s real name is Hunter Zolomon. The real Jay Garrick is being held hostage on Earth 2, along with Harry’s daughter, but he’s actually Barry’s dad from Earth 3?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“And you know all this because you’re from the future,” Joe said.

“Sort of,” Kara said.

“See, that’s the part that confuses me,” Joe said. “How can you ‘sort of’ be from the future?”

“That’s where things get complicated,” Kara said.

“Oh, thank God things haven’t gotten complicated yet,” Joe said.

“Well, we are only ten minutes in,” Cisco said, only to have Caitlin reach up and swat him on the back of the head. He looked over at her for a moment, then nodded. “Yeah, I deserved that.”

Joe just held out his hand and Iris put a beer in it without ever looking away from Kara, Alex and Maggie.

“Okay, let me give you the short version,” Kara said. “I was born September 22nd, 1965 on the planet Krypton.”

“Wait, you’re an alien?” Cisco asked.

“Shut up, Cisco,” Harry, Joe, Iris, Alex and Caitlin all said.

“Eleven years later, my Uncle Jor-El discovered that our planet was dying due to overmining of the planetary core. Most people didn’t believe him, but my Aunt Astra did, and she tried to save the planet. Someone was killed during her efforts, and she and some of her followers were locked up on a prison ship called Fort Rozz, which was parked in a rift in space-time called the Phantom Zone.”

“Two years after my uncle made the discovery, he sent his son, my cousin Kal-El, to Earth. I was sent along to protect him. We departed as the planet collapsed. My cousin escaped successfully, but I was caught in the explosion and my ship was knocked off-course and drifted into the Phantom Zone. I was stuck there for twenty-four years. My cousin arrived on Earth two years after Krypton exploded, and became a Superhero known as Superman around the age of twenty-two.”
“Around that same time, my pod drifted within communication range of Fort Rozz. A Coluan named Indigo, who was a prisoner on Fort Rozz, managed to hack the computer system, slave it to my pod’s guidance system, and reboot my pod, which picked up on my cousin’s pod’s homing beacon. Two years later, my pod and Fort Rozz both arrived on my Earth.”

“Alex’s family adopted me, and for the next twelve years, I pretended to be a human. I revealed myself to save my sister’s life when the plane she was on was sabotaged by my aunt, who was trying to kill all the DEO agents on the flight. That was about seven weeks ago. I then spent the next year fighting my aunt, and after she was killed, her husband, who was attempting to deploy a mind-control technology in an attempt to avoid global environmental collapse on Earth. In the end, around the beginning of April of 2016, I threw Fort Rozz into space. I spent the year after that fighting a group of anti-alien extremists, before the Earth was invaded by a group known as the Guardians of the Universe.”

“The Guardians had been working to police the universe for billions of years, and had decided that their police force was ineffective, so they were going to convert the human race into a stronger, more efficient, more obedient police force. Earth resisted, and we won, but not before three-quarters of the population was killed.”

“While that was happening, an evil god named Darkseid found Fort Rozz, and the mind control technology my aunt had created. With it, he was able to finish a weapon called the ‘anti-life equation’. We, meaning everyone in this room, all of Oliver’s team, and a bunch of other people we picked up along the way from various Earths, spent almost eight years fighting a running war across forty-six of the fifty-three universes in this multi-verse.”

“In the end, it was down to me, Sara Lance, Thea Queen, and a Martian from my home universe named M’gann M’orzz. Everyone else was dead, and all fifty-three universes in the multiverse had fallen to Darkseid. So, we decided to stop it from ever happening. Sara Lance had taken command of a time ship called the Waverider. We went back in time to just before Krypton blew up and recovered a couple of items so I could make contact with my aunt Astra, then came forward to about a year ago. Martians are telepaths. Their abilities don’t *normally* work on Kryptonians, but we had a telepathic booster drug which would allow her to connect with me telepathically. The only catch was, it would kill her. She took it, ripped my mind out of my future self, and forcibly merged it with my younger self.”

“So, technically, I’m not from the future, I just have twelve years’ worth of memories from a timeline I’m trying to prevent stuffed in my head.”

“In that timeline, Barry and I met right before I had the final battle with my Aunt’s husband and his partner Indigo, who yes, Cisco, is the same alien who hacked Fort Rozz and rebooted my pod. Cisco would go on to become a Superhero called Vibe, using his powers—”

“Cisco doesn’t have powers,” Caitlin said.

“Yes, he does,” Kara and Harry both said.

Everyone looked at Cisco, who kind of shrunk down in his seat. “I was going to tell you,” he said.

“Caitlin becomes a superhero called Killer Frost,” Kara said, “and no, she doesn’t have powers yet. She got them after Barry screwed up the timeline by going back in time and saving his mom after Zoom murdered his dad.” She looked over at Barry. “I would yell at you sternly for doing it, but pot, kettle.”

“Zoom killed my dad?” Barry asked.
“Yes,” Kara said. “And that’s one of the things I’m here to fix. Because going back in time and saving your mother causes so, so many problems. Caitlin developed multiple personalities to go along with her Superpowers, and Killer Frost… Kind of a bitch. Also, ironically, hot. Like, smoking off-the-charts hot.”

“Blonde, too, I’m guessing,” Maggie said.

“White hair,” Kara said.

“You really need help,” Maggie said.

“I know,” Kara said. She looked over at Barry. “I kind of have a type.”

“Supervillains?” Barry asked.

“I wouldn’t go that far,” Kara said. “But give me pale hair, emotional baggage, and a bit of snark and I start thinking with my ovaries.”

“No idea where you picked that up,” Alex said, voice dripping sarcasm.

“Are we done discussing my appeal as an evil, mentally-ill lesbian sex symbol?” Caitlin asked, in a voice that made it very clear they *were* in fact done discussing it.

“Sorry,” Kara said. “If it makes you feel better, Cisco followed both versions of you around like a love-sick puppy, even before you two got married.”

Cisco’s and Caitlin’s eyes got as wide as dinner plates. “We got married?” Caitlin squeaked.

“Yeah. I mean, it wasn’t a big ceremony, but the little chapel on Graxos IV was super cute.”

“Um,” Cisco said, “we’re not… um, we’re just friends.”

“Really?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Caitlin said.

Kara turned and pointed at Barry. “Okay, see, this is why you aren’t allowed to time travel.”

“Me?” Barry asked.

“Yeah, you,” Kara said. “See, I didn’t meet them until the Dominator invasion, which was your fault, because you screwed up the timeline, and I don’t know if they just haven’t gotten together yet, or if they got together because of something you changed. I just know that by the time you and Iris got married, these two idiots couldn’t look at each other without it being sickeningly cute.”

“And Barry and I—” Iris started

“Yeah, no,” Kara said. “Don’t even try that. After the number of times I had to listen to *both* of you go on about how much time you waisted, and how you wished you could go back and be together sooner, I swear I will scream so loud you’ll wish I was Black Canary. The thing with Patty goes nowhere, and I really don’t want to spend the next decade watching Iris go into a jealous snit every time Patty is around, which is a lot, considering she ends up becoming a time traveling superhero. The two of you get together and are absolutely disgusting. In fact, I only ever saw one couple be more disgustingly in love in my entire life, and it wasn’t Oliver and Felicity. Which reminds me. Please, please, please elope. I mean, I loved singing at your guys’ wedding, I really did, but just elope.” Kara shuddered at the memory. “Go to the court house, go to a chapel in Vegas, just
elope."

“As important as I’m sure the disastrous wedding of Mr. Allen and Ms. West is, I’m sure we have more important things to discuss,” Harry said in an annoyed tone.

“Um, no,” Kara said. “I cannot stress this enough. The first wedding ended with the priest in the hospital. Before the second wedding ended, Cisco had to breach us to Earth Zero, then we had to travel back in time to prevent the entire multiverse from collapsing in on itself. And seriously, Iris never, EVER, got over Felicity’s spur of the moment decision to turn the third wedding into a double wedding for her and Oliver. Which is totally fair, because I would have heat-visioned Felicity right in the face for even suggesting that had I actually been at the third wedding, which I wasn’t because I had to take Alex back to Earth 38 for medical treatment from injuries she got during the second wedding.”

“Right,” Iris said. “Barry, if we ever do get married, Oliver and Felicity are off the guest list.”

“I’m thinking that’s fair,” Barry said.

“The big thing I’m having trouble with is, where is Wally?” Kara said.

“Who’s Wally?” Cisco asked.

“Joe’s son,” Kara said. “Iris’s brother? I mean, I know he grew up with his mom, but I’m sure he was living with Joe during the whole Zoom thing because Zoom kidnapped him to blackmail Barry into giving his speed to Zoom and why is everyone looking at me like I’ve grown a second head?”

“I don’t have a son,” Joe said.

Kara’s attention was focused on Iris though, because she’d gone stiff as a board. Joe turned, following Kara’s gaze, and looked at Iris.

“Iris, what is it?” Joe asked.

Iris swallowed and turned to look at Joe. “I did some digging,” she said. “Into mom. I wanted to make sure she wasn’t…” She closed her eyes.

“/:zhouzdh w tov dovrosrno/” Kara said.

“You didn’t know about this?” Alex asked in a whisper.

Kara shook her head.

“I have a son?” Joe asked Iris.

“I didn’t know how to tell you,” Iris said. “His name is Wally. He was born about eight months after mom disappeared.”

Everyone in the room watched as Joe stood up and started towards the door.

“Joe,” Barry said.

“I…” Joe started, holding up a hand to forestall whatever Barry was going to say. “I’m going to need to sit with it a minute.”

Chapter End Notes
Translated from the Kryptonian

.:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho
Literal: *Fuck the shadows*
Semantic: *Fucking Hell*
“Here you go,” Maggie said, holding out a cup for Iris.

Iris jumped a little at the sound of Maggie’s voice, then looked up and gave her a weak smile. “Sorry,” she said.

“It’s okay,” Maggie said. “One dark roast with a shot of espresso, one cream, two sugars, right?”

Iris took the cup from Maggie. “It’s so weird you know that.”

“I’m sorry,” Maggie said. “I didn’t mean to invade your space. I just wanted to help.”

“It’s okay,” Iris said. “It’s just a lot to take in.”

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “I get that. I mean, when she told me, she kind of took her time about it, and she was a lot less… blunt.”

“She probably didn’t tell your dad he had a son he didn’t know about either,” Iris said.

“No,” Maggie said as she sat down across the table from Iris. They were in the break room, which was surprisingly well appointed for a place that had technically been closed for two years. “But then, I think if Kara ever met my dad, I don’t think she’d talk to him. She’d just throw him into orbit, then ask if we should go for ice cream.”

“A bit of tension there?” Iris asked.

“My dad found out I was gay when I was fourteen. Kicked me out,” Maggie said.

“That’s terrible,” Iris said.

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “It was.” Maggie lifted her coffee and took a sip of it, then sat it back down. “I think about it sometimes, you know. About how much I wish I had him back in my life.”

“Have you tried reaching out to him?” Iris asked.

“A couple of times,” Maggie said. “I sent him an invitation when I graduated from high school.
Another one when I graduated from college, and when I graduated from the police academy. He ignored them. When my abuela died, my Tiá called me to let me know. She had to tell me that she only knew because my papi had called to tell her we weren’t welcome at the funeral. I got that message after that.”

“Maggie, I’m sorry,” Iris said.

Maggie held up her hand, waving Iris off. “I’ve dealt with it,” she said. “It’s not a comfortable memory, but I get by. The funny thing is, as horrible as everything he’s done is, I’d still forgive him. If he walked back into my life. If he tried. I think I’d at least give him a chance.”

Iris took a deep breath, then let it out. “Barry told you about what happened with my mother,” she said.

“He was just trying to explain it to Kara,” Maggie said. “She felt really bad about what happened.”

Iris nodded. “Yeah,” she said. “I could see that on her face.”

“That’s the thing about Kara,” Maggie said. “She’s never met a problem she didn’t feel responsible for.”

“God,” Iris said, “no wonder she and Barry were friends.”

Maggie laughed. “Your boy is cut from the same cloth?”

“Yeah,” Iris said. “Ever since his dad went to jail, he’s felt like he was responsible for finding out who really killed his mom, and it’s only worse since he became the Flash. He feels like he’s personally responsible for every time someone so much as jaywalks in Center City.”

“I suppose it takes a certain kind of crazy to put on a costume and run around fighting bad guys.”

“Um, pot, kettle,” Iris said, gesturing to what Maggie was wearing.

Maggie looked down sheepishly. “This is new,” she said. “Kara kind of insisted.” She looked back up at Iris. “Someone shot me in the back Friday, and Kara and Alex are both being crazy over protective.”

“Someone shot you?” Iris asked in shock.

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “Funny thing. This crazy blonde alien friend of mine had her robot swap out all of my clothes for bullet proof alien fabric. I took two in the back and didn’t even feel it. Just heard the gun shots and thought I’d gotten lucky and the guy missed.”

“Wow!” Iris said. “Does she take requests? Because my dad could use some of that.”

“I’m pretty sure Kara is going to hook you guys up with some goodies,” Maggie said. “So, did my little speech work?”

“You mean, am I going to go see my mom?” Iris asked.

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “I mean, I know we just met, and it’s really not my business, but as far as Kara is concerned, Barry’s family, which pretty much makes you, Joe, Cisco, Caitlin, Wally, Harry and Harry’s daughter family. And since Kara’s my family…”

“I don’t know,” Iris said. “I mean, I’m angry with her for leaving, and now I’m angry with her for not telling us about Wally, and I wonder if Wally’s the only reason she came back.”
“And you’re wondering why she could love him, but you weren’t enough.”

“Wow. Is everyone on your world that blunt?” Iris asked.

“Not normally, but I got fired, shot in the back and watched Kara, who is my best friend in the world, take a missile to the head all on the same day. Alex got called to the scene when her girlfriend of exactly five days got shot in the back, got to see her sister shot in the head with a missile and got to help pick magic shrapnel out of her sister’s spine. Kara actually took that missile to the head and spent two days in a coma having her spine regrown. I don’t think any of us are at our best right now.”

“Yeah,” Iris said. “You could be right.”

“Well, I wasn’t one of the most successful detectives in National City for no reason.”

Iris smiled and took a drink of her coffee. “You know, it’s funny. Kara’s the second time traveler this year to tell me I’m going to marry Barry.”

“It messes with your head, right?” Maggie said.

“She told you who you were going to marry, too?” Iris asked.

“Sort of,” Maggie said. “I knew her for about four months before she started doing the whole Supergirl thing, and she only told me about the time travel stuff a couple of weeks ago, but she kept trying to fix me up with Alex, who hadn’t even realized she was gay.”

“Wow,” Iris said. “That must have been awkward.”

“A little. Kara kept telling me that she’d take one look at me and there’d be an Alex-shaped hole in the closet door.”

“And?” Iris asked.

“I’m not usually one to kiss and tell, but I got to second base on the first date,” Maggie said, a smug grin on her face.

Iris laughed, and her face lit up as she smiled. “That good?”

“Honestly? I was ready to buy the engagement ring before we’d even been on an official date, but I was nervous too. I’d been listening to Kara talk about her sister for months before I even met her, and once did meet her, she was more than what I’d expected. I mean, Kara told me she was smart and tough and beautiful and caring. I was afraid to meet her, because I was afraid I wouldn’t measure up. Then I met her, we started hanging out, and I found out Kara had actually undersold her. She’s amazing. I would look into her eyes and see forever looking back at me. But there I am, little Maggie Sawyer, who’s never been in a stable relationship in her life, who still cries herself to sleep every Valentine’s day, because that’s the day my dad threw me out of the house, who works too much, and spends her days trying to help aliens who think she’s some kind of groupie. What could I offer someone like Alex Danvers?”

“What happened?” Iris asked.

“Kara told us about the time travel thing, and it kind of clicked why she kept pushing me towards Alex, so I decided to take a chance. I took her out, and I let her decide if it was going to be a date or not. We started talking, and I told her how nervous I’d been about meeting her, and poor Alex just turns into a big gay mess, stammering about how much she likes me. There was a little bit of alcohol
involved, but there was also about forty-five minutes of making out like the world was going to end the next day.”

“Wow,” Iris said.

“Oh, no. Wow does not even begin to cover what kissing Alex Danvers feels like,” Maggie said. “It feels like coming home after you’ve been away so long you’ve forgotten what home even feels like. It’s like being able to breathe after drowning. And I swear to God, every love song I ever made fun of suddenly makes sense.”

“And you two have only been together for five days?” Iris said.

“I know,” Maggie said. “Kara’s right, it’s completely disgusting how hard I’ve fallen for Alex.”

“Well, it looks good on you,” Iris said.

“So, what about you and Barry?” Maggie asked.

“Long story,” Iris said. “Barry’s dad went to jail for killing his Mom. Which he didn’t. Barry came to live with us, and I don’t know. It’s confusing. I mean, we were close growing up, but not brother/sister close, if that makes sense.”

Maggie nodded. “Yeah. I get that.”

“I mean, I knew how I felt, but I was never sure about him, you know. And then, Barry was in a coma, and Eddie asked me out. And then Barry was out of the coma, but I was with Eddie, and Dad and Barry were lying to me and Barry was being weird, and Barry finally told me how he felt, right around the time Eddie asked me to marry him. And then, Eddie died, which was terrible, and still is terrible, and I don’t know.”

“Well,” Maggie said, “here’s the thing. That other timeline. It doesn’t exist anymore. Kara has blown it completely out of the water. And like Kara said to me when I asked her about me and Alex. What worked for us in that world might not work in this one, and this is the world you have to live in. But by morning, this Zoom guy will be taken care of, so you guys got time to figure things out. Figure out if you even want to be with Barry. Just remember, just because it went that way once doesn’t mean you don’t have a choice.”

Iris smiled as she looked at Maggie. “Thank you,” she said. “I think I needed to hear that.”

“It’s a nice night,” Kara said as she sat down on the steps next to Joe. She’d traded her war suit for a pair of jeans and a CatCo T-Shirt, figuring a young woman sitting next to a guy on a park bench would be less conspicuous than a Superhero in costume. Joe glanced over at her, clearly a little startled at the sound of her voice. “How are you doing?”

“Honestly, I’ve been better,” he said. “Look, I don’t know you-”

“No, you don’t,” Kara said. “But I know you, Joe. I sang at your daughter’s wedding. You sat with me the night my cousin died, and again the night my sister died. I sat next to you the day Wally got married. That was not a good day for either of us.”

“Do I even want to know?” Joe asked.

Kara smiled as she shook her head. “I couldn’t tell you. You, me and my girlfriend all got black-out drunk that night, and Iris wasn’t cutting any of us any slack the next morning.”
“A lot of weddings where you come from,” Joe said.

“Yeah, war will do that to people. All that death, all that destruction. Makes people cling to what they have harder. I know it did for me. I was thirteen years old when I watched my world die. Everything I knew, just wiped from the stars. The only comfort I had when I climbed into that pod was knowing that I was going to have my cousin Kal with me.”

“He was just a baby, barely a month old. I was going to protect him. I was going to raise him. I was going to teach him to speak /kryptahniulo/, know our culture, honor Father Rao. And then, suddenly, he was standing over me, a grown man of twenty-four. He didn’t need me. Didn’t want me. Fobbed me off on the Danvers less than a week after I showed up.”

“I don’t know exactly how you’re feeling, Joe,” Kara said. “But I’ve been on all sides of it. Suddenly finding out you’re responsible for a child. Having the chance to raise a child snatched away from you. Suddenly finding yourself with a parent you didn’t have yesterday. There’s no way around the fact that it is *hard*, whatever side of it you end up on.”

“But Wally, Wally is a good kid, and he will grow up to be an amazing man. He loved you, he loved Iris, he loved Barry. And he was a hero, every day I knew him. He saved so many lives, but you, you were always proudest of him when you got to watch him just sit and be Wally. Not Kid Flash, not General West, just Wally. And I could always see why. He was like me. All he ever wanted to do in life was make a difference, be someone worthwhile, be someone his parents could be proud of. That’s the Wally West I knew, and the Joe West I knew was proud, so very, very proud, to call Wally West his son.”

“But the thing is Joe, all of that, the fighting, the war, the death and destruction. I’m trying to make sure it doesn’t happen again. I’ve made a pretty good start of it. That world, that horrible world I come from, it isn’t your world. I’m doing everything I can to make sure it’s never your world.”

“That doesn’t mean I’m not going to make mistakes like I did today. And once I make those mistakes, I can’t go back and unmake them. I can’t go back and change how you found out about your son. What I can do is give you this,” Kara said, holding out a silver hard case for Joe.

“What is it?” Joe asked.

“Something that will make things easier, and harder,” Kara said. “Barry told me Francine is dying of MacGregor’s Syndrome.”

“Yeah,” Joe said.

“This is a cure,” Kara said.

Joe reached out and took the case, slightly stunned. “This will save her?” he asked, looking up at Kara.

She nodded. “Yeah,” Kara said. “You’ll need to bring her here to administer it, but yeah. That will repair the damage to her lungs and re-write the defective gene sequences which cause the disease.”

“Just like that?” Joe asked.

“Would it be easier if I told you why, or if I just said ‘yes’?” Kara asked.

“I’m not sure,” Joe answered.

“It’s not a magic bullet, Joe,” Kara said. “It doesn’t make up for what I did. It doesn’t magically fix
whatever is between you and Francine. It doesn’t make up for the fact that you’ve missed the first eighteen years of Wally’s life. But Wally doesn’t have to lose his mother, and neither does Iris. At least, not today. Maybe that’s enough to make things better.”

“Thank you,” Joe said.

“I’ve got to go,” Kara said, nodding back towards the Star Labs building. “I have to finish here and get back home. Take some time to process if you need it but talk to Iris. This is going to be as hard for her as it is for you, and one thing I know about Iris is, she always needs her Dad.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

kryptahniuo

_Kryptonian (Language)_
“I’m back,” Barry called from the Cortex, making Kara look up from the cerebral regulator she was explaining to Cisco. When she saw who was with him, she felt a wave of fury roll over her like the heat from an exploding bomb. She stood up and marched out into the Cortex, doing her best to rein in her temper, and having no luck as she walked past Felicity and stopped, standing toe-to-toe with Oliver Queen.

“Um,” Barry said, “Kara, is everything okay?”

“No,” she said, “but it will be.” She drew back and punched Oliver square in the nose, making him stagger back a few steps as the blood ran down his face.

“/!rraop :zhaoahm kahkhym zhaf !zhikuvaium !ton le:zhaolodh tiv rraozhehd khethgr !ton leshisirao rraop w dovrrosh vav/” Kara said.

Barry looked at her for a moment, then looked at Oliver, then back to Kara.

“Kara,” Alex asked from somewhere behind her, “Is everything okay?”

Kara turned and looked at Barry. “I said Laurel and Felicity, Barry.”

“I know, but-”

“No,” Kara said, holding up her hand. “I know he’s your friend, but I can’t be in the same room as him right now.”

She didn’t wait for a reply. She just marched out of the Cortex.

“You know, I’m impressed. He usually has to speak before he gets that reaction out of someone,” Felicity said as she watched Caitlin setting Oliver’s nose.

Alex almost managed not to laugh, but when she glanced over at Maggie, they both lost it.

“It’s not funny,” Caitlin said as she pressed the ice pack to Oliver’s freshly set nose.

“It’s a little funny,” Cisco said.
“I don’t suppose anyone can tell me why the pretty blonde alien from another universe who I’ve never met before hates me?” Oliver asked.

“I don’t know,” Alex said. “I mean, I knew she didn’t like you, but I don’t think I’ve ever seen her that mad at someone.”

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “Kara’s normally so bright and sunny it causes tooth decay. About the only one she doesn’t like are Super Villains and people who say bad things about Cat Grant.”

“She knows Cat Grant?” Oliver asked.

“Yeah,” Maggie said.

“Well, now I know where she learned that right hook,” Oliver said. “Broke my nose in the same place, too.”

“Cat Grant broke your nose?” Alex, Maggie and Felicity all asked at the same time.

Oliver shrank down a little. “Let’s just say I probably deserved it and remember we all do stupid things when we’re seventeen, okay?”

Felicity sighed. “Do you know how depressing it is to be reminded that your boyfriend used to be a man whore?”

Maggie laughed as she shook her head. “I have *never* had that problem.”

“I wasn’t a man whore,” Oliver said.

“Oliver, I love you, but you took your girlfriend’s sister for a romantic getaway on your dad’s yacht. That’s kind of textbook man whore behavior,” Felicity said.

“She’s got a point,” Cisco said.

“And you’re still dating him after that?” Maggie asked, looking at Felicity.

Felicity shrugged. “Well, he did kind of spend five years stranded on an island in the North China Sea and has spent the last three years fighting criminals and supervillains. Besides, Laurel and Sara both forgave him,” she said.

“Sara?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Felicity said. “Why?”

Alex closed her eyes and took a deep breath, hoping she was wrong. “Sara Lance?” she asked.

“Yes,” Oliver said. “Is that important?”

Alex and Maggie looked at each other, and that was all the communication they needed.

“Hey,” Barry said.

“Hey, Barry,” Kara said as she reached up and wiped the tears off her face and tried to blink away the pounding ache behind her eyes. She was sitting on one of the upper spires of the Star Labs building, staring out at the city and enjoying the feeling of cold November air coming in off the coast.
“You okay?” he asked.

“I have a headache,” Kara said. “Which is unusual for me, but I did just get shot in the head with a missile, so I’m making allowances.”

“Not what I meant,” Barry said.

“I know,” Kara said in a resigned tone. “I knew I’d have to see him eventually. I just wasn’t ready for it.”

Barry stepped up beside her and sat down, dangling his legs over the side of the spire. “Wanna talk about it?”

Kara looked over at him and gave him a weak smile. “It’s not really his fault,” Kara said. “The truth is, we used to be friends. You, me, Oliver. The three of us were tight. He did what he had to do. But, I could never forgive him for it.”

“What did he do?” Barry asked.

“You sure you want to know?” Kara asked.

“No, but I kinda think I have too,” Barry said.

“It was bad. We were trying to hold Earth Nineteen, and it was working, for the most part. Darkseid had taken Earth Fourteen and Sixteen, but he hadn’t had time to breed more soldiers, so we’d forted up inside the cities. I was holding down National City, and you were holding down Central and Keystone, while Cisco evacuated people to New Genesis.”

“What’s New Genesis?” Barry asked.

“It’s sort of the opposite of Apokolips,” Kara said. “If Apokolips is hell, New Genesis is more like, Mount Olympus, I guess.”

Kara took a deep breath. “The way Cisco described it, Darkseid just boomtubed in right on top of you and snatched you off your feet like it was nothing, and then boomtubed out again.”

“Boomtubed?” Barry asked, a puzzled look on his face.

“A Boomtube sort of tunnels through space-time. Like wormholes, sort of,” Kara said. “They call them boomtubes because of the noise they make when they open.”

“Like a breach?” Barry said.

“Sort of,” Kara said. “The physics is different, but it’s a way to move between dimensions.”

“Okay,” Barry said.

“We didn’t know what happened to you. We couldn’t look for you. The only place we could think he would take you would be Apokolips, which was too well guarded by that point. He’d taken some tech that Cisco invented and upgraded it to force all breaches to Apokolips to open in his dungeons, and we didn’t have anyone left who could create a booktube without a Mother Box.”

“Mother Box?” Barry asked.

“Living Alien Supercomputer,” Kara said. “You showed up again a month later on Earth 23, but you were different. Darkseid had fused you with one of his servants. A speedster called the Black Racer.
Your powers fed off each other. The Racer killed all of our speedsters. That’s when Cisco built the speed force calcifier. We used it to make a drug, called Velocity Twelve that would turn anyone into a speedster for about an hour per dose.

“We set a trap. One of the medics from New Genesis thought she could separate you from the Black Racer with her Mother Box. She was wrong. He tore through her, and just started killing. He slaughtered Oliver’s entire team. They’d all taken the Velocity Twelve, and he tore them to shreds, right in front of Oliver. Then, he went for Thea, and Oliver lost it. Oliver just put him down. One shot, two arrows. I’ll never forget that sound.”

“It was the right decision. It was the only decision. We should have done it sooner. I know that. But you can’t kill the Black Racer. It’s not even a god. It’s a personification of death, and the person’s just a host. So, when Oliver killed him, the Racer left, and it was you, laying there.”

“I know it had to be done, but I sang at your wedding, Barry. You were one of the best friends I ever had. You helped put me back together when I was alone and broken. You and Joe kept me alive after my sister died. And seeing you laying there, with one of Oliver’s arrows in each eye... I couldn’t forgive him. I couldn’t. I saw what that fight cost him. His whole world. Felicity, Diggle, you. Thea was all he had left, and I still couldn’t forgive him.”

“I don’t know. Maybe if he’d lived, if I’d had more time, I would have gotten over it, but he died two days later, and with both of you gone, I just... I didn’t have time to deal with it. By that point, Kal was gone, Bruce was gone, Diana was gone, Arthur was gone, Ted was gone. Sara and I were the only leaders left.”

She looked over at Barry, not sure what to expect, but all she saw was compassion.

“Can I hug you?” she asked.

“Yeah,” he said, reaching for her.

“I think we can do that.”

She was careful not to squeeze too tight.

When Kara walked back into the Cortex a half an hour later, it took a lot of effort not to blush in embarrassment as everyone watched, but for the second time that night, she walked over to Oliver, who was sporting two black eyes and a broken nose. She felt slightly guilty that she’d apparently hit him harder than she thought but couldn’t quite keep the smile off her face when he stepped back and raised his hands in front of himself.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I owe you an apology.”

“Uh, okay,” Oliver said. “Apology accepted. I... Um... I can’t say with any degree of certainty that I didn’t deserve that. It’s probably even odds that I did, but can I at least know why you were mad at me?”

Kara gave a small head tilt. “the past tense there might be pushing it a bit,” Kara said. “But you didn’t deserve it. Um, Barry told you about me sort of being from the future?”

“Yeah,” Oliver said. “Still not used to that part.”

“Oliver, one of you best friends is a speedster, and one of your ex-girlfriends is going to become a professional time traveler in a few months. You might want to get on board with the time travel crazy train now and beat the rush.”
“Noted,” Oliver said, looking slightly green around the gills.

“Look, in the timeline I lived through, you and I were friends. Admittedly, most of that friendship consisted of you being annoyed and reminding me and Barry that you don’t have super speed, and us mocking you mercilessly behind your back, but we were friends. There was a fight five years from now. It was bad. We were losing. You made a decision. The right decision. I know it was the right decision. I know it saved lives. I know, in your place, I would have done exactly the same thing. Someone I cared about died. Someone we both cared about. I had to clean up the body, and I haven’t been able to let go of it,” Kara said. “You died before I could forgive you, and it was easier to just hate you than to have to grieve you too. That’s on me. So… I’m sorry. I’m sorry I never dealt with it.” Kara lowered her eyes, feeling her cheeks heat slightly at the thought of what came next. “I’m sorry I called you a ‘limp-dicked fucker’, I’m sorry I called you a ‘fucking idiot’, I’m sorry I said, ‘fuck your ancestors to ten generations’, and-”

“You know,” Oliver said, “I think we can let the rest of it go.”

Kara looked up, noticing that Alex, Maggie, Cisco and Iris were all covering their mouths, but their eyes were filled with mirth.

“You know, I’m just gonna go,” Oliver looked around frantically, and finally pointed towards the MedLab, “get another ice pack for my nose.”

Kara nodded. “Okay.” She looked over at Barry as Oliver walked away. “Where is Laurel?”

“She’s with Sara,” Felicity said. “You know who that is, right?”

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“I kind of figured,” Felicity said. “Your friends kind of had a reaction when her name came up.”

Kara looked over at Alex and Maggie, then glanced back at Oliver, then back to Alex and Maggie. “Is that why he has two black eyes to match the broken nose?”

“We heard about the yacht,” Maggie said.

Kara sighed. “Well, at least neither of you shot him,” she said, then turned back to Felicity. “Come here.” Kara turned around and pulled two of the cases off the hover cart and cared them over to one of the work tables, set them down.

Felicity stepped up beside her as everyone else gathered around. “Oh, presents.”

“Yes,” Kara said. “I wanted to give these to Laurel, but since she’s not here, you get to be the messenger.” Kara turned to face Felicity. “Look at me,” she said.

Felicity turned to face her.

Kara stood in front of Felicity in a pair of tennis shoes, jeans, and a CatCo t-shirt. She raised her right arm, showing off an iridescent blue cuff, embossed with the House of El coat of arms. She touched the cuff, and the iridescent blue surface shimmered for a moment, then spread out, quickly enveloping her from the neck down before solidifying as a cape flowed down her back, leaving her standing in her full war suit.

“WOW!” Felicity said.

“That is SICK!” Cisco said.
“What I am wearing is a Kryptonian War Suit. The pattern is slightly modified from standard. It uses tech similar to the ring that the Reverse Flash used to store his costume in, but it doesn’t require an external compression system, because Kryptonian Technology was about fifteen thousand years more advanced than Earth’s,” Kara said. She turned and opened the first case. There was a black cuff inside, a device that looked like the sonic collar Cisco had made for Laurel earlier in the year, a pair of tonfas, and a device that looked like an iPad. “These are for Laurel,” Kara said. “I’ve modified the standard design to look like Laurel’s normal costume and incorporated Nth Metal, which means it will protect against magical as well as physical attacks. The iPad contains an instruction manual for the new sonic device as well an interface that allows her to adjust the appearance of the war suit. I’ve preprogrammed about five hundred costume variations, and she can mix and match to find something she likes. There’s also an injector which will trigger her metagene using a metagenetic profile lifted from her Earth two counterpart, which will turn her sonic cry into an innate power.”

Kara closed the first case and opened the second one. This one had a white cuff inside, as well as an assortment of weapons, an iPad like the one in Laurel’s case, and a small crystal phial. “This is for Sara. She needs to drink the contents of the phial before she goes out on any missions. It’s Lotus elixir and will neutralize the effects of the Lazarus pit.” She closed the second case.

“The cart has a case marked for Thea which includes Lotus elixir, plus ones for Diggle and Oliver,” Kara said. She looked over at Cisco. “There are also cases for you, Barry, Caitlin, Harry’s daughter Jesse, Jefferson Jackson, Martin Stein, and Wally, who you guys are going to meet in a few weeks. The ones for Jesse and Wally contain injectors that will trigger their metagenes. Barry, save yourself a lot of trouble, and just tell Wally you’re the Flash.”

Barry looked like he wanted to argue, but he kept his mouth shut.

“There’s also a case for Joe in there. One for Iris and one for the real Jay Garrick. Those aren’t all the ones you’ll need, but they take time to make, and I was only able to lay my hands on the Nth Metal necessary to build them a week ago, so we can add more as we go.”

Kara walked over to the cart again, and pulled the two largest crates from it, carefully ignoring the fact that Oliver had slipped back into the room.

“These are the main event though,” Kara said as she flipped the latches on the crates and opened the lids. Two Kryptonian Servitor Constructs, the same design as Kelex, Konex and Kolex, floated up out of the crates. One was a shiny metallic red, trimmed with gold, and the other was metallic green trimmed with black.

“Holy R2D2,” Cisco said.

“The red guy is Balex, and the green guy Arlex. Both are fitted with transdimensional communications arrays, which will allow them to put in requests for gear that I can supply you guys. Both are also fully capable doctors, so you guys aren’t going to have to get creative with the excuses at the ER anymore.”

“Can I ask a question?” Oliver asked.

“Of course,” Kara said.

“I don’t want to sound ungrateful. All of this is amazing, and we can definitely use the additional resources, but, I can’t help but wonder what all of this is going to cost us.”

“What it’s going to cost?” Kara asked.
“Yes,” Oliver said.

“/_.rao, i dovrрош” Kara said. “Did you recently take a massive blow to the head, or something? Because I remembered you being an arrogant, self-righteous ass sometimes, but I don’t remember you being stupid.”

“Hey!” Felicity shouted.

“Look, I’m not gonna lie, I’m here because I need help, but your problems, are my problems, because at the end of the day, my problems are going to end up being your problems. Because if the Dominators come, like they did before, and I’m too busy dealing with Cadmus or the Guardians of the Universe and the Third Army to help, then every person with the meta gene on this planet will die. Or maybe I can help with the Dominators, but I’m not here when the Monarch invades, and the whole multiverse ends up collapsing in on itself.

“But let’s say that none of that happens. Let’s say Barry defeats Zoom, and you defeat Darhk, and hey, let’s say Darhk doesn’t shove one of your arrows through Laurel’s gut and kill her, and Diggle doesn’t have to shoot his brother, and Barry doesn’t have to watch his father die. That doesn’t change the fact that Darkseid is coming. With or without the anti-life equation, he’s coming. And he won’t stop at Earth 38. His goal is to enslave the entire Multiverse, and I can’t stop him. Not alone. I need the Arrow, I need the Flash, and I need all the other people you can bring to the table with you.”

“I don’t know how many lives are at stake, Oliver, but it is every life in fifty-three universes. If it was literally anything else, I wouldn’t standing here at all.”

“As for today,” Kara said, “I need three things from you guys. The first one is simple. You cannot tell Sara Lance any of this. Not where her war suit came from. Not where the lotus elixir came from. None of it. Second, a few months from now, a man named Rip Hunter is going to show up. He’s going to ask Sara for help. Encourage her to go. She did, in the original timeline. I don’t know how that decision will be affected by the lotus elixir, but Sara Lance has to get on the Waverider. If she doesn’t, bad stuff will happen. An immortal tyrant named Vandal Savage will conquer the world. The Reverse Flash will get ahold of an object that allows him to rewrite reality at will. Things like that.”

“So, no pressure,” Felicity said.

Kara reached up, rubbing her temples, trying to ease the low-grade pounding in her head. “No. No pressure. But if it helps, Sara was the best of us. And she and Thea were the last. They even outlived me, at least by a few hours. Which brings me to the last thing. I need access to Gideon.”

“Barry,” Oliver said. “Can I have a word with you, in private?”

“You’re going to want to use the time vault for that,” Kara said. “It’s the only place between here and Texas I won’t be able to hear every word you’re saying.”

“Oh,” Oliver said. “Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:
!raoop :zhaolahm kahkhyf zhaf
Literal: “You cold-dick fucker”
Semantic: “You limp-dicked fucker”

!zhikuvaium
Literal: “Big Idiot”
Semantic: “You fucking idiot”

!ton le:zhaoledge tiv raozhehd khethgr
Literal: “May your ninth grandfather be fucked”
Semantic: “Fuck your (male) ancestors for ten generations.”

!ton le:hisirao raoop w dorrrosh vav
Literal: “May you be damned into shadows.”
Semantic: “Damn you straight to hell”

,rao, i dorrrosh
Literal: “Rao's Shadow”
Semantic: “Oh, hell”
Conversations and Compromises

Chapter Summary

Barry comes to a decision about whether to trust Kara, and Zoom is dealt with.

Chapter Notes

No, really, do not get used to this...

“No, no, no,” Kara said. “That’s the tachyon accelerator. *This* is the ionization capacitor.”

“And that would make this little guy here... the speed force calcification catalyzer?” Cisco asked.

“Yes,” Kara confirmed.

“And I designed this?” Cisco asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “It’s a long story, and hopefully one you won’t have to live through.”

“I don’t like the sound of that at all,” Cisco said.

Kara glanced over at where Alex was talking to Caitlin about the Kryptonian vaccines.

“You really don’t,” Kara said. “The other side had a speedster who made Zoom look like a snail on valium. After we lost our speedsters, Velocity Twelve was the only way to fight back.”

“I thought you said those suits Alex and Maggie are wearing gave them enhanced speed,” Cisco said.

“Yeah. They’re almost as fast and tough as I am while they’re wearing them, but the suits are strictly limited edition. They run off Dwarf Star Alloy, which is incredibly hard to come by, and X-Kryptonite, which is insanely dangerous to manufacture. Even the smallest mistake and you end up with Red K.”

“And Red K is bad?” Cisco asked.

“Red K suppresses the portions of the brain responsible for inhibitions and stimulates the portions of the brain responsible for baser emotions. Anger, rage, lust, jealousy, greed. Imagine someone as strong as I am, who gives in to every bad thought and impulse that they’ve ever had.”

“That doesn’t sound good,” Cisco said.

“I was exposed, once,” Kara said. “Inside of three days, I’d gotten someone fired from their job, let a criminal go, burned my entire wardrobe, bruised my sort-of boyfriend’s ribs, threw my boss, who I had an enormous crush on, off the fortieth floor of the building, trashed a bar, destroyed a JumboTron, burned a dozen cop cars, broke my sister’s arm, tried to murder her and thirty other
people, and exposed my other boss as an alien, which got him arrested and sentenced to death by vivisection. Wasn’t my best week.”

“You killed your boss?” Cicso asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I caught her before she hit the ground.”

“Great. That’s good. We’ll file Red K under *really* bad,” Cisco said.

Kara glanced up at the clock. “I wish Barry and Oliver would hurry,” she said. “I don’t have a lot of time.”

“I’m sure they won’t be much longer,” Cisco said.

“I hope not,” Kara said.

“Are you sure you should have told them to use the time vault?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I know Oliver and Barry both well enough to know exactly how the conversation will go. Oliver is going to ask Barry if Barry is sure he should trust me. Barry’s going to be, ‘I don’t think we have a choice’. Oliver will be suspicious and point out all the ways this could be a trap or a trick of some sort. Barry will waffle. They’ll go back and forth for a few minutes. Barry will realize they have a data archive from the future and ask Gideon to pull up any information on me. They’ll find a few dozen articles, all written by Iris, about Barry, Oliver and me teaming up. That will be enough to convince Barry I’m on the up and up. Oliver will still be suspicious, but eventually agree that it’s Barry’s decision. Barry will come in and tell us we can access Gideon. Oliver will pout like a two-year-old who didn’t get his way but feel better about it once we capture Zoom.”

“That’s a surprisingly accurate description of how most of Oliver and Barry’s conversations go,” Felicity said, pitching her voice loudly enough to carry across the Cortex. She pointed at her ear. “Also, your eavesdropping device works really well.”

Kara laughed and gave Felicity a thumbs up. “My friend Winn designed it,” she said. “It started as a frequency filter to protect Barry and I from sonic attacks when we were fighting a Banshee.”

“You and Barry fought a Banshee?” Cisco asked. “Like, a real Irish Banshee?”

“First time we met,” Kara said. “I kind of got her fired from her job and the Banshee curse was triggered by her desire for revenge. She came into where I worked and used her scream to knock me out of a window. Barry was testing out the prototype tachyon accelerator for his suit, and accidently breached his way to Earth 38, and caught me when I fell. Which, ironic, right, but you have never seen anything as funny as Barry trying to put out a pair of breasts that are on fire without touching the owner without her permission.”

“Wait, I’m sorry, did you just say, ‘breasts that are on fire’?” Felicity asked.

“Cheap polycotton blend sweaters don’t react well to the friction from running at Mach two, so yeah. Barry caught me, but he was running so fast, the front of my sweeter caught fire. I was a little disoriented at the time, but it was hilarious later.”

“You have a very strange sense of humor,” Felicity said.

“Did they mention the part where my side job is punching aliens in the face?” Kara said.
“Yeah, but… okay, you have a point,” Felicity said.

Kara turned her head at the sound of the time vault opening and used her X-Ray vision to check. “Here they come,” she said, and a moment later, Barry and Oliver came around the corner. Oliver looked really unhappy and Barry looked a little unsure of himself.

“What kind of access to Gideon do you need?” Barry asked.

“We want to do a hardware scan and pull a copy of the AI substrate so we can build a duplicate,” Kara said.

“You don’t have more sophisticated computers of your own?” Cisco asked.

“Not easily available,” Kara said. “Krypton outsourced most of its higher-level AI needs to a race called the Coluans. Considering they’re the ones responsible for the sabotage that resulted in Krypton exploding, I’m thinking we might want to go with a different vendor.”

“Yeah, could see that,” Cisco said.

“How do you want to do this?” Barry asked.

“Balex can do the scan, and then download the results to Kolex along with a copy of the AI substrate while we deal with Zoom.”

“Yeah. How, exactly, do you plan on doing that?” Oliver asked.

“Simple. Barry is going to call Zolomon and tell him that some people from Earth 2 showed and Barry wants him to come in and double check our story. When he shows up, Barry will tag him with a speed siphon. The first time he tries to use his speed, the siphon will suck it right out of him, and transmit it directly into Barry.”

“Wait, what?” Barry asked.

“Zoom is always going to be a threat, as long as he’s connected to the speed force. I have a device that will drain all the speed force energy out of Zoom’s body, but it has to go somewhere. We could bottle it, but if we do that, anybody who got ahold of it could turn themselves into a speedster. I’m not comfortable leaving Zoom’s speed here in an injectable form, because frankly, security in both of your bases suck. I have a place I could lock it up where it would be safe, but I didn’t think either of you would be comfortable giving something like that to someone you hardly know. So, I figured the safest place to store Zoom’s speed was in Barry. I also just like the irony. In the original timeline, Zoom used the speed siphon to steal Barry’s speed and give it to himself, so I say we steal his speed and give it to Barry.”

“That’s actually not a bad plan,” Felicity said.

“Except for the part where we have no idea how forcing another speedster’s speed into Barry will affect him,” Caitlin said.

“Um, yeah, we kind of do,” Kara said. “It’s been done before. It wasn’t Zoom, but Barry and I used this exact plan to defeat a speedster once before.”

“You want to share the details on that one?” Oliver asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Speedster named Godspeed. You guys called him a speed vampire. If you want, all the medical data on it is included in the files we gave Caitlin.”
“I’m sorry, did you say, ‘speed vampire’?” Cisco asked.

“Okay, two of your enemies are a telepathic Gorilla and a half-man-half-shark, and you’re getting hung up on a speed vampire?”

“Well, to be fair, King Shark is fairly new,” Barry said.

“Yeah, better you than me,” Kara said with a shudder. “If Barry doesn’t want to take the speed, we can bottle it, and I can take it back to Earth 38. But I am serious, I am not leaving here if we bottle it. The last thing I need is someone like Damian Darhk, or Vandal Savage, or Malcolm Merlyn running around hopped up on speed force. Other than Barry and Wally, the only people on this Earth I would trust with it are Iris and Thea.”

“My sister?” Oliver said.

“Iris?” Barry, Cisco and Caitlin said.

“Me?” Iris said.

“After… Iris and Thea were our best speedsters for the last few years of the war. They had to use a drug called Velocity Twelve to access the speed force, but they were really good at it,” Kara said. “I would trust either of them with my life. You want my help with Zoom, those are my terms.”

“I’m in,” Barry said. “I’ll take the speed.”

“Barry!” Caitlin said. “You have no idea what it will do to you.”

“Look, if she’s telling the truth, I’m going to need to be faster,” Barry said. “It’s not like Zoom is the first speedster I’ve come across who’s faster than I am, and it sounds like he won’t be the last either.”

“Couldn’t we bottle the speed for now, and let her take it for safe keeping?” Caitlin said. “Just to give me time to review the medical data?”

Barry looked over at Oliver, and Oliver looked like he was sucking on a lemon.

“Oliver doesn’t trust me,” Kara said.

“Nothing personal,” Oliver said.

“I know,” Kara said. “You don’t trust anyone, which will cause you problems down the road by the way.”

“I’ll take my chances.”

“Okay, but I will mock the brooding and pouting mercilessly,” Kara said.

“I don’t pout!” Oliver said.

“Yes, you do,” Barry, Felicity and Kara all said at exactly the same moment.

Oliver gave Barry and Felicity both a betrayed look. “Really?”

“In this case, Oliver’s right,” Kara said. “If I take Zoom’s speed back with me, I’ll use it. Speedsters are really useful, and I know at least three people from my Earth I’d trust with it.”

“Well, at least you’re honest about it,” Oliver said.
“If I want you to trust me, I can’t lie to you.”

“Punching me in the face didn’t help your case,” Oliver said.

“To be fair, do you actually know anyone who hasn’t at least wanted to punch you in the face?” Felicity asked.

“You,” Oliver said.

Felicity reached up and patted Oliver on the shoulder. “It’s cute that you believe that,” she said.

“I hate to be the voice of reason here, but can I ask a practical question?” Cisco said.

“Sure,” Kara said.

“If we take away Zoom’s speed, which I’m all for doing, what are we going to do with him? Without his speed, we can’t prove he’s a meta, and we’ve got no way to prove he’s committed a crime.”

“Zolomon is already a convicted murderer on Earth Two,” Kara said. “Barry and Harry can take him back home. Harry turns him over to the Central City PD, while Barry goes to get Jesse and the real Jay Garrick out of lock up.”

“Then you explain all of this to them?” Barry asked.

“Only if we do it through transdimensional Skype or Jay and Jesse can pop over to Earth 38,” Kara said. “I have to be at work in nine hours, and National City cannot go another day without seeing Supergirl back in the sky. The fact that Cadmus took me off the board for two days is a major win in their books, and a lot of lives are in danger. Honestly, I always planned on popping over here before the end of the year and giving Barry a head’s up about Zoom, as well as tipping Oliver off on how to take down Darhk, but a lot of things are happening before they are supposed to. The changes I’ve made to the timeline are causing ripples that I can’t predict anymore, and that’s only going to get worse. I need a computer that can run at least a tier nine Artificial Intelligence to sort through the historical archives I brought back with me. But even for that, coming here right now with the situation as volatile as it is back on my Earth is a calculated risk.”

“I get it,” Barry said. “And if you can help with Zoom and Darhk, that’s a fair trade. Especially with all the gear you’ve brought us.”

“Okay,” Cisco said, “but what about the breaches all over Central City?”

“You and Harry can figure out how to close them,” Kara said. “You did it the first time. Oh, which reminds me. Whatever you do, don’t send Gorilla Grodd to Gorilla City on Earth 2.” She looked over at Harry. “Not your best idea.”

“Duly noted,” Harry said.

Kara turned to Oliver. “Oli, do you want to keep quibbling about the plan, or should I tell you how to defeat Damian Darhk while we wait on the current big bad to show up?”

“We’ll go with the second thing,” Felicity said. “That, or Oliver will be sleeping on the couch for the foreseeable future.”

Oliver turned to Felicity and gave her a withering look, but Felicity just shrugged.
“What? I have a vibrator. I’m pretty sure I can hold out longer than you.”

Barry stood in the hallway leading to the Cortex waiting. He had his hands in the pockets of his jacket and was fiddling with the speed siphon. After a few more rounds of arguing, they’d finally decided to bottle Zoom’s speed, and let Kara take it back to Earth 38. Barry wasn’t sure anyone was happy with the decision. Caitlin and Cisco were both happy the speed wasn’t being transferred directly to Barry but were unhappy that they wouldn’t be able to keep the bottled speed for study. Oliver was pissed that they were giving something so powerful to someone they’d known for a few hours. Barry had tried to argue for letting him take the speed to Earth 2, but no one would agree to that. Joe and Iris weren’t happy with the idea of Barry traveling to Earth 2, something Barry wasn’t exactly crazy about either. Kara tried to put a good face on it, but she seemed frustrated that he wouldn’t take the speed. Alex and Maggie both seemed indifferent, which wasn’t the same as happy.

Of course, Barry wasn’t happy about anything that had happened that night. He liked Kara, or maybe he wanted to like her, he wasn’t really sure which. He could see them as friends, and especially after their rooftop conversation, he believed that they had been friends in the future Kara came from. Except, if she was telling the truth, and Gideon had provided more than enough evidence that she was, once Barry had the right keywords to search through the AI’s archives with, then it meant Barry’s judgement was questionable. He’d trusted fake Wells for months, only to find out that he was the Reverse Flash, and now, he’d made the same mistake again.

“Penny for your thoughts,” Iris said.

Barry looked up at her, surprised by the sound of her voice. “I’m not sure they’re worth that much,” he said.

“Tell me anyway,” Iris said.

“I’m just thinking that if Kara’s right, then I’ve made another mistake,” he said. “Like the one that got Eddie and Ronnie killed. And it won’t even be the last one.”

“I don’t think you should look at it that way,” Iris said.

“What other way is there to look at it?” Barry said. “I messed up, and if Kara hadn’t shown up, it would have gotten my Dad killed.”

“But she did,” Iris said. “She’s giving us a chance to do better. To learn from our mistakes without having to pay for them.”

“You know, I hadn’t thought of it that way,” Barry said.

Iris slipped her arm through his and leaned against him. “Guess it’s a good thing you have me around then,” she said.

Barry smiled at her and rocked a little towards her, bumping her with his shoulder. “I guess you are good for something,” he said.

“You watch it, Barry Allen,” she said. “I know where you live.”

“Did I say ‘something’?” he asked. “I meant ‘that’s another thing you’re good for’.”

“Is there a list?” Iris asked.

“Yeah,” Barry said. “A big one. Size of a dictionary.”
“Nice save,” Iris said.

“What do you think of her?” Barry asked.

“Honestly?” Iris said.

“Yeah.”

“I think she’s scared,” Iris said. “I think she’s trying not to be, and she’s hiding it behind a lot of bluster and bravado, but I think she’s absolutely terrified.”

“Really?” Barry asked.

“Yeah,” Iris said. “The way she dropped the ‘you two get married’ thing on Caitlin and Cisco, and the way she went on about how much we regretted wasting time… I think the attack spooked her. I think she’s worried that she might fail, and she’s trying to push her friends along, so that if things do go bad, they don’t have any regrets this time.”

“That makes a lot of sense,” Barry said.

“She might be right, too,” Iris said.

“What about?” Barry asked.

“About not wasting time,” Iris said.

“Is, what are you saying?” Barry asked.

“I’m saying you should ask me out,” Iris said. “I mean, it could be a terrible idea, trying to rush things. But if we only have a few more years, I don’t want to waste any of them.”

“I.”

“Here he comes,” Cisco said over comms, cutting Barry off.

“He’s here,” Barry said. “But Friday night?”

Iris smiled and nodded. “Friday night,” she said. “Don’t disappoint me, Barry Allen.” She let go of him and headed back to the Cortex.

Barry watched her go, staring down the hall after her until he heard Zolomon’s footsteps, and turned to face him.

“Hey, Jay,” Barry said.

“Caitlin said you needed to see me?” Zolomon said. “She said it was urgent.”

“It is,” Barry said. “We’ve got some visitors.”

“Visitors?” Zolomon asked.

“They claim they’re from Earth 2,” Barry said. “I thought you could check out their story.”

“Sure,” Zolomon said.

“Thanks,” Barry said. He reached up and patted Zolomon on the shoulder, attaching the speed siphon in the process.
They walked down the hall, coming into the Cortex, and Barry was a little shocked at what he saw. Kara was perched on one of the chairs like it was a throne, legs crossed, as Alex and Maggie stood behind her, weapons drawn.

“Hello, Zoom,” Kara said.

Zolomon stopped dead in his tracks. “Shit!” he said, and to his surprise, Barry heard fear in Zolomon’s voice. Kara just smiled at him, and Zolomon bolted. He turned and ran so fast Barry was barely able to keep up with his movement, but after the third step, Zoom dropped out of super speed, and fell to the floor, and Kara was on him before he could react.

“You lose,” Kara said as she hauled him to his feet.

Zolomon glared at her. “Which one are you?” he sneered.

“Lucky you,” Kara said. “I’m one of the ones that doesn’t have a personal grudge, so I’ll settle for taking your speed and sending you right back to that prison you escaped from.”

Zoom lunged for her, but Kara just shoved him back against the wall and held him there.

“Behave,” Kara said. “I might not hate you, but I’m not one of the nice ones. You resist, and I’ll breach you right into the Monarch’s throne room. I imagine she really wants to talk to you.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” Zolomon said. “That would just attract her attention.”

“Maybe you’re right,” Kara said. “But I do know someone on Earth 46 who would just *love* to have a word with you.”

Zolomon paled, and Kara turned towards Barry. “He’s all yours.”
Supergirl Returns

Chapter Summary

Kara and Supergirl go back to work, and the day starts off with a bang.

Chapter Notes

As of this chapter, we're back to the 'once every Saturday' posting schedule.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 30 Nov 2015

Good morning National City! Hope you enjoyed the fly by. #sorryaboutthesonicboom #supergirlreturns

From Instagram

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 30 Nov 2015

A sneak peak at the new look! #amibutch #butchofsteel #thesuitidntmakeit #thehairidntmakeiteither #supergirllives #supergirlreturns #thatsalotofhashtags @CatGrant #noflannel

From YouTube

Supergirl Zor-El

Monday, November 30rd, 2015

The video opened on a black screen, with the House of El coat of arms slowly fading up, emblazoned in red and gold over a rich blue background, before the entire thing faded out to reveal Kara sitting in what looked like a room in her Fortress. She looked different that she had in her previous videos. Her hair was trimmed close in a classic crew cut, maybe an eighth of an inch on the sides with perhaps a quarter inch on the top. The blue of her normal suit was missing, replaced by the black of her war suit, trimmed in the gold and red of the House of El. Above her left shoulder there was a large oil painting depicting the destruction of Krypton. Above her right shoulder was another painting, also in oils, depicting Zod’s siege of the El Citadel in Kryptonopolis, and directly behind her, an image of the Collection of Kandor with Brainiac’s massive Skull Ship floating above the city.

“Good morning,” Kara said. “I know there’s been a bit of speculation, and in some places, some pretty spirited debate over whether or not I survived the attack on Friday. Some people suggested the posts to my twitter account yesterday were faked to cover the fact that I was dead, or near death. I
imagine there will be similar theories concerning my appearance in the skies above National City this morning. I wanted to assure the people of National City, humans and aliens alike, along with anyone else who was concerned, that aside from one of my suits and my hair, I’m fine.”

“I wanted to take a moment this morning to talk about what happened on Friday afternoon. I’m sure many of you have seen the footage of me being attacked outside the CatCo building and have been wondering who attacked me and why. I want to assure you that I am cooperating fully with the DEO, who are conducting a thorough investigation. Director J’onzz has given me the go ahead to tell you that we believe the attack on me and the attack on Leslie Willis are related. We believe that Hank Henshaw is connected to both.”

“Over the next few days and weeks, you may hear whispers and rumors that the weapon used on me was alien. These are partially true. The weapon was an anti-tank missile enhanced with alien technology.”

“The attack was meant to scare people. It was meant to scare aliens away from taking advantage of the Alien Amnesty Act, and it was meant to scare humans into believing it’s dangerous just to be around us. The rumors and whispers were meant to sow discord and distrust. To make aliens suspicious of each other, and to make humans think we can’t be trusted.”

“Make no mistake. The weapon might have had alien technology in it, but the technology was acquired by humans through murder and coercion, and a human hand fired it. The hand of a coward, who fears those different from them, a coward who would rather attack from the shadows than stand up and be heard, because whoever they are, they know that good and kind people everywhere will reject their fear, prejudice and bigotry. They know that our compassion is greater than our uncertainty, and that hope is stronger than fear.”

“Some of you watching may have noticed the paintings behind me, and wondered why I chose those to feature in this video. They were chosen with care, and I want to tell you why. The first, the one in the center, depicts the Bottling of Kandor. The day a being known as Brainiac kidnapped and imprisoned over a hundred million Kryptonians. The second image, the one above my right shoulder, depicts the siege of the House of El during General Zod’s civil war shortly before the destruction of Krypton. The last, the image above my left shoulder, is my memory of the death of my world.”

“Each of these events was a tragedy, a horrible moment in the history of my world, but from each of these came hope. The Bottling of Kandor was what inspired my uncle Jor-El to begin to study our world, and led to the discovery that Krypton’s end was approaching. The siege of our Citadel made my family realize that they needed to prepare to escape Krypton. The destruction of my world brought me to Earth, where I found friends, a new family, and a bright future among wonderful people.”

“We cannot undo the past, no matter how much we long to do so. But we can look to those events, we can draw inspiration and strength from them, and we can find hope for the future. Each of these horrible things pictured behind me happened. They shaped me, defined edges of my life, but I sit before you today, someone who believes in the possibility of a better future for all people. And I ask you, when you look back at the events of last week, to do the same. Look at them as the horrible moments they were, but do not look at them as a sign that there is no hope. Instead, look at them as a call to action. You don’t have to go out in the streets and fight anti-alien terrorists and extremists. You can make the world better with the smallest of actions. Be kind, be accepting, and act out of love for your fellows, be they human or alien.”

“Hope, help and compassion for all. Those words, like the paintings behind me, were chosen with care. Keep them close, and when given the choice of how to act, or whether to act, remember them,
and you will be every bit the hero I aspire to be.”

“//.rao?, sokao:divilodh w raotiv gi ehrehd zrhig osh/” (Subtitled: “May Rao light your way.”)

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 30 Nov 2015
@CatGrant 2 Medevacs, 3 traffic accidents, a fire and a kitten stuck in a tree, all before breakfast. #supergirlreturns

Cat Grant @CatGrant 30 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl It’s good to have you back, but you still owe me an interview #supergirlreturns

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 30 Nov 2015
@CatGrant I haven’t forgotten. I just want to make sure my schedule is missile-free first. #supergirlreturns

Cat Grant @CatGrant 30 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl That would be appreciated. I hear bomb stains are hard to get out. #supergirlreturns

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 30 Nov 2015
@CatGrant Why don’t you ask @VickiVale ? #imnotjealous #supergirlreturns

Cat Grant @CatGrant 30 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl That’s a good idea #shestotallyjealous #supergirlreturns

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 30 Nov 2015
@CatGrant try not to antagonize @SupergirlZorEl #shesnotmytypeiswear #pleasedonthrowmetothemoon #supergirlreturns

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 30 Nov 2015
Don’t be silly @VickiVale the moon is a ridiculously small target #deepspaceiseasiertohit #supergirlreturns

Cat Grant @CatGrant 30 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Behave. @VickiVale don’t worry. She knows better than to mess with my reporters #toldyoushesjealous #supergirlreturns

Lillian answered her cell phone on the second ring as she pushed the door to her office closed.
“What can I do for you, General Lane?” she asked.

“We may have an issue,” Lane said.

“General Braxton, I assume?” Lillian asked as she headed back towards her chair.

“He’s upset that we left him out of the loop on the Martian,” Lane said.

“Unsurprising,” Lillian said.

“We may have a serious issue if he decides to pull the off-the-books funding,” Lane said.

“He won’t,” Lillian said. “I have assurances from SecDef that he’ll muzzle Braxton at the first sign of trouble.”

“I wouldn’t count on that. Lewis is a politician. He might agree with us, but if the shit looks like it will splash on him, he’ll cut and run,” Lane said.

“Sam, I assure you, Lewis is controlled,” Lillian said. “Of course, this wouldn’t be an issue if you could locate Jeremiah Danvers.”

“We’ve been over this,” Lane said. “It’s been ten years. The man is dead.”

“He’s alive,” Lillian said. “We know someone picked him up off that jungle floor, and we know it wasn’t Cadmus, the Martian, or the DEO.”

“There’s got to be someone else who can help Simon complete work on Project Brain,” Lane said.

“There are only three biochemists in the world who have enough experience with Kryptonian genetics to give us what we need,” Lena said. “And all three of them are named Danvers.”

“I’ll rattle the bushes again,” Lane said. “If Jeremiah Danvers is alive, maybe Supergirl’s debut has made him sloppy. But you need to come up with a backup plan.”

“That’s what Maxwell Lord is for,” Lillian said.

“I still think we should just grab the mother and the sister,” Lane said. “Put guns to both of their heads, and one of them will give us what we need.”

“That’s what I like about you, Sam. Always willing to use violence to achieve your goal,” Lillian said. “Which reminds me. After Supergirl’s little display last night, I’ve decided we can clean out that nest of vermin. I’ve passed word to the Action Network. They’ll answer Supergirl’s little declaration for us.”

“It’s about time,” Lane said.

“I’ve got to run,” Lillian said. “Go, shake trees, and see if you can find Danvers. He’s the easiest solution to all of this.”

Lillian ended the call and checked the clock. Not too much longer until the roaches were scared back into the gutter where they belonged.

Kara glanced up from her computer when she heard the elevator come to a stop and slipped her glasses down just far enough to use her X-Ray vision, smiling widely when she saw who it was. She pushed her glasses back up and used a bit of super speed to check her hair in the mirror while Cat
walked across the bullpen where the Supergirl Social Media Group worked. She tucked the mirror away so Cat wouldn’t see it, and waited for Cat to appear at her door.

“Hey, Cat,” she said as Cat came into view.

Cat smiled at her. “Hello, Kara. You have a moment?”

“Of course,” she said, gesturing to the chairs in front of her. “I mean, you’re the boss, so I always have a moment for you.”

“You do remember you own the company now?” Cat said.

“Practically, yes,” Kara said, “But technically, everything still has to go through regulatory approval.”

“Oh, and I’m so sure that won’t mysteriously get fast tracked,” Cat replied as she sat down.

“Well, I might have a string or two I can pull,” Kara said.

“You always do,” Cat answered, pride clear in her voice. She looked Kara over, and frowned. “Where on Earth did you find that wig?”

Kara frowned. “Is it as bad as I think it is?” she asked.

“That depends,” Cat said. “Do you think a polyester factory vomited on your head?”

Kara rolled her eyes. “You try finding a wig shop that’s open at seven in the morning.”

“Oh, Kara, you clearly have no idea how to use money.”

“What do you mean?”

Cat huffed. “You are probably the richest woman on Earth, a fact you left off your resume, by the way, but you still think like you’re scraping by in the upper mid-five figure range.”

Kara leaned back in her chair. “What am I doing wrong?” she asked.

“Well, we won’t get into where you live,” Cat said, giving an exaggerated shudder. “I might not have been there, but I’ve seen the address, so I can imagine. Artist loft, one room. Fourth-storey walk up,”

“The building does have an elevator,” Kara said.

“How modern,” Cat said. “Does it work?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “I had it installed when I bought the building. I put the Kryptonian Defense Shield in myself.”

“Well, at least you’re being practical,” Cat said. “Though we’re going to need to move you to a better location.”

“We are?” Kara said.

“Kara, you are going to need a building with real security. Swipe badges, lobby guards. Biometrics would be best.”
“You have something in mind,” Kara said.

“Well, it wasn’t what I came up here to discuss, but as it happens, the penthouse and the upper five floors of the north tower of Waverly Towers are available.”

“You own Waverly Towers,” Kara said.

“A happy coincidence” Cat said.

Kara laughed and shook her head. “Cat, I appreciate it, but I’m sure I’ll be fine.”

Cat leaned forward, reaching across the desk to take Kara’s hand in hers. “You almost weren’t,” Cat said, all humor gone from her tone, replaced with the kind of fear and grief Kara had never wanted to hear from Cat again. “The Waverly Towers are two of the tallest buildings in town. If you moved into the penthouse, we could fit both rooftops with video monitoring that could look out over the rooftops of every building with a clear line of sight. We could convert one of the free floors into a security center to monitor the surrounding buildings. It would make sure you had a clear, safe place to go.”

Kara stared at Cat, surprised by the shift in her tone. Cat wasn’t asking, she was pleading, and it broke Kara’s heart. It also wasn’t a bad idea. Kara had actually considered moving into Waverly Towers a few times, just to be close by in case Cat needed her. It was something she could never have afforded in the old timeline. A studio in Waverly Towers cost almost three thousand a month. But in this timeline, she could easily afford it. The main thing stopping her was the idea that someone would see her leaving via her balcony. If she had one of the penthouses though, that would be much less of an issue.

“Let me think about it,” she said, giving Cat’s hand a gentle squeeze. “I knew I’d have to move out of my current apartment eventually, but things are moving faster than I expected, and Waverly Towers might not be the best location for a number of reasons. The people who took a shot at me on Friday know my civilian identity, so anywhere I live is going to need Kryptonian Security Measures. Defense screens, pre-staged matter transit locations. Possibly security drones. I’m not sure about bringing that into a building full of people.”

Cat’s face had gone slightly pale, but she rallied quickly. “Well, I might have a solution,” Cat said. “The Solarium.”

“The residential tower going up in midtown?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Cat said.

“It’s only half built,” Kara said, not adding that she knew the building well. Lena had lived in the penthouse in the other timeline. She’d died there, too.

“A bit more than half,” Cat said. “The structure is in place. It’s just awaiting inspection to start finishing out the interior, but no units have been sold yet.”

“You know a lot about National City real estate,” Kara said.

“You didn’t really think I’d put all my eggs in one basket, did you?” Cat asked, her grin returning. “I’m an investor in about sixty percent of the developments in town, to one degree or other. It’s good money, *and* it helps keep the developers honest, because if they want my money, they have to agree to independent inspections. They also know I will splash them across the evening news in every market in the country if I catch even a whiff of anything shady.”
Kara laughed, because of course Cat would do that. It was just so her. Saving the world and making money in the process. Kara had to stomp on the urge to get up, walk around the desk, and kiss Cat senseless for just being Cat.

“How much of the Solarium do you own?” Kara asked.

“Seventy percent,” Cat said. “Normally I wouldn’t invest that heavily in a residential project, but if Sasha didn’t get the money right away, Morgan Edge was going to buy the property, and the last thing I want is that little worm getting a foothold in National City the way he has in Metropolis and Gotham.”

Kara frowned. She’d heard of Edge, knew he’d had a hand in some of the rebuilding following the Battle of CatCo plaza, but he’d died during the business with the Third Army. “Not a good person?” she asked.

“No,” Cat said. “Sleazy, corrupt, ties to intergang.”

Kara straightened up a bit at that. If Edge was tied to intergang, he was more dangerous than Cat suspected, because intergang was tied to Darkseid. “Well, maybe he and Maxwell Lord can share a cell someday,” Kara said.

“I wouldn’t complain,” Cat said. “But we could buy the other investors out and turn the Solarium into a base of operations for you. Put you in the penthouse and fill the lower floors with whatever you need.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” Kara said. “Have you hired contractors for the interior work yet?”

“We’re still in the bid phase,” Cat said.

“Call your partner,” Kara said. “Have her cancel the bidding and settle on a buyout price. I can have my people finish out the interior.”

“You don’t want to be involve in the negotiations?” Cat asked.

“Cat, I know nothing about real estate,” Kara said, “but I know I can trust you.”

“You have entirely too high an opinion of me,” Cat said.

“Tell me I’m wrong,” Kara said.

“No,” Cat said, “I might not be as good a person as you think I am, but you will always be able to trust me.”

“I knew that the day I met you,” Kara said. “Just like I knew you’re a better person than you think you are.”

Cat dropped her gaze slightly, her cheeks reddening with a blush most people would have missed.

“Now,” Kara said, “tell me what else I’m doing wrong.”

“Well, the first thing we need to do is find you a Personal Concierge,” Cat said. “Not just a regular service, either. Something high-end. I’ll call mine today and have a dozen or so wigs sent over for you to choose from, but we’ll get someone your DEO can clear. There are a few in town that work for Presidents and other Politically Exposed People. We should be able to locate someone we can trust with your identity.”
“Cat—” Kara started.

“Trust me, Kara,” Cat said. “I’m not asking how you became a billionaire overnight, but the world knows you are one now, and if you don’t want the world to know that Kara Danvers and Supergirl are the same person, you’re going to have to let me help you build your image, just as carefully as you’ve built Supergirl’s.”

“Cat, I don’t want to be a socialite. I didn’t raise all that money to buy expensive toys with it. I did it to help people. That’s why I bought the companies I did. So I don’t have to argue with Bruce and Diana over how I go about it. I can take Kryptonian Technology straight to the public. I can share the best parts of my old world with my new one, while you take the microphone I’ve just given you and hold it up for the people whose voices have been ignored. I want to change the world, Cat. Not set myself above it. That’s what happened to Krypton. The Houses set themselves above the Rankless, and our hubris destroyed us.”

“You are amazing, Kara… You know, it just occurred to me that I don’t even know your real name,” Cat said.

“/kahrah,danvrz,zor,ehl/” Kara said, “but Kara Zor-El is close enough. It’s hard to get the inflections right if you don’t speak the—”

“/kahrah,danvrz,zor,ehl/” Cat said with perfect inflection, stopped Kara cold.

“/shisir/” Kara said. “You’re going to make me teach you Kryptonian, aren’t you?”

“What makes you think I haven’t already been learning?” Cat said.

“Have you been?” Kara asked.

“I’m trying,” Cat said. “But I haven’t learned enough to know what you said to me last night, or what you said to your cousin in the waiting room at the hospital.”

Kara felt herself blushing this time, because there was absolutely no way she was going to tell Cat what she’s said to Kal in that waiting room. Not when it would be far too easy for her to do a quick search of the Idiomatic database on the Krypton Remembered website and find out exactly what it meant.

“I—”

“Lady Kara,” Konex said, his voice coming from Kara’s phone without pre-amble, “Darla’s is about to be attacked.”

Kara didn’t take the time to say goodbye. Cat would understand. She used superspeed to scoop up her phone and pocket it and was still activating her war suit as she cleared the railing of the balcony.

Sonic booms echoed through the streets of National City as Kara raced for the filthy alleyway that lead to Darla’s, praying to Rao that she was in time, and that the precautions she’s put in place were enough. She needed the alien’s trust, their faith, if this was going to work, and the fastest way to lose that would be to let them die in job lots.

But even leaving that aside, there was another reason, a far more personal reason, to protect Darla’s. M’gann might be a relative stranger in this timeline, but that didn’t matter to Kara. She loved M’gann, had called her sister for the better part of a decade. M’gann was strong, like any White Martian, but Kara wasn’t sure what toys Cadmus would bring.
She went in fast and hot, slamming down onto the asphalt hard enough to leave cracks.

“Konex, what’s happening,” she asked. The answer arrived in the form of an 83mm rocket fired from a roof top across the street. The sound of the rocket motor’s ignition drew Kara’s attention, and she raised her left arm, making the snapping motion with her wrist that triggered deployment of the shield. The segmented heater shield, based on Winn’s old Guardian design, but forged out of an alloy Kara had invented herself, expanded and locked into place in just a fraction of a second as Kara used her superspeed to put herself in the flight path of the missile.

“Konex, I need backup!” she snapped.

“En route!” came J’onn’s voice over her comm.

The rocket slammed into her shield, but the alloy of titanium, vanadium, depleted promethium, Nth Metal and calcified speed force held firm.

The fireball was still dissipating when Astra, J’onn, Kal and Diana all dropped from the sky behind her.

“Astra, Wonder Woman, protect and evacuate the bar! Kal, J’onn, with me!” Kara snapped. She didn’t wait to see if they would obey her orders. She simply demanded it, then moved, kicking off for the launch point of the rocket as her shield folded away. She used her X-Ray vision to peel away obstructions, and spotted the shooter tossing aside the launcher and turning to run. She didn’t give him the chance. A needle fine beam of heat vision burned through his thigh and he dropped, screaming in pain as Kara landed on the roof next to him. She snatched him up and flung him at Kal as she lifted off again, scanning the area, searching and finding.

Three more shooters, one target. Kara let her rage boil out. Three blasts of heat vision, three screams and the fight was over.

“DEO, I have four wounded hostiles. I need medevac, containment and forensics on site ASAP,” Kara called into her comms as she rose higher, scanning, searching, watching for targets.

“Talk to me Konex,” she said.

“No active hostiles detected,” Konex said.

“J’onn, Kal, recover tangos. I have overwatch,” Kara said.

Kara floated higher still, scanning and wider area for threats, but however closely focused she was on her task, she didn’t miss the disturbed look on Kal’s face.

Four more Kryptonians were in the sky flying overwatch before Kara relaxed enough to drop down into the alleyway outside Darla’s. Alex was running the scene, while Maggie talked to M’gann who didn’t look happy at all. Kara had expected that and headed straight for her when she landed.

“I’m sorry,” she said.

“Sorry?” M’gann screamed. “You’re sorry? That’s the best you can do? You said you wouldn’t bring this here!”

“M’gann,” Kara said, a lump of guilt settling in her stomach, because M’gann was right. She had promised not to bring the war to Darla’s, and it had happened anyway.
“Don’t!” M’gann snapped. “I knew you were trouble the night you snatched that plane out of the sky. But I thought, doesn’t matter. She doesn’t know we’re here. But then you just walk in like you own the damn place, wearing that damned crest like a fucking badge. Well fuck you, Kara Zor-El! This isn’t Krypton, and this isn’t some game.”

“I’m trying to help,” Kara replied, trying not to let her temper get the best of her, though the headache she felt building wasn’t making that easy. She knew this wasn’t her M’gann, that this M’gann would have no way of knowing the things Kara had been through, but the words stung, because she knew the stakes better than anyone.

“Help? Bullshit! You walked in here last night and declared war!”

“Cadmus declared war!” Kara snapped. “Or maybe you missed the part where they tried to frame me for murder and shot me in the head so they would have an excuse to dissect the last few members of my species.”

“You picked a fight with someone strong enough to fight back, and then you brought it to our door!” M’gann shot back. “You don’t know what it’s like down here. You think you can make a few deals with humans and make us safe. But they’ll only respect those deals because you’re strong enough to fight back, and because you can walk around looking like them.”

Kara felt the last bit of control on her temper snap. “Don’t you dare,” she shouted, her voice loud enough to shake windows a block away and make M’gann stagger backwards. She stepped right into M’gann’s personal space. ‘Don’t you dare condemn *me* for passing. I passed because people’s lives depended on it. I passed because the one time I didn’t, someone I loved died, a girl was left without a father, and a woman without a husband.

“Don’t *you*, of all people, condemn *me* for passing. I know who you are, M’gann M’orzz. I know what you are. If someone discovers you, it doesn’t mean a thing. You get to just walk away. A new city, a new face. You’ve been here for centuries, hiding behind a mask, covering another mask, running away from problems and responsibilities when you could have been helping people.

“Tell me, Daughter of Mars, how many people did you watch die of Cholera or Dysentery while you were too busy tending bar to teach people how to boil water and add a little salt to stave off dehydration? How many wounds did you watch go septic when you could have solved the problem with a little alcohol?”

“Enough!” Maggie yelled. “Supergirl, back off.”

“You think I never tried to help?” M’gann said. “Why do you think I’m here, Kryptonian? I tried to help, and everyone died.”

“So you just stop?” Kara asked. “You try to do the right thing once, and it doesn’t work, so you just quit? You’re better than that. Out of your whole race, you’re the one person who stood up and said, ‘enough’. Who said, ‘no more’. Now you’re just going to stand by and watch it happen all over again? You’re going to watch it happen here?”

All at once, the anger seemed to drain out of M’gann, and she asked, “What am I supposed to do?” The pleading tone in her voice was enough to puncture Kara’s own anger, leaving nothing behind but a dull, pounding ache.

“Tell me what you need,” Kara said. “Let me help you help them.”

“We need a refuge,” M’gann said. “A safe place. Somewhere we can go without fear.”
Kara nodded. “Okay,” she said. “Give me time. A few days. I’ll find a place, or I’ll make one.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

,.rao, sokao:divilodh w rraotiv giehrehd zrhig osh
Literal: "Rao, please light your path of wisdom"
Semantic: "May Rao light your way"

,kahrah,danvrz,zor,ehl
"Kara Danvers Zor-El"

.shisir
"Damn"
Kara touched down on the landing pad of the downtown facility, feeling relief at being out of the desert complex. The control room was packed, with agents working hard to bring the facility up to speed. With the DEO now being an official, public law enforcement agency, and without the threat of an attack from thirty angry Kryptonians, J’onn had ordered operational control shifted from the Desert Base to the Downtown facility, while the Desert Base would continue to function primarily as long-term detention until a permanent federal facility for housing alien and metahuman criminals could be brought online.

Kara wasn’t sure whether it was a good sign or not. The Desert facility had its share of bad memories, but the move to the Downtown facility had marked the beginning of the downward spiral in the old timeline. She really hoped things would be different this time.

At that moment though, she also really needed to take a breath and get her head on straight before heading back to CatCo. Maybe rest for a moment until the pounding in her head stopped. The fight at the bar was nothing. Four human hostiles with ordinary munitions wasn’t enough to work up a sweat. It was the confrontation with M’gann that had her off balance. She knew she’d made a mistake losing her temper, and it bugged her.

“Ma’am,” Vasquez called, breaking Kara out of her thoughts. She headed across the command center towards where Vasquez was standing.

“Hey, Susan,” Kara said.

Susan held out a small manila envelope with the House of El crest carefully inscribed on it. “This arrived for you,” she said. “Someone named Alfred dropped it at the front door about ten minutes ago.”

Kara took the envelope. “Alfred Pennyworth?” Kara asked.

“Yes ma’am,” Vasquez said. “He said Jason sends his compliments.”

Kara looked down at the envelope and tore it open. Inside was a Micro-SD card and a folded piece of paper. She unfolded the paper and groaned when she saw the Lord Technologies letterhead. There was a note, hastily scribbled in red sharpie. ‘Max had some interesting things to say’. That was it, and Kara suddenly wanted to go find Jason, though she wasn’t sure if it was to hug him or strangle him. But then, she always had that problem with Jason.

She looked up at Susan. “I need to listen to this,” she said, making a mental note that she needed to add data retrieval from physical media to her bag of tricks.

Susan took the SD card and slipped it into the slot on a tablet. A couple of taps later, and she looked
up. “I sent the contents to your secure DEO inbox,” she said.

Kara held out the letter and the envelope. “Better have all of this logged in as evidence. Just list it as an anonymous tip.”

Susan nodded. “Yes, ma’am.”

“Is something wrong, Susan?” Kara asked.

“I know you’re busy, but I was hoping you could check in on Leslie,” she said. “I mean, Ms. Willis. She’s currently set up in the signal tracking lab, and I—”

“Kara,” Kal called.

Kara turned around to see Kal, Diana, J’onn and Astra marching down the steps that lead up to the landing pad, and she didn’t like the looks on any of their faces. J’onn looked positively murderous. Astra was glaring daggers at Kal, and Diana was giving him the side eye as well, but Kal had that look he used to get on his face before he launched into one of his ‘I’m concerned’ speeches.

“/:zhaolahm ghao/” Kara muttered. “This is not going to be fun.”

“Better you than me,” Susan said.

Kara gave her a brief glare before she headed over to Kal.

“Can we have a word?” Kal asked.

“Sure,” Kara said. “This way.” She led him up the stairs into one of the conference rooms and shut the door behind them.

“You want to tell me what the hell is going on with you?” he said without preamble.

“Oh, hey, cousin, it’s good to see you too. Me? I’m fine. Little upset about the hair, but hey, at least I’m alive. I mean, yeah, I had to spend a day in the regeneration matrix getting my spine rebuilt after someone shot me in the head with a missile that should have killed me, but these things happen.”

“Kara, stop it! You know I care about you,” Kal said.

“You have a funny way or showing it sometimes,” Kara said.

Kal closed his eyes, and she could hear him counting backwards from ten in Kryptonian.

He opened his eyes and looked at her. “You hurt people today,” he said. “You might have crippled them for life.”

“I stopped four killers who were trying to murder a bar half full of innocent people, and you’re worried about breakage?” Kara asked. “You know, if you don’t like the way I had to do it, maybe you should have dealt with Cadmus a decade ago.”

“That’s not fair!” Kal said.

“Yeah. You know what else isn’t fair? Alex having to grow up without a father isn’t fair. People getting strapped down to tables and cut into pieces by men like Sam Lane and Simon Tycho isn’t fair. Getting framed for murder isn’t fair. The fact that I have to find a new place to live, because if I stay where I am, Cadmus might murder everyone in the building just to get at me isn’t fair. The fact that I have to do this alone because you’re not willing to step up isn’t fair. You coming into my city
and telling me how to fight my battles when you’ve been too busy ignoring my existence for the past
twelve years isn’t fair. The fact that I’ve been at this eight weeks and done more to help the aliens on
this world than you have in fourteen years isn’t fair. And yet, here we are.”

Kal stared at her for a moment, and Kara wasn’t sure what to make of it. She normally knew his
moods pretty well, but between the exhaustion, the anger, and the pounding headache, she couldn’t
read him at all.

“You are scaring people, Kara,” he said finally.

“Good,” Kara said. “Cadmus should be scared of me.”

“It’s not just Cadmus!” Kal said. “You’re scaring me.” He took a step towards her. “I wanted you to
choose this, but I think I made a mistake. You go out there, and it’s like you’re stepping into a war
zone. You cut people down today. You didn’t even think about disabling their weapons. You just
crippled them.”

Kara sighed and shook her head. “Anything else bothering you? I want to get it all out now, so we
don’t keep having this argument.”

“Yeah,” Kal said. “A lot of things. Where did all the money come from? Why do you have a
painting of a sociopath in your-”

“She’s not,” Kara said. “Harley’s not sociopathic. And the correct term is Antisocial Personality
Disorder. But Harley’s problem is Dependent Personality Disorder with a comorbidity of Histrionic
Personality Disorder and cyclical depression, along with a history of childhood physical, emotional
and sexual abuse. The condition is exacerbated by the modifications Pamela Isley has made to her
physiology, because her body filters out any attempts to medicate with mood stabilizers.”

“How do you know that?” Kal asked.

“I know a lot of things, Kal. Things I shouldn’t know. Things I don’t want to know. Things I wish
weren’t true but are. Things I wish were true but aren’t and never will be.”

“What are you talking about?” he asked.

Kara stared at him for a moment, on the verge of telling him he wouldn’t understand, but she realized
that was her fault. He wouldn’t understand because he didn’t have all the facts. Which was also her
fault. She’d had good reasons for not sharing her future knowledge with him up until now. If the
Justice League had found out Astra had even a part of the Anti-Life equation, they would have lost
their collective minds, and she never would have been able to keep them away from the situation.
But with Myriad destroyed and Astra’s legal status in the clear, those reasons were gone. And she’d
shared everything with Barry and Oliver. Kal was her cousin, and whatever resentment she might be
holding after all this time, the fact was, she needed him in the fight, and it was clear he wasn’t going
to get on-board unless she read him in. And if she was going to read him in, that meant reading
Bruce and Diana in too. In fact, she might as well read in the entire Bat Clan, along with Zatanna,
Astra and Eliza, too.

How big did she make the circle of trust? Could she read in M’gann? Would it help her to know that
she’d been a hero, or just crush her down, knowing that she’d lost everything, again and again?
Could she read in Lena? What about Cat?

She felt a pang, a longing for Sara in that moment. After Oliver died, she and Sara had shared the
leadership load between them, but Kara tended to command at the tactical level, while Sara dictated
strategy. Their roles weren’t clearly delineated, but it played to both their strengths. Sara was much better at stepping back and taking in the big picture, and adapting on the fly, while Kara was good with the moment-to-moment, but tended to hesitate when she had too long to consider things.

“There are things I haven’t told you,” Kara said. “Things I’m not sure I can tell you, because they might reach the wrong ears.”

“Kara, you know you can trust me,” Kal said.

“You’re not the issue,” Kara said. “There are people in your circle of trust who shouldn’t be.”

“Who?”

Before Kara could answer, her phone started ringing. She reached down and pulled it out, frowning at seeing Kaldur’ahm’s name there.

“Hey, Kaldur’ahm,” she said.

“I’m sorry to disturb you, but there’s a woman here who insists on speaking with you, and Ms. Grant thinks it might be important.”

Kara frowned in confusion. “Who is it?”

“Lena Luthor,” Kaldur’ahm said.

“I’m on my way,” Kara said. “Show her to the conference room on the forty-second floor.”

“There’s a Sam Arias with her,” Kaldur’ahm said.

“Show them both to the conference room. Tell them I’ll be there in less than half an hour.” She lowered her phone and disconnected the call. “I’ve got to go,” she said.

“To meet with Lena Luthor?” Kal asked.

“Yes.”

“I thought you’d agreed to wait until after the new year,” Kal said.

Kara shrugged. “I didn’t expect her to show up at my office,” she replied. “Besides, circumstances have changed. I don’t need Bruce and Diana’s resources anymore. And Kal, I don’t need your approval to do what I know is right.”

She turned and started to walk out of the conference room, but she stopped and turned back to him. “We’ll talk. Soon, I promise. Just… Don’t trust the Lanterns. Their loyalties are… Just don’t trust them.”

She turned and headed out into the command center, eyes already searching for Astra.

Ten minutes later, she and Astra touched down on the balcony outside her office. Kara gave a quick burst of X-Ray vision to the curtains and was surprised to find Cat sitting on one of her couches. She touched her bracer, causing her war suit to retract back into it as Astra did the same. She did a quick once-over of their appearance. She was wearing a navy blue single-breasted power suit over a red silk camisole, while Astra was in a black suit over an oxford with the top button left open. It was a good choice for both of them. She just wished she’d had a chance to get a better wig. She opened the door and stepped into her office.
Cat looked up at the noise. “Welcome back,” she said. “A shoot out with anti-alien terrorists isn’t the first day back I was hoping for.”

Kara hesitated, sure she heard a touch of fear in Cat’s voice. “I was prepared this time,” Kara said. “I also had backup.” She turned and gestured to Astra. “I believe you remember my aunt?”

Cat stopped up and approached them, holding out her hand. “A hard woman to forget,” she said as she and Astra shook hands. “/i:/bezgham w ,astruh,in,zhe, ahmpahr/” she added in perfectly accented Kryptonian.

Kara felt a little flutter in her stomach. Something about the sound of Kryptonian coming out of Cat’s mouth was just unreasonably sexy.

“Full of surprises,” Kara said with a small shake of her head. “Aunt Astra, this is Cat Grant. She’s my boss.”

“Was,” Cat said. “Your niece keeps forgetting that she owns CatCo now.”

“She’s supplanted you?” Astra asked.

“I wouldn’t put it that way,” Kara said. “Cat owned a percentage of the company but ran the day-to-day operations. Several of the directors wanted to remove her from that position, and I simply provided the financial means to remove them, so Cat can run things without interference.”

“She’s being modest,” Cat said. “It’s an unfortunate habit I hope to break her of.”

Kara laughed. “You can try,” she said.

“I will,” Cat said. “I think we’ll start by hiring you an assistant, so I don’t have to keep lending you mine.”

“Oh,” Kara said. “You know, I hadn’t even thought about that.”

“I suspected as much,” Cat said. She turned around and picked up a large box. “Just like I suspected you forgot about our conversation about the personal concierge.” Cat turned back around and opened the box, revealing a gorgeous red wig, styled in an up do Kara might have worn to work on any given day.

“Thank you,” Kara said, reaching in and carefully lifting the wig out of the box. She put it on quickly, only for Cat to step forward and adjust it slightly.

“There,” she said. “That should keep the sudden change in hair styles from prying eyes.”

“I hope so,” Kara said. “Do you have a few minutes, Cat? I think I could probably use your help in the meeting we’re about to go into.”

“I suspected you might, so I had Jacob clear my schedule this afternoon. I will admit to some concern. You meeting with a Luthor doesn’t seem like the safest thing.”

Kara felt Astra straighten and shift her gaze and knew her aunt was searching for threats. “It’s okay, both of you. Lena and I haven’t met yet, but I know for a fact that the only thing she has in common with her brother is that they are both geniuses. Lena’s more of the ‘rescue puppies and build cancer wings for hospitals’ type than the ‘murder all Kryptonians because I’m super crazy and paranoid’ type.”
“You’re sure?” Cat said.

“Of most things, no. Of Lena Luthor, yes,” Kara said. Cat didn’t look happy with that answer, and with a quick glance, Kara confirmed that Astra looked decidedly unhappy with it, and that, more than anything, made up Kara’s mind for her. “Please, I need both of you to trust me. I can’t explain it right now, there simply isn’t time, but I promise, soon, I will explain to both of you exactly why I would trust Lena Luthor with my life.”

Both Cat and Astra wore shocked expressions at the vehemence of her statement, but she really didn’t have time to let them process it.

“Let’s go,” she said.

Kara led the three of them out of the office and cross the bullpen to the conference room. To her relief, she saw the protective detail she’d asked the president to assign to Lena. Two US Marshals at the conference room door, one near the elevator, and one near the stairwell. She nodded to them politely as she opened the door, only to be a little shocked when she found Siobhan Smythe in the room with Lena and another woman. Siobhan was obviously there delivering food, and whoever had arranged it was obviously familiar with Kryptonian appetites, because the spread was easily enough for a dozen or so people. On the other hand, the menu was all wrong for Lena.

“Ms. Smythe, thank you, but you’ll find that Ms. Luthor is an ovo-lacto vegetarian,” Kara said. “Perhaps you could run down to Noonans and fetch her one of the Veggie Bacon BLT wraps, with honey mustard on the side.”

Siobhan looked up at her and Kara could see the surprise in her eyes, but she nodded. “Of course, Ms. Danvers. I’m sorry, Ms. Luthor. I didn’t know.”

“It’s quite alright,” Lena said. “I confess I’m surprised Ms. Danvers knew.”

Kara just smiled. “Now, Ms. Smythe,” Kara said in a tone that made it clear she wanted Siobhan gone. She watched as Siobhan left, and made a mental note to deal with the that situation as soon as possible.

“I apologize Ms. Luthor,” Kara said as she took a seat at the head of the conference table, which left Lena seated to her right, and the mystery woman, Sam, seated to Lena’s right. Cat took the seat immediately to Kara’s left, and Astra sat on Cat’s other side.

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“As I said, it’s alright, Ms. Danvers,” Lena replied.

“Kara, please,” Kara said. “I know you and Ms. Grant run in the same circles, but I’m not sure if the two of you have ever actually met.”

“I’m afraid not,” Lena said. “I know Lois Lane and Vicki Vale, of course, but by the time I was old enough to start giving interviews, Ms. Grant had moved into more of an executive role.”

“Yes,” Kara said. “Lois speaks highly of you.”

“You know Lois?” Lena asked.

“Through my cousin,” Kara said. She watched as Lena’s eyes widened a bit at her comment, and felt Cat and Astra both stiffen slightly, but she turned her attention to the woman at Lena’s side.
“I’m afraid I know you only by name, Ms. Arias. Well, by name, and by the fact that Lillian Luthor vehemently dislikes you, which is certainly a point in your favor. The fact that you keep company with Lena is definitely another recommendation.”

Sam and Lena looked at each other with uncertainty before turning back to face Kara again.

“You certainly speak your mind, don’t you?” Lena said.

“I find it saves time,” Kara said. “Normally, I would take more time for pleasantries, Ms. Luthor, but I’m afraid I’ve got fifteen different problems pulling at my attention, and every one of them is absolutely urgent. You turning up here is actually fortunate, because you could help me solve at least six of them.”

“I’m not entirely sure how to take that,” Lena said. “I’m just here to try to convince you to back off of the LuthorCorp purchase.”

“No,” Kara said. “Absolutely not. I do understand that that company means to you, Lena, and I’m sorry. I truly am. But I need LuthorCorp’s resources, the same way I need Lord Technologies and TychoTech. Queen Consolidated I could probably let slide if I didn’t think Malcolm Merlyn was on the verge of snatching it up.”

“Well, you’re not wrong about that,” Lena said, all warmth gone from her tone, “but if you’re unwilling to consider backing off the LuthorCorp acquisition, I’m not sure we have anything to talk about.”

“I was hoping we could talk about the company you’re going to build out of the combination of LuthorCorp, Lord Technologies, TychoTech and Queen Consolidated.”

“I’m sorry,” Lena said. “I don’t think I heard you correctly.”

“Ms. Luthor,” Kara said.

“Call me Lena,” Lena said, cutting Kara off.

Kara nodded. “Thank you,” she said. “May I ask a personal question?”

Lena frowned. “You can ask,” she said grudgingly.

“How much do you trust Ms. Arias?” Kara asked.

“I’m not sure how that’s relevant,” Lena said.

“It’s relevant because I need to know whether or not I should ask Ms. Arias to leave the room before we continue.”

Lena glanced over at Sam, then back to Kara. “You’d take my word?”

“I believe the expression is, ‘Any day of the week and twice on Sundays’,” Kara said.

“She’s one of three people in this world I trust without question,” Lena said. “Before you ask, my brother is not on the list.”

“I had no intention of asking,” Kara said. “My problems with your mother and your brother are just that. My problems. But if you trust Ms. Arias, then that’s enough for me.”

“Kara,” Cat said, obviously having realized what was about to happen.
Kara reached over and covered Cat’s hand with her own, gently lacing their fingers together. “It’s okay,” she said. “Lena’s already figured it out, anyway.”

“You’re Supergirl,” Lena said.

Kara nodded. “I’m Supergirl,” she said.

“Then I really don’t understand,” Lena said. “My brother tried to kill your cousin. My mother thought it was a great idea and hates aliens more than Lex ever did, but you’re sitting here offering me the keys to the kingdom.”

“I’m offering you more than that, Lena,” Kara said. “I’m offering you a research partner; my Aunt Astra who, despite being shuffled off to the Military Guild, was one of the most brilliant scientists Krypton ever produced.” Kara could practically feel the subtle shift in Astra’s posture at those words, but to her Aunt’s credit, she was sure no one without super senses could have picked up on her surprise. “I’m also offering you access to a carefully vetted list of alien technologies, Kryptonian and otherwise. Ones that can be used safely, without putting the environment at risk.

“Lena, I’m trying to change the world. To make it a better place for humans and aliens. Something my cousin should have done years ago with your brother. Instead, they lied to each other, kept secrets, broke trust, and when your brother tried to set fire to the world, my cousin did nothing but snuff out the matches. This world is in danger. The leaders do nothing, while men like Maxwell Lord, Simon Tycho, Malcolm Merlyn, and forgive me, your brother shove money in their own pockets as a reward for throwing gasoline on the fire.

“I have the technology to shift the world over to clean, renewable energy in a matter of two or three years. Imagine every gas and coal-burning power plant on the planet going dark overnight, replaced with power sources no bigger than a softball. Imagine electric cars that ran for centuries on a power cell the size of a triple A battery. Drones that will scour the oceans, collecting trash. Waste-processing plants that recycle one hundred percent of what comes in. Self-tending farms that produce massive crops in the middle of the desert. No more famine, no more disease, no more want.

“I’m not talking about the hope of a better future, I can give them that myself. That’s what I do every time I put on that cape. I’m talking about creating the *reality* of it. And the symbolism of it doesn’t hurt, either. A Super and a Luthor, coming together to build the future, using alien technology and human ingenuity.” Kara gave Cat’s hand a small squeeze. “That’s got to be worth a few headlines.”

The room went silent as Kara sat there, with Lena just staring at her.

“You’re absolutely insane, aren’t you?” Lena asked.

“My girlfriend used those exact words on more than one occasion,” Kara said, “but you’re going to do it, aren’t you?”

“You are god-damned right I am,” Lena said.

“Lena, are you sure?” Sam asked.

Lena turned and looked at Sam. “Yes,” she said. “Absolutely, yes.”

“Okay,” Sam said, then she looked over at Kara. “Please don’t hurt my friend.”

“I promise you, I will protect her with my life,” Kara said.

“That’s a little dramatic,” Cat said.
“She gets it from her mother,” Astra said fondly.

Kara turned and glared at Astra. “If you break out the baby pictures, I swear I will get J’onn to revoke your parole.”

Astra laughed, and Kara turned back to Lena.

“Now, everything I know about running a multibillion dollar business essentially comes down to ‘ask Cat Grant, then do whatever she says’. Which, admittedly, is a pretty successful model. But Cat and I know media, not tech, so my thought is, CatCo absorbs Galaxy Communications and the media assets of LexTel, while continuing to exist as a wholly owned subsidiary of Danvers International. We create a new company, say, LCorp, as another wholly owned subsidiary of Danvers International. Cat will remain as CEO of CatCo and will also take on the role of Chairman of the Board. You will take the role of CEO and Chairman of LCorp. We’ll amend the Danvers International Corporate Charter to include three seats on the board, and you and Cat can work out an administrative staff to run whatever needs to be run to manage the day-to-day operations of the parent company. I’ll hold the Chairman position for Danvers International, which will issue an additional nine hundred shares. I will receive three hundred of the additional shares, bringing my total to four hundred. You and Cat will each receive three hundred shares each, giving you the ability to outvote me if you both agree I’m making an absolutely bone-headed decision.

“Are those terms agreeable to both of you?”

“You are willing to just give each of us thirty percent ownership of the company?” Lena asked.

“Well,” Kara said, “to be honest, there is a small catch.” She saw Lena’s defenses go up, and kind of wished she could skip this part. “Your mother tried to kill me three days ago.”

“You think she was involved with that?” Lena asked.

“I know she was, and I’m sorry. Lillian is the person who implanted Hank Henshaw’s cybernetics, and she’s been the chief biomedical researcher and one of the defacto heads of a government program called Project Cadmus for nearly a decade. Our best guess is that Cadmus saw the writing on the wall regarding the Alien Amnesty Act, and tried to use Hank Henshaw to frame me in an attempt to turn public opinion against the Act, and force President Marsdin to veto it. I know you have nothing to do with it, but I also need to know if the fact that I’m going to put your mother in jail is going to be a problem.”

Kara watched as Lena sat there, trying to take it all in. She noticed Sam taking Lena’s hand, lacing their fingers together under the table, and wondered just how right Lois was, and why she didn’t know Sam from the previous timeline.

“If my mother tried to murder you, then she’s a criminal.”

“Yes,” Kara said. “And up until Friday afternoon, my Aunt was a criminal as well. That didn’t stop me from loving her. It didn’t stop me from doing everything I could to protect her. Lena, I know this is hard. I know that family is hard. If you need time to think it over, I can give you a few days. The FTC approvals for the purchases won’t go through until the end of the week. Cat’s been through enough acquisitions that I’m sure she can hand-hold me through the process while you think about it.”

“No,” Lena said. “No, I’m in.”

“Good,” Kara said. “You’ll need to relocate to National City. Astra is here, and I need her to stay
here. The other Kryptonians will be available to you for consultation on an as-needed basis. Astra will have final approval on which technologies we adapt. I believe LuthorCorp has a building in town?"

“Yes,” Lena said. “We do.”

“Then you can set up there. CatCo will continue operating out of this building, and we’ll work out arrangements for Danvers International as things progress.” A noise caught her attention, and she used her X-Ray vision to have a peek. “And Ms. Smythe is back with your food, so we’ll work the rest of this out over lunch.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

.:zhaolium im zhaoghao
Literally: *It fucker*
Semantic: *Motherfucker*

.:bezhgam w ,astruh,in,zhe, ahmpahr
*Welcome, General Astra In-Ze*
Clark, Diana and Bruce have a chat, and so do Kara and Lena.

Clark took the bottle of water Bruce offered and twisted the top off, taking a sip as he waited for Bruce to sit behind his desk. Diana sat next to him, and he supposed he should feel guilty that Victor wasn’t there, but somehow, when things got really dark, it always came down to this. Him, Bruce and Diana. They’d fought together first, before the League, before Darkseid. Before Hal and Victor and Arthur. The League might grow and shrink, might fracture and crumble, but the three of them always seemed to hold.

“How bad was it?” Bruce asked.

“She used her heat vision to burn holes through four people,” Clark said.

“Their limbs,” Diana said. “All four lived. She burned the leg of the first to one keep him from escaping. The she burned through the arms of the other three to keep them from firing missiles into a building full of people. It was expertly done. I doubt you’ve ever been so precise with your heat vision in the heat of battle.”

“She hurt people!” Clark said.

Diana shrugged. “She hurt four people caught in the act of murder in order to prevent them from completing their crime. I do not see you scolding Bruce for breaking a mugger’s arm to take away a gun.”

“Broken arms heal,” Bruce said.

“So do burns,” Diana said. “If she’d been careless or sloppy, I could see cause for concern, but she moved like someone more comfortable on the field of battle than Clark is. She gave orders with the surety of a general and moved with the skill and purpose of a warrior. I would follow her into battle without hesitation.”

“That’s the thing, isn’t it,” Bruce said. “She shouldn’t move like that. She’s a novice. She’s been in a single fight that we know of with an opponent that could hope to match her, and it was over before any real blows were traded. But her moves were practiced. Almost instinctive.”

“And there’s the matter of the argument with the Martian,” Clark said.

“I thought J’onn was the last of his kind,” Bruce said.

“He is,” Clark replied. “If I followed the argument, this M’gann is a *white* Martian, and Kara knew it.”

“She also had Harley’s diagnosis memorized,” Bruce said. “You’re absolutely sure you repeated it word-for-word?”

“Yes,” Clark said.
“He did,” Diana confirmed. “I heard it myself. The walls at the DEO were not designed to block super hearing.”

“And there’s the paintings,” Clark said. “Harley, Ivy, Darkseid, Granny Goodness, Apokolips. She’s got a whole vault out at Sanctuary full of them, and most of them are nightmares.”

“I listened to her speech on Leslie Willis’ show. It was telling,” Bruce said. “You told me once that she’s been to twelve worlds, including Krypton and Earth.”

“Yes,” Clark said.

“But on Willis’ show, she said more worlds than she could count,” Bruce said. “She also said she’d passed through the Tannhäuser Gate and been to the Vanishing Point.”

“The Tannhäuser Gate? What is that?” Clark asked.

“Aside from a reference to an old Harrison Ford movie, I don’t know,” Bruce said.

“A Tannhäuser Gate is a doorway to the realm of the divine,” Diana said. “Tannhäuser was a German poet who discovered a portal to Aphrodite’s home, and when he saw her, he knelt in worship. He later had to go to the Pope and seek forgiveness for kneeling to a Pagan goddess.”

“But she said ‘The’ Tannhäuser Gate,” Bruce said. “As if there were only one of them.”

“If she’s met Darkseid, the answer is obvious,” Diana said.

“A doorway to Apokolips,” Clark said.

“That would certainly warrant the use of the definite article,” Bruce said.

“What’s the Vanishing Point?” Diana asked.

“I have no idea,” Bruce said. “I’ve only ever heard the term used in art. I’m honestly more worried about her ‘Captain’.”

“You mean her lover?” Diana asked, and Clark saw her roll her eyes when he winced slightly at the term. “She’s a woman of twenty-five years, Kal. I think you can learn to live with the reality that she’s had sex.”

“I know,” Clark said. “But I still remember the thirteen-year-old girl I rescued.”

“What’s your concern?” Diana asked Bruce.

“First, the word Captain,” Bruce said. “Captain of what? A ship, an army?”

“Darkseid’s Furies,” Diana suggested.

“My thought exactly,” Bruce said.

“No,” Clark said. “Her name is Sara.”

“How do you know that?” Bruce asked.

“When Zatanna was extracting the Nth Metal, Kara was in and out of consciousness. She kept calling for Sara. Alex told me that Sara was her girlfriend.”
“Now that is interesting,” Bruce said. “You remember that tip she gave you about Malcolm Merlyn?”

“Yes,” Clark said.

“Turns out, Ah Sa-Her *is* Malcolm Merlyn. The name means ‘The Magician’.”

“What does that have to do with Sara?” Clark asked.

“You said she told you the tip came from Ta-er al-Sahfer,” Bruce said.

“Yellow bird,” Diana said. “Traditionally a reference to a Canary.” Diana laughed and looked at Clark. “She said a little bird told her.”

“Normally, I would appreciate the joke and move on,” Bruce said. “But as it happens, the mantle of Ra’s ah Ghul passed recently to the previous Ra’s daughter, Nyssa, who has a lover named Ta-er al-Sahfer. A young woman whom Nyssa fished out of the North China Sea seven years ago, just a few hours after the Queen’s Gambit sent a distress call.”

“A young woman named Sara,” Diana guessed.


“I know those names,” Clark said.

“You should,” Bruce said. “Lois wrote a piece on them. Sara, lost at sea. Quentin and Laurel both died in the Star City Earth Quake.”

“You think Kara is connected to Sara Lance, somehow?” Diana asked.

“I don’t know,” Bruce said. “The timeline doesn’t make sense. Kara claims her Sara died in September of 2014. Ta-er al-Sahfer is very much alive and hasn’t set foot in this country in seven years.”

“The timeline for the money doesn’t make sense, either,” Clark said. “Kara arrived in 2003, but you said the money has been accumulating since 1998.”

“Is it possible she co-opted someone else’s program?” Diana asked.

“Anything’s possible,” Bruce said. “There was a definite shift in the aggressiveness of the trading when she brought her fortress online, but that’s to be expected. She would have access to much better computers to manage the trades.”

“How do the Lanterns tie into this?” Diana asked.

“I don’t know,” Clark said, “but she definitely doesn’t trust them, and I can see why she might have her suspicions. If she’s right, and Krypton was destroyed intentionally, then the Lanterns at the very least failed in their duty.”

“Do you think she might believe they were complicit?” Diana asked.

“That’s a new and terrifying thought,” Bruce said. “If she’s right, then six of the most powerful beings on the planet are loyal to an organization that conspired in the murder of thirty billion people.”

“Even if she’s wrong, she might still be willing to wage war over it,” Diana said.
“And now, she has an army of Kryptonians, and God knows how many other aliens and meta-humans willing to follow her into that war,” Bruce said. “We have to do something about this.”

“We should talk to her,” Diana said.

“I don’t know if she’ll be willing to talk now that she feels like she doesn’t need us anymore,” Clark said.

“She didn’t need us before,” Diana said. “She was using us to conceal the resources she had accumulated.”

“Which doesn’t make sense either,” Clark said. “If she had all that money, why even take the job at CatCo?”

“You said she cares for Cat Grant,” Diana said.

“Yes,” Clark said. “But that would have come after she started working there, and according to Bruce’s timeline, she was already a billionaire when she took the job.”

“Why hide the money?” Bruce said. “There are plenty of ways she could have covered its existence until we wouldn’t have even noticed that she was playing on my and Diana’s level financially.”

“That’s a good question,” Clark said. “One I don’t have an answer to.”

“Would the other Kryptonians follow her if she wasn’t the head of House El?” Bruce asked.

“They might,” Clark said. “Normally, she’d be expected to obey my decisions if I took my place as head of house, but the Kryptonians in question are criminals.”

“Former criminals,” Diana pointed out.

“Still,” Clark said. “Astra wasn’t the head of House Ze, but they still followed her.”

“Then I suppose the question is, would Kara follow you, if you were the head of house?” Bruce asked.

“I think so,” Clark said, “but I’m not sure. Like I said before, she’d have the option to challenge.”

“But you could beat her in a fight?” Bruce said.

“Yes,” Clark said.

“No,” Diana said.

Bruce and Clark both turned to Diana. “What?” they both asked at the same time.

“If you fought her, you would lose,” Diana said.

“I’ve been doing this for a decade and a half, Diana,” Clark said. “I’m not saying she’s not good, but-”

“But you would lose,” Diana said. “Quickly. I do not know how she acquired the skills she has, and I am not saying you are not a skilled fighter, but the woman I saw on the field today would defeat you, without hesitation or difficulty.”

“Could you take her?” Bruce asked.
“Perhaps,” Diana said. “It would not be an assured outcome. Kal and I together, yes, but she would be a challenge for me alone.”

Bruce looked over at Clark. “If she does challenge you for leadership, can you select a champion?”

“Yes,” Clark said. “Normally it would be another member of the House, but there’s no rule saying it has to be.”

Bruce looked at Diana. “If it comes to a challenge, would you be willing to act as Clark’s champion?” he asked.

“No,” Diana said. “I agree that there is cause for concern. Questions we need answers to. But it’s been clear since almost the first day that she is seeing threats that we aren’t, and that she has an agenda we’re not privy too. The past week’s events prove she has a better assessment of the danger than we do, and if she believes the Lanterns are a threat, I am not inclined to doubt her. In fact, if the Lanterns are a threat, I’m inclined to believe she was right to keep it from us given your reaction to events. I trust her. I don’t believe she’s a threat, and I don’t believe that we should strip her of her birthright, just because Kal has suddenly decided to pay attention to his responsibilities and is surprised to find that in the twelve years he’s been absent, his cousin has surpassed him.”

“And if you’re wrong?” Bruce asked.

“Then I am wrong, and we will have a fight on our hands the likes of which we have never seen before,” Diana said. “Thirty battle-hardened Kryptonians, plus whatever other allies she can bring to the field.”

“How can you take that risk?” Bruce asked.

“Trust is a choice, Bruce,” Diana said. “One you make far too rarely. And if you try to take her House from her, you will only succeed in making her the enemy you fear her to be.”

Kara was sitting at her desk, lost in thought as she skimmed through three days’ worth of social media about the attack on Supergirl. Miranda Crane has made a few tentative remarks about how Supergirl’s very presence has turned National City into a war zone, but she’d quickly been eviscerated by any number of people who’d pointed out that, to date, Supergirl had been in exactly one fight with a Supervillain and said fight had lasted less than thirty seconds. They’d gone on to point out that Miranda had accused Supergirl of murder, and when Leslie had turned up alive, she’d switched to claims of mind control. In short, Miranda had been laughed off the internet, while a small handful of people publicly wondered if she was connected to the attack.

There was also a frenzy surrounding J’onn, Astra, the DEO, and Hank Henshaw, and the negative was far outweighed by the positive. She was pretty sure she could push a bit more on that if she got some profiles out there. It would also help to get the “Martian Manhunter” moniker out there. She just needed a codename for Astra. Her first thought was Nightwing, but Dick was already using that name, but when she thought about it, Flamebird was more appropriate. After all, hadn’t Astra lost everything she loved while seeking to do what she believed was right? It fit. In fact, it was almost heartbreakingly appropriate.

Decision made, she’d get their permission, then she’d run the profiles. She’d do what she had been doing. Turn personal tragedy into triumph and hope.

Rao’s light, she was so tired of it. Or maybe she was just tired. It felt like she’d been carrying the weight of Krypton on her shoulders since she was thirteen, and now, the weight of the entire
multiverse was piled on top. She leaned back, closing her eyes, just for a moment to try to soothe the incessant pounding that had taken up residence…

She jerked awake at the sound of a knock on her door. When she looked over, she saw Lena standing there.

“I’m sorry to disturb you,” Lena said. “I was hoping to have a word in private before Sam and I left.”

“Of course,” Kara said. “Close the door and come in.”

Lena closed the office door and walked over to take of the chairs in front of Kara’s desk.

“Did you and Cat get all the details hammered out?” Kara asked.

“Enough to have the lawyers draft an agreement in principal,” Lena said. “I’m surprised you were comfortable with the idea of Sam acting as CEO of Danvers International.”

“Is there a reason I shouldn’t be?” Kara asked.

“No,” Lena said. “Sam’s one of the hardest working and most dedicated people I’ve ever known.”

“That’s enough for me,” Kara said.

“Just like that?” Lena asked.

“Just like that,” Kara said, giving Lena a smile.

“But why?” Lena asked. “You had me, dead to rights. You could have just taken LuthorCorp and built all of this without me. You could have had me without giving me partial ownership. I don’t understand.”

“Trust is a choice,” Kara said. “I can trust you or I can fear you and I’ve said it before. Hope is stronger than fear. I see so much hope when I look at you. You and Jack Spheer in that garage, trying to cure cancer on a shoestring budget. You, building those cancer wards. The Lena Luthor Foundation. Trying to take LuthorCorp and turn it into a force for good.”

“You’re good woman, Lena Luthor. A better woman that I am. After all, I have a whole closet full of ulterior motives here.”

“Oh?” Lena said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “First, I really don’t want another generational feud on my hands. The whole House of El/House of Zod thing goes all the way back to my grandfather Seg-El. I would really rather my grandchildren not be fighting Luthors.”

“Oh, that’s a terrible motive,” Lena said, the corners of her lips turning up slightly.

“It would also be nice not to have to pick up and move to another planet because of global warming.”

“So selfish,” Lena said.

“Absolutely none of my friends appreciate my taste in music, so it will be nice to have someone else around who appreciates N’Sync and Britney Spears.”

“Seriously?” Lena said, her eyes lighting up.
“Yes,” Kara said, grinning. “Seriously, my sister likes Marilyn Manson.” She gave a little shudder for effect.

“Okay, that’s gross,” Lena said.

“I know!” Kara said. “Little secret though. A Nine Inch Nails concert totally turned her gay.”

Lena snorted, and quickly reached up to cover her mouth as her cheeks turned red. “I’m sure there’s more to the story,” Lena said.

“A little more,” Kara agreed.

“Well, any other deep, dark secrets I should know about?” Lena asked.

“I’m hoping you can save my aunt’s soul,” Kara said. “Show her the truth. That even humans surrounded by darkness can rise up and make the world a better place for everyone.”

“Oh. That one might be a little scary,” Lena said.

“No,” Kara replied. “I think you are the perfect person for the job.”

“That’s a lot of faith you’re putting in a perfect stranger,” Lena said.

“Maybe,” Kara said, not able to keep herself from smiling at the fact that Lena was sitting across the desk from her. It felt so familiar, even if it did feel just a little odd being on the other side of the desk. The oddity of that feeling quickly brought to mind the other incongruity in the moment, and Kara took a deep breath, hoping she wasn’t about to offend Lena.

“I hope this isn’t too personal,” she said, “but how did you and Sam meet?”

“Oh,” Lena said. “My first assignment when I went to work at LuthorCorp was in mergers and acquisitions. Sam was a junior VP at this company we’d just bought, and I was walking through the office at three in the morning and found her head down in a cost analysis report. There was something about her. She was so focused, and I just knew I wanted to work with her.”

“How long have the two of you been dating?” Kara asked.

“Dating?” Lena sputtered.

“Oh,” Kara said. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to assume. It’s just…” She shook her head. “I’m just going to have to murder Lois Lane in her sleep.”

Lena laughed. “Oh, dear,” she said. “I could see how Ms. Lane would get that impression. Sam didn’t want me to do the interview at all. She was afraid Lois was just out to do a smear job on me because she hates Lex, and Sam kind of hovered the whole time.”

Kara nodded. “She also mentioned that she found out there was some sort of tension between you and your mother over Sam.”

“Oh,” Lena said. “My mother doesn’t think much of, let’s say, ‘common people’. Sam’s adopted, and a single mom, so in my mother’s mind, that makes her gutter trash. You know, I think she actually used those exact words.”

“That’s terrible,” Kara said.

“Terrible is a good descriptor for many of my mother’s opinions,” Lena said. “Sam’s probably the
best friend I’ve ever had. Worked her way up to junior VP while raising a baby on her own. Right now, she’s the CFO of the Lena Luthor foundation.”

“Were you planning on bringing her into LuthorCorp with you?”

“I was,” Lena said. “Ironically, I had planned on shifting our headquarters here. Sam was going to stay behind and run the Metropolis offices for the first year and oversee the shift in management locations. It would have let her daughter finish middle school where she is, then they would move out here the summer before Ruby starts ninth grade.”

Kara thought about it. The timing explained why she’d never met Sam in the previous timeline. Henshaw had killed Lena before Sam had made the move from Metropolis. She made a mental note to check the archives to see if Sam had taken the CEO position at LCorp after Lena’s murder.

“I hope the move won’t be too disruptive for her daughter,” Kara said. “I know what starting a new school around that age is like.”

“Probably easier when you don’t have to learn an entirely new set of cultural cues,” Lena said.

“Also probably easier when you don’t already have the equivalent of multiple Earth PhD’s in science,” Kara said.

“Really?” Lena said.

“Yeah. At thirteen, I had the equivalent of a PhD in classical mechanics, quantum physics, relativistic theory, stellar cartography, astronomy, astrophysics, geology, geophysics, mathematics, and statistics. Our theoretical models function a bit differently than yours. The standard model is… terrible, honestly, and don’t even get me started on string theory, but I think I actually like Newtonian Mechanics better than Vexian Physical Mechanics. Tylo Bar-Vex was absolutely brilliant, but the woman didn’t simplify anything. If I had a time machine, I would be sorely tempted to go back twelve thousand years and just shove copies of the inverse square law down her throat until she choked on it.”

Lena laughed. “Oh, God. I’ve had the same thought about Newton and his mathematical notation.”

“Ugh… You’re going to give me flashbacks,” Kara said. “Seriously, why do they even teach Newtonian notation. Euler is so much better.”

“I’m partial to Lagrange, myself,” Lena said.

“Well, everyone has their faults,” Kara said with a huge grin on her face. “How long do you think it will take you and Sam to pack up and make the move?”

“I’m not sure,” Lena said. “If I fly back tomorrow afternoon, I can probably be here full time by Monday if I stay in a hotel. That’s not really an option for Sam and Ruby. They’ll need a permanent address, so they can get Ruby enrolled in school.”

“You know, I actually happen to know of an apartment building with the penthouse and top five floors available,” Kara said.

“Really?” Lena said. “Is it nice?”

“Waverly Towers,” Kara said. “Cat lives in the penthouse of the south tower, but she owns both buildings. I also know a contractor who does good work and is fast. They built out this entire floor for me in about five days.”
“That sounds like it would work out perfectly,” Lena said.

“Something else to have the lawyers take care of,” Kara said.

“What about you? You own some fancy apartment building?”

“Not yet, but Cat keeps telling me all the really classy billionaires have one,” Kara said. “Honestly, it’s one of the reasons I was keeping my money on the down low. I *like* my apartment.”

“Well, if you need help getting used to being a billionaire, I’m sure Cat will show you the ropes,” Lena said.

“I’m sure,” Kara said.

“How long have the two of you been together?” Lena asked.

“What?” Kara asked.

Lena turned her head slightly, narrowing her eyes. “You and Cat?” Lena asked. “I mean, Sam mentioned the rumors about the two of you on the plane, but I thought it was just office gossip.”

Kara swallowed. “There are rumors?” she squeaked.

“I’m sorry,” Lena said. “It’s just the way you were holding her hand in the meeting, I didn’t realize it was a secret.”

Kara stopped and thought about it, her mind going back to the moment when Cat had tried to interrupt her to stop her from revealing her identity, and she hadn’t even really been conscious of the way she’d taken Cat’s hand, or the fact that she hadn’t let go until she excused herself from the meeting to let Lena, Sam and Cat hammer out the finer details.

“We’re not together,” Kara said.

“Oh,” Lena said. “Now I’m sorry. I’m the one making assumptions on bad information.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “Cat and I are close, and if we’re a bit more tactile than normal, it’s probably because I got shot in the head on national television three days ago.”

Lena winced. “I’m still amazed you would trust me if you think my mother is connected to what happened.”

“My father designed bioweapons, my mother used me as bait in a trap that led to my aunt receiving a life sentence in prison, my parents, aunt and uncle let thirty billion people die, and my cousin has spent the last fourteen years refusing to share technology that could have saved tens of millions of lives. If I was going to condemn people for the sins of their families, I’d have to start with myself. I just wish it wasn’t true, for your sake.”

“If you don’t mind my asking, how do you know she’s connected to what happened?” Lena asked.

“That’s a good question,” Kara said, “and probably the first of many I’ll have to refuse to answer. Not because I don’t trust you, but in order to work with the DEO, I had to sign a number of non-disclosure agreements. I can’t talk about any DEO investigation I’m involved with.”

“I understand,” Lena said. “I should probably get back in there and ask Cat about that apartment.”

“Okay,” Kara said. Lena got up, and she’d almost gotten to the door before Kara called out to her. “Lena.”
Lena turned around. “Yes?”

“I know we’re going to be business partners,” Kara said, “but I would also like it if we could be friends. I know it may seem like I treat my secret lightly, but I don’t, and the number of people I can really share my life with is smaller than I would like it to be.”

Lena smiled at her so brightly it hurt Kara’s heart, because she remembered all the times the Lena from the other timeline had smiled at her that way, and ached for the friend she had lost, and hoped she’d found again.

“I think I would like that too,” Lena said, before she turned and left.

Kara glanced down at the clock on her computer and signed when she realized the work day wasn’t even half over. She glanced over at the conference room, and saw Lena sitting back down courtesy of her X-Ray vision. Astra had left earlier, so it was just Lena, Sam, Cat, Kaldur’ahm and a pack of lawyers. They probably would have moved to a larger conference room if Kara hadn’t insisted that they stay. She didn’t think Lena was in danger inside the CatCo building but having Kaldur’ahm backed up by the five DEO agents who worked in the S2MG and the four Marshals in Lena’s detail made Kara a lot happier than she would otherwise be.

Her phone chimed a text alert, and she pulled it out of her pocket to check the message.

Susan: Kara, I asked Konex to send this when you are free. I’m worried about Leslie. Can you swing by and check on her?

Kara frowned, angry at herself for having forgotten Susan’s abortive attempt to ask her that earlier in all the drama with Kal and Lena. She typed out a text to Susan.

Kara: On my way.

That sent, she fired off a quick text to Kaldur’ahm.

Kara: Headed to DEO. Let Cat know. Call/Text if you need me.

Kaldur’ahm: Understood. I will make sure she is safe.

Kara took off her wig, putting it back in the box it had come in, then stepped out onto the balcony, activated her war suit, and headed for the DEO.
“Kara!” someone yelled as she stepped into the DEO command center. Kara flinched slightly as the volume of the shout made her head throb but didn't have time for any other reaction before she had two arms full of Lucy Lane, who was busy crushing her in a fierce hug.

“You scared the life out of me,” Lucy said.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

“Next time you had better fucking dodge,” Lucy said.

Kara smiled. “Let me go for a minute. I want to show you something.”

Lucy stepped back, and Kara felt a tightness in her chest at the sight of tears glistening in Lucy’s eyes. She gave Lucy her brightest smile as she raised her arm and activated the shield.

“Promethium alloy,” Kara said. “Kal or I could punch it for hours, and it wouldn't even heat up.” Kara retracted the shield and lowered her arm. “See, I am hard headed, but I *can* learn.”

Lucy slapped her on the shoulder. “That's not funny!” she said.

“At least tell me you like the hair,” Kara said. She reached up and ran her fingers through the short hair on top of her head. “What do you think, sexy enough to steal James’s girl?”

Lucy laughed and shook her head. “You’re terrible,” Lucy said. She took a deep breath and let it out. “It was my dad wasn’t it?”

Kara reached out, placing her hands on Lucy’s shoulders.

“Hey, look at me,” Kara said. “You are not responsible for your father’s actions, and I would *never* blame you for anything he has done.”

Lucy gave her a watery smile. “You know you are amazing, right?”

“Not amazing enough,” Kara said. “I started a war.”
“Hey!” Lucy said. “If I’m not allowed to blame myself, neither are you.”

“Okay, deal,” Kara said. She let go of Lucy’s shoulders. “We'll talk soon, but I need to go check on someone.”

Lucy nodded. “Go on. Go be a hero,” she said.

Kara smiled and leaned in, kissing Lucy’s cheek before heading down the stairs.

“Kara!”

Kara sighed. She’d made it half way across the command center before she heard her sister’s voice, and Alex did not sound happy. She turned to see Alex stomping towards her with murder in her eyes.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“What’s wrong?” Alex asked in the tone of voice she reserved for those moments when, in her opinion, Kara should already know exactly why she was pissed. “You want to know what’s wrong?”

“Of course,” Kara lied, having never been more certain of anything in her life that she absolutely didn’t want to know what Alex was upset about.

Alex raised her hand, her index finger extended, jabbing Kara to emphasize each word. “You. Haven’t. Been. To. See. Mom!”

“/rao, i dovrrosh/” Kara groaned. “How mad is she?”

“Mad?” Alex asked in a tone that might as well be the Waverider's collision alarm. “She saw you get shot in the head on National Television, and you went to work to update your youtube channel before going to visit her. Why on Earth would she possible be mad?”

“/nahn w zhi:zhaoaluhs/” Kara said.

“Oh, fucked doesn’t even begin to cover it,” Alex said.

Kara closed her eyes and took a deep breath letting it out slowly. “I’ll go see her just as soon as I’m done here.”

“If you don’t I swear I will go to every Chinese delivery place in National City, wave my shiny new badge, and tell them it’s against the law to sell Kryptonians pot stickers.”

“You wouldn’t!” Kara said.

“Try me!” Alex said, before she turned and stormed of in the general direction of her lab.

“Ma’am,” Susan said.

Kara jumped, letting out a very undignified screech before her head smacked the ceiling. She looked down, glaring at Susan as she floated down to the floor.

“You know Director J’onzz is going to take that out of your pay, right?” Susan said.

“That would assume I got paid,” Kara said.
“Good point,” Susan said. “Thanks for coming.”

“No problem,” Kara said. “I’m sorry I forgot earlier. Kal was being a jerk, and then Lena Luthor showed up at CatCo.”

“Was she wearing one of the Lexosuits?” Susan asked.

“No,” Kara said. “Lena’s one of the good guys.”

“We really need a flow chart,” Susan said. “Leslie’s still in signal tracking.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “Thanks for looking out for her.”

Susan nodded, and Kara headed for the elevator.

Kara got stopped six more times before she reached the signal tracking lab. She tried to check the lab before she opened the door, and almost laughed when she realized the door was lead-lined. It has been ages since she thought about how paranoid J’onn was, but she just took a moment to refocus her vision, using a little trick she’d picked up from Powergirl on Earth 46, and smiled as the lead turned as translucent as any other material, and she spotted Leslie sitting at one of the computers, glaring at one of the screens.

Kara took a deep breath and opened the door. The sound made Leslie jump a little, and she turned around.

"Oh," Leslie said. "Little Miss Sunshine. Nice haircut. Almost as butch as the new outfit."

Kara smiled as she closed the door behind her and dropped into the seat next to her.

"How you doing?" Kara asked.

"Still not interested," Leslie said. "Maybe you can find a lesbian bar on Yelp or something."

"Nah, I'm trying to steal Olsen's girl. I mean, she's not blonde, but have you seen that neck?" Kara said.

"We'll, if that does it for you," Leslie said.

"Susan said you'd been helping them track the signal from the missile launcher," Kara said. "I wanted to say thank you."

Leslie shifted in her seat, looking a little uncomfortable. "Don't let it go to your head. I figure whoever took a shot at you is connected to Henshaw, and I want to fry that son of a bitch."

"Yeah, I get that," Kara said.

Leslie turned to look at her. "Really? No lecture on how revenge is wrong?"

"Not that much of a hypocrite," Kara said. "There are people I'd kill without hesitation."

"You?" Leslie asked.

"Yeah," Kara said. "Don't get me wrong, I believe in what I said. Hope, help and compassion for all. But I also believe in justice, and I've seen enough to know that sometimes there isn't a difference between justice and revenge."
"Darker than I expected from you, Sunshine," Leslie said.

"We'll," Kara said, touching the spot on her bracer that collapse into her wrist cuff. "you've only met Supergirl." She held out her hand. "Kara Danvers Zor-El. Nice to meet you."

Leslie's eyebrows shot up. "No shit? Cat's mousy little assistant?"

"Hey! Who are you calling 'mousy'?" Kara said, knowing the smile on her face undermined any pretense of wounded pride.

"Maybe I should call you 'Puppy', the way you follow Cat- Oh my God! You've got a thing for Cat!"

Kara rolled her eyes. "Why does everyone go there?"

"Because you're gay and Cat is gorgeous," Leslie said smugly.

"Sounds like I'm not the only one with a bit of a crush," Kara said.

Leslie's face fell, and she almost seemed to shrink into herself. Kara immediately kicked herself.

"I'm sorry," Kara said.

Leslie turned back to the computer she'd been working on. "I'm busy, Sunshine," Leslie said.

Kara reached out and rested a hand on Leslie's shoulder. "I'm sorry," Kara said. "I know what that feels like."

Leslie turned and glared. "Really? You know what it's like? You... Yeah. Okay, maybe you do."

"I'm sorry I got you into this mess," Kara said. "I might not have attacked you, but that doesn't mean it wasn't my fault."

"It wasn't," Leslie said. "Honestly, I was kind of impressed when you stormed into the studio."

"Really?" Kara asked.

"Yeah," Leslie said. "You know, I've been on the air almost sixteen years all told, and you are the only person I've talked shit about to ever come on the show and defend themselves."

"You're not mad that I got you fired?" Kara asked.

"I was," Leslie said. "If I'd had these powers before I got attacked, I'd have probably burned CatCo to the ground. Getting murdered makes you rethink your life choices." Leslie gave a small shrug. "So does having your life saved by someone you were insulting on national radio three days earlier."

Kara nodded. "What did you come up with?"

"That maybe if I wasn't such a bitch I wouldn't have died alone," Leslie said.

"You're not dead yet," Kara said. "And you don't have to be alone if you don't want to be."

Leslie laughed bitterly. "I'm a bitter-has-been mean girl. I'm sure people will be beating down my door."

"Well, you have at least one friend, if you want," Kara said, holding out her hand.
Leslie stared at it for a moment. "You are unbelievable," she said.

Kara just smiled and waited. It took a while, but eventually, Leslie took her hand.

Kara drifted in through the open window of her apartment, touching down softly as she watched Lois and Eliza sitting at the dining table with their laptops open. Both of them looked up at the sound of Kara’s feet hitting the floor, and if Kara didn’t know better, she’d think Eliza had used super speed to get to her feet. Kara tapped her bracer, retracting her war suit as Eliza came around the table, then reached out wrapping her foster mother in a hug.

“Oh, Kara, I was so scared,” Eliza said, squeezing Kara as hard as she could.

“I know,” Kara said. “I’m sorry.”

“You should be, Short Stuff,” Lois said. “You’ve been up and around for almost twenty hours and you’re just now coming to see your mom.”

Kara glared over Eliza’s shoulder and flipped Lois the bird behind Eliza’s back.

“Kara Zor-El Danvers, I taught you better than that,” Eliza said.

Kara huffed. “How did you know?” she asked.

“Because I raised you,” Eliza said, finally letting go. She stepped back. “Your sister said something about you thinking Jeremiah might be alive.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “It’s complicated, and it’s connected to Sara and Astra and Hank Henshaw, and a whole lot of other, really ugly things.”

“She said you were going to get something that could help you find him,” Eliza said.

Kara nodded. “We were. We’ve got the blueprints, and Kolex has finished putting it together. We just need one more piece.”

“What is it?” Eliza asked.

“That’s a long story,” Kara said. “Let’s sit down.”

They both walked over to the dining table and sat down. Eliza closed her laptop, and Lois did the same.

“Are you familiar with Multiverse theory?” Kara asked.

“A little,” Eliza said. “That was more Jeremiah’s field, but the idea is that there are an infinite number of alternate universes, each slightly different from our own.”

“Yes,” Kara said. “The theory is off on a few finer points. The universes are grouped into multiverses. Our particular multiverse consists of fifty-three full universes and their temporal zones, a huge number of pocket dimensions associated with each one, and two godspheres. One called New Genesis, and one called Apokolips.”

Lois sucked in a breath. “What do you know about Apokolips, Short Stuff?” Lois asked.

“More than I’d like,” Kara said. “Not the point right now.” She looked at Eliza. “We are on Earth thirty-eight. Or, the Earth of Universe Thirty-Eight. Last night, Alex, Maggie and I went to Earth
“Shit,” Lois said. “How the hell did you manage that?”

“I have friends there,” Kara said. “One of them built me a dimensional breaching device so I could go visit.”

“When?” Eliza asked. “Kara, how did all of this happen?”

“That is an even longer story,” Kara said. “And I will tell you. I need to tell a lot of people, and I’d prefer to do it all at once, so as soon as I can, we’re going to Sanctuary, and I’ll tell you everything. Right now though, the important thing is that my friend Barry has a computer, an artificial intelligence. One that’s a lot more sophisticated than anything I have access to on this Earth. I went there last night and got a scan of it using Kryptonian sensors. Right now, Kolex is building me a copy of it. The problem is, it’s a mimetic AI. It’s designed to use a copy of a neural network superimposed over the AI substrate as a governing system. Basically, you copy a person’s mind into the system, without their memories.”

“That sounds horrible,” Eliza said.

“I know, but it’s not,” Kara said. “I’ve dealt with two of these computers before. In both cases, the owner used his wife’s mind, which is frankly a little creepy, but both computers were happy, stable and well adjusted.”

“Still a little creepy,” Lois said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Honestly, if I had my choice, I’d use a copy of my own mind, but the neuro-imaging system and the AI substrate were both designed with a human brain in mind.”

“And this computer can find Jeremiah?” Eliza asked.

“Theoretically, yes,” Kara said. “I just need to find someone who-”

“I’ll do it,” Eliza said.

“What?” Kara asked.

“I’ll do it,” Eliza said. “You can use me as the template.”

“Are you sure?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Eliza said. “If it will bring back Jeremiah, yes.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “Then I guess it’s time you got to see Sanctuary.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

,rao, i dovrrosh
Literal: “Rao’s Shadow”
Semantic: “Oh, hell”
I am so screwed.
Chapter Summary

Astra tries to find out more about Lena. Vicki tries to get Cat to open up about Kara. Lena and Sam discuss the meetings at CatCo. Jason and Artemis worry that Kara might be too softhearted to handle the current situation. Tim, Barbara and Victor try to figure out a way to ease the tension between Bruce and Kara. Clark and James have a talk. Alex and Maggie have a moment to themselves. Kara makes a decision on how to handle Clark and Bruce.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Astra walked into the small underground town the DEO had built to house her and the other Fort Rozz escapees until more permanent arrangements could be made. The red sun lamps had been replaced, meaning she and her fellow Kryptonians were in full possession of their powers. Something which still shocked her.

Kara had so much hope. Astra did not miss the well of pain contained in her once innocent niece, but the girl still somehow had a capacity for faith in these humans. So much faith she was willing to accept the daughter of her mortal enemy into her circle of trust just days after that enemy tried to murder her.

If she hadn't watched Kara so carefully since she learned her niece was alive, she would think her naïve. Instead, she'd watched for weeks as Kara had waged a masterful campaign to sway public opinion. So successful that she'd managed to sway one of the most powerful leaders on the planet to her side.

What truly surprised her, though, was the way her niece assumed and wielded authority. Kara walked into a room and gave orders, and people followed them. She barked orders in the heat of battle and soldiers with decades more experience obeyed. It was her tone, one that spoke with authority and the absolute surety that she would be obeyed.

It was gratifying to see the magnificent women Kara had grown into, but the incongruities were weighing on Astra. Kara knew things she shouldn't, trusted when it made no sense, forgave some without hesitation, while openly declaring war on others days later.

It was almost as if her niece had a map that everyone else lacked. She'd even implied as much before the meeting with this Lena Luthor.

Astra was a leader herself. She was one of Krypton’s most successful Generals. She understood secrets, compartmentalization of information, and she trusted her niece. But this alliance with Lena Luthor disturbed her.

Astra stopped at the door of houses and pressed the chime. The door opened a moment later and Fendra Kem-Kann stood before her. Fendra’s right hand immediately rose to her left shoulder, and she dropped her head in a crisp salute.
"General," Fendra said.

"Stand easy, my friend," Astra said.

Fendra dropped the salute and looked up. "What can I do for you?" Fendra asked.

"How much access do you have to the human's information networks?" Astra asked.

"At the moment, I'm limited to public data, my Lady," Fendra said. "But if we need to inquire more deeply, I am sure options can be found."

Astra understood the subtext of the sentence. Her people were obeying her command to obey this world's laws, but Fendra was offering to risk her new freedom at Astra's command. Astra was not naïve enough to believe that she could shield her people from consequences if they broke the law on her orders and decided that she would only do that if there was no choice.

"Not at this time," Astra said. "But I need to know as much as possible about Lena Luthor and her family."

The reaction to Astra's words was immediate. Her intelligence officer's face darkened, and she stepped back from the door.

"Come inside," Fendra said in a tone that brooked no argument.

Cat felt the subtle shift in the mood in the bullpen and glanced up, smiling as she saw heads whipping around and begin tracking Vicki across the bullpen. She didn’t really blame them. Seeing the tall redhead in a black power suit and four-inch heels did the same thing to Cat now as it had fifteen years ago. She was just a bit less likely to get drunk and try to hit on her these days.

The smile didn’t drop off her face as Vicki walked right past Jackson, who, to his credit, tried to stop her, and into Cat’s office.

“Hey, Cat,” she said.

“It’s okay, Jacob,” Cat said, before Jackson could get a work out. He relaxed slightly and went back to his desk as Vicki dropped into one of the chairs in front of Cat’s desk.

“Back to work?” She asked.

“It is Monday,” Cat said, leaning back in her chair.

“Mmm… True,” Vicki said. She leaned forward, and the pitch in her voice shifted. “Seriously, are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Cat said.

“I remember what it was like after Bruce got messed up pulling one of his stunts. Faulty parachute while base jumping brought him home with a broken leg. Cracked ribs when a zip line snapped. Skull fracture when he hit a branch while mountain biking. Always scared the life out of me,” Vicki said.

“Yes, well, I don’t have a boyfriend who’s into extreme sports,” Cat said.

“No,” Vicki said, “but Supergirl did have a very bad weekend.”
“Yes,” Cat said. “The whole city was worried about her.”

“Well, I hope the whole city knows she has an old friend who’s been there, if she ever needs to talk,” Vicki said.

“I’m sure the city will keep that in mind,” Cat said. “Was there something you wanted?”

“I wanted to talk to that insanely perky former assistant of yours. You know, the one who bought the entire company just so you could keep your job,” Vicki said.

“I’d tell you to schedule an appointment with her assistant,” Cat said, “but she doesn’t have one yet.”

“I did notice that,” Vicki said. “Any particular reason why not?”

“Kara likes her privacy,” Cat said.

“Then she probably shouldn’t be flashing around that much money. I think I saw Forbes pitching a tent out front,” Vicki said.

“They better not be,” Cat said. “CatCo Finance gets first crack at her.”

Vicki threw her head back and laughed. “Now that’s the Cat I know,” she said. “But do you think Kara still has Supergirl on speed dial? I’d like to see if I can schedule an interview.”

“An interview?” Cat asked. “You’re not serious.”

“As a heart attack,” Vicki said. “Kara’s got all the good connections. She works with Supergirl, her sister’s the field director for the DEO, her best friend is the Local Law Enforcement Liasion for the DEO, and as it happens, the Assistant Director for the DEO has visited her here at CatCo at least once, though it was when she was still in the Army.”

“Lucy Lane was in my building?” Cat asked.

“On more than one occasion,” Vicki said. “Usually visits Olsen, but the day after that bombing in the research park, she signed in to see Kara.”

“Well, I can see you’re still a top-notch investigator, but I am curious as to why you’re investigating Kara,” Cat said, feeling her heart beat a little faster.

“I like to know who I’m working with,” Vicki said, “and I had planned to poach that girl just the moment I could talk her into a real job.”

Cat laughed. “Careful what you wish for, Vale. A year or two as a reporter, and she’d have been after your job.”

“I suppose it’s a moot point now,” Vicki said. “I can’t really put the owner of the company on the street as a cub reporter, now can I?”

“You never know,” Cat said. “She might like that. I’m afraid you’re out of luck with the interview though. I’m the first, and as yet only name on the list of reporters Supergirl gives interviews too.”

Vicki shrugged. “As long as it’s someone at CatCo, it’s all good. But I do want the hook up on Lane, other Danvers and Sawyer. And I figure if she can get in touch with Supergirl, maybe Supergirl can get ahold of the Martian and Supergirl’s Aunt. We could do a whole issue on the DEO.”
“That idiot isn’t without merit,” Cat said. “I’ll have a word with Kara next time I see her.”

“You do that,” Vicki said, standing up. “And remember what I said, Cat. Sometimes, having someone to talk to about it makes it a lot easier to deal with.”

Cat nodded. “I’ll remember,” she said.

Lena looked up from her laptop to find Sam staring at her across the dining table of their hotel suite.

“What?” she asked.

“I’m just waiting for the right moment to say, ‘I told you so’,” Sam said.

“And what, exactly did you tell me?” Lena said.

“That you jinxed it,” Sam said.

“Jinxed what?” Lena said.

“You said, and I quote, ‘We’re just going to go to National City, have a nice talk with this Kara Danvers and come right back home. We won’t go anywhere near this mess with Supergirl, and we’ll be back by the end of the week,’” Same said.

“Oh,” Lena said. “I did say that, didn’t I?”

“Yes,” Sam said, giving an exaggerated nod. “You said exactly that. I remember, because I said, ‘You realize you just jinxed it, right?’”

“It will be fine,” Lena said.

“Right up until your mother kills us both,” Sam said.

“I didn’t see you arguing in the meeting,” Lena said.

“Of course I wasn’t arguing!” Sam said. “She offered you a thirty percent stake in a company that’s going to put every Oil and Coal company on the planet out of business. We’re definitely going to die, but we’re going to die really, really rich.”

“Sam,” Lena said.

“I don’t understand what happened today,” Sam said. “I mean, I expected her to be a little hostile, because she works with Supergirl and you’re Lex Luthor’s sister, and she just blurts out that she doesn’t just work with Supergirl, she *is* Supergirl, and then she doesn’t just offer you a job, she offers you thirty percent of her company, no questions asked.”

“I don’t understand it either,” Lena admitted.

“Do you think it’s come kind of trick?” Sam asked.

“I don’t think so,” Lena said. “When I talked to her in her office, she was different.”

“What do you mean?” Sam asked.

“She seemed tired,” Lena said. “Like she’s been carrying the weight of the world on her shoulders, and just wants to put it down for a minute, but is afraid that if she does, everything will fall apart
around her.”

“That’s oddly specific, for a feeling,” Sam said.

Lena gave a small shrug. “I recognized the expression on her face,” she said. “I’ve seen it in the mirror, often enough.”

“Okay, that makes more sense,” Sam said. “You’re projecting.”

“No,” Lena said. “I talked to her. I listened. We talked about music and math and she just lit up, like she could breathe again, just for a moment, but then the conversation turned serious, and it was like she was weighed down again, which I kind of understand. Can you imagine what it must be like to have all that power?” Lena asked.

“You could do a lot of good,” Sam said.

“Yes, but think about the weight of the responsibility that comes with it,” Lena said. “Knowing you’re one of the last of your people, knowing that everyone is going to look to you as an example of everything aliens are. Being in that spotlight, all the time.”

“I admit, that part wouldn’t be a lot of fun,” Sam said. “I’m just glad that it’s someone like her.”

“I think she’s lonely,” Lena said.

Sam looked at her a bit more sharply. “Lena, don’t,” Sam said.

“What?” Lena asked.

“Look,” Sam said, “I get that she’s gorgeous. Hell, I’m tempted, and I don’t even like blondes. But don’t go getting a crush on someone who is going to be your business partner and is dating your other future business partner.”

“They’re not,” Lena said. “I asked, and she told me they weren’t dating.”

“Oh, bullshit!” Sam said. “If they aren’t dating, then it’s because she’s too stupid to admit she has Cat Grant wrapped around her little finger.”

“I’m not sure stupid is the right term,” Lena said, “but your point is taken.”

“Good,” Sam said.

“You want to hear something funny?” Lena asked.

“What?” Sam asked.

“Kara thought *we* were dating,” Lena said.

Sam rolled her eyes. “Where did she get that idea?”

“Lois Lane,” Lena said. “I told you that you were being too protective during that interview.”

“Oh, forgive me for not wanting to see some two-bit hack do a hatchet job on my friend,” Sam said.

“She won the Pulitzer,” Lena said.

“You’re the one who called her a ‘two-bit hack’,” Sam said.
“Really?” Lena asked.

“Yeah. Right after she wrote that exposé on Lex’s embezzling funds from the defense contracts to build his LexoSuit.”

“Well, I might have been a little emotional at the time,” Lena said.

“No, really?” Sam asked.

“Shut up,” Lena said.

“Just be careful,” Sam said. “I don’t want to see you get hurt.”

“I won’t,” Lena said. “This is strictly business. Besides, aliens aren’t really my type.”

“You realized you just jinxed it, right?” Sam said. “Seriously, you’re going to be head over heels in love with an alien by Christmas. New years at the latest.”

“Why do you always sound like a ten-year-old?” Lena asked.

“Maybe because the most mature person in my social circle is my ten-year-old daughter,” Sam said.

“I’m offended,” Lena said.

“Doesn’t stop it from being true,” Sam said.

“Your Alfred delivered the message?” Artemis asked as Jason stepped out onto the balcony of their hotel room, taking up a spot next to her at the rail.

“He’s hardly my Alfred,” Jason said, “but yes. Kara has the recording.”

“Do you think we should go after them ourselves?” Artemis asked. “I doubt Superman, Wonder Woman and Batman have the stomach for it.”

“I don’t know,” Jason said. “If it were up to me, I’d shoot them all in the head and be done with it. Henshaw might take a bit more killing than that, but I’m sure your bow would do the job.”

“Without a doubt,” Artemis agreed.

“I’m just not sure what Kara would want,” Jason said.

“They tried to murder her, and this morning, they tried to murder dozens of aliens in that bar. Surely she’d want to see justice done.”

“I’m sure,” Jason said. “But her idea of justice might not match yours and mine. It’s like I said to Max. Kara’s the gentle type.”

“Something I’m thankful for,” Artemis said, reaching over and threading her fingers through Jason’s.

He smiled at her. “She does seem to have a way of making people’s lives better.”

“We will wait for her response,” Artemis said. “But if she moves too slowly, we *will* help things along. She may be angry with us, but better angry and alive, then happy and dead.”

Jason laughed and shook his head. “I think those words describe both our lives,” he said.
“True enough,” Artemis said.

“I don’t like this,” Tim said.

“I’m not crazy about it either,” Barbara replied. “I’d be much happier back home, where I had access to some real horsepower.”

“That’s not what I meant,” Tim said.

The two of them were holed up in one of the hotel suites Bruce had rented and had dozens of computers set up around the suite, running any number of cyberattacks against TychoTech, but even Victor, who was there with them, wasn’t having any luck. TychoTech’s security was downright scary.

“What did you mean?” Victor asked.

“Bruce’s acting like Kara’s some kind of criminal,” Tim grumbled. “Honestly, it’s pissing me off.”

“Kara is a criminal,” Victor said.

“What?” Tim asked, turning around.

“I could give you a list of the laws she’s broken,” Victor said. “It’s a short one, by our standards, but it includes at least thirty-four counts of felony assault, ninety-six counts of obstruction of justice, two-hundred and sixty-five violations of FAA regulations, and almost five hundred counts of destruction of property. That’s not including all the perjury or forgery necessary for her to maintain her identity as Kara Danvers. The ugly truth is, we’re all criminals, Tim. If you were ever convicted of the crimes you’ve committed, you wouldn’t be eligible for parole for nearly twelve hundred years, and that’s just the crimes I have personally witnessed.”

“He’s got a point,” Barbara said. “The question isn’t whether Kara’s a criminal, it’s whether Kara’s our kind of criminal.”

Tim liked mulish for a moment, but finally nodded in agreement. “Okay,” he said. “So, what should we do?”

“I don’t know,” Barbara said. “I think we should just ask her what’s going on.”

“Yeah, Bruce didn’t seem to like that idea,” Tim said.

“That’s because Bruce is an idiot,” Barbara said.

“I wish I could argue with that,” Victor said, “but given the number of times Diana’s beaten the crap out of him, I can’t.”

“I thought that only happened once,” Tim said.

“If you’ve seen Diana fight, and then do something you know is going to piss her off, then once is a statistically significant data set,” Victor said. “But it’s actually happened three times.”

Barbara laughed, and Tim shook his head.

“Why am I not surprised,” Tim said.

“Because you know exactly how stubborn he is,” Barbara said.
“So, what are we going to do?” Tim asked.

“Well, I know this is going to sound crazy, but hear me out,” Barbara said. “Why don’t *we* ask Kara what the hell is going on, and then double check whatever she tells us, then we can drop it in Bruce’s lap before he can do something stupid.”

“You know, as crazy ideas go, that’s… not that crazy,” Tim said.

“Well, I admit it’s not trying to land a Seven-Forty-Seven using the batmobile’s ejector seat rocket motors while attached to the roof with a grappling line, but then, I don’t have the same level of testosterone poisoning as Bruce,” Barbara said.

“He actually did that?” Victor asked, then shook his head. “Of course he did that.”

“It’s kind of sad you even asked,” Tim said. He looked over at Barbara. “You want to call, or should I?”

“I’ve got it,” Barbara said, reaching for her phone.

“Hey, Jimmy, you have a moment?” Clark asked as he stepped into James’ office.

James jumped slightly at the unexpected noise and shook his head to try and wake up a bit. “Sure,” he said. He looked over at Clark and felt relief roll through him. “Is that coffee?”

“Yeah,” Clark said. “Chai Latte,” he said. “The girl down at Noonan’s said it was your usual order.”

James waved for Clark to hand over the coffee. “Yeah,” he said.

“Since when do you drink coffee?” Clark asked as he sat down.

“Since I met your cousin,” James said. “I swear I haven’t had a good night’s sleep since the day after the lab bombing.”

“I didn’t realize things out here were that hectic,” Clark said.

James took a drink from the coffee. “Yeah,” James said. “And I used to think it didn’t get more serious than the stuff you dealt with.”

“What?” Clark asked.

James waved him off as he took another drink. He swallowed the coffee without really tasting it and sat the cup on his desk. “Your cousin is working on a whole different level,” he said.

“That’s kind of what I wanted to talk about,” Clark said.

“What do you mean?”

“There’s something off about Kara,” Clark said. “I don’t know what it is, but-”

“Stop,” James said, watching as surprise spread across Clark’s face at the interruption. “Clark, Kara’s dealing with a lot of stuff you don’t know about. You need to give her some room.”

“I’m not sure that’s a good idea,” Clark said. “Did you hear about what happened this morning?”

“Some sort of shootout at an alien bar,” James said.
“She used her heat vision on humans,” Clark said.

James winced, because he’d seen up close and personal what that could do and watching Zod execute people wasn’t a pleasant memory. “How bad was it?”

“They’re all in the hospital, with holes burned clean through their limbs. One guy’s leg, and the other three’s arms,” Clark said.

“Did she have a good reason?” James asked.

“Good reason?” Clark asked. “Are you serious?”

“Yeah,” James said.

“What could be a good reason for maiming someone?”

“Well, the way I heard it, they were trying to blow up a bar full of people. If it was the only way she could save those lives, I think that would count,” James said.

“But there had to be another way,” Clark said.

“Maybe,” James said. “But I don’t see you yelling at Bruce every time he break’s some gangster’s arm.”

“Bruce doesn’t have Superpowers.”

“Look, Clark, if you want to understand why Kara made the decisions she made, try asking her,” James said. “It’s not my place to spill her secrets.”

“I tried,” Clark said. “But she blew me off to take a meeting with Lena Luthor.”

“Ah,” James said. “That’s what this is about.”

“What do you mean?” Clark asked.

“Like I said, it’s not my place to spill Kara’s secrets. But, if Kara trusts Lena Luthor, I can tell you that she has a really good reason. When she gets time to talk, ask her about it. Until then, trust her judgement.”

“I’m not sure I can, Jimmy,” Clark said. “It’s starting to look like she might think the Green Lanterns are connected to the destruction of Krypton. Do you have any idea what would happen if she goes to war with the Green Lantern Corps?”

“She’d win,” James said. “At least, that would be my guess.”

“James, this is serious,” Clark said. “She’s good but come on. I’d be hard-pressed to take down one or two Lanterns, and there are over seven thousand of them.”

“Clark, you *need* to talk to Kara before you make any kind of decision. She knows things you don’t, and if you knew them, you’d see all of this differently,” James said.

“Then tell me what the hell is going on,” Clark said.

“No,” James said. “It’s not my secret to tell. All I can say is Kara knows what she’s doing, and if she thinks Lena can be trusted, then Lena can be trusted.”
“*You* are telling me to trust a Luthor?” Clark asked, and James could hear the shock and disbelief in his voice.

“No,” James said, “I’m telling you to trust *Kara*. And if you can’t do that, then trust *me*.”

“I want to, Jimmy, but you’re not giving me a lot to go on,” Clark said.

“We’ve been friends for fourteen years,” James said. “That’s not enough?”

“That’s not what I meant,” Clark said.

“Trust is a choice, Clark,” James said.

“You’re the second person to say that to me today,” Clark said.

“Who was the first?” James asked.

“Diana,” Clark said.

“She might be worth listening to,” James said.

“She usually is,” Clark said.

“And what does she think about Kara?” James asked.

“Pretty much what you just told me,” Clark said.

“Then maybe stop listening to Bruce’s paranoid ass,” James said.

“It’s not just Bruce,” Clark said. “I trusted Lex. Even when everyone told me I shouldn’t, I kept telling myself he was my friend, that he wouldn’t do those things, and now there’s another Luthor in the mix.”

“Look, Clark,” James said, “if it helps, I was one of the people telling you Lex was evil, and I’m telling you straight up, Kara is one of the good guys.”

“I hope you’re right,” Clark said.

“I am,” James said. “Just talk to her.”

“I’ll try,” Clark said, standing up. “See you around?”

“Yeah,” James said. “Any time.”

He watched as Clark left, and gave it enough time for him to reach the elevator before he took his phone out to call Kara.

“Hey, Danvers,” Maggie said.

Alex looked up from the heavy bag she’d spent the last half hour pounding into submission. Maggie was leaning against the door of the gym in a DEO uniform, and Alex suddenly felt her mouth go dry.

“Um… Hey,” Alex said. Maggie smiled, and Alex could see the laughter behind her eyes, which made Alex blush. She took a deep breath and squared her shoulders, because she could do this. She fought aliens professionally. She’d been to an alternate universe. She could talk to her girlfriend
without turning into a complete, gibbering idiot, just because Maggie was in a shirt that had to have been painted on.

“Hi,” she said.

Well, maybe not.

Maggie laughed out loud as she pushed off the doorway and walked over to where Alex was.

“Like what you see?” she asked.

“Yes,” Alex said without thinking, only to feel the blush get worse. She closed her eyes, hoping that would help, but it didn’t, because suddenly she was imagining what it would feel like to run her hands over that shirt.

“Hey,” Maggie said, her voice soft and gentle. “Look at me.”

Alex opened her eyes, and felt herself swallow, because Maggie was right there in front of her now, close enough to touch.

“You okay?” Maggie asked.

Alex thought about it, about the anxiety and tension that had been building all day. Her worry over the people who’d attacked Kara, that Kara was back in the field, that events were moving faster than they were supposed to and what that could mean for her dad. At how upset her mom was at not having seen Kara yet, and her nervousness at Kara’s decision to use Eliza as the template for the new AI.

Somehow, all of that was gone.

“Yeah,” she said. “Now that you’re here.”

Maggie smiled. “Careful, Danvers. I might start thinking you like me.”

Alex reached up, cupping Maggie’s jawline in her hands, resting her thumbs on Maggie’s cheeks as she leaned down and kissed her. Maggie responded immediately, stepping closer and slipping her arms around Alex’s waist, sucking gently on Alex’s lower lip, and making Alex’s knees go weak when Alex felt Maggie’s tongue slip into her mouth.

When the kiss ended, Alex opened her eyes to find Maggie smiling up at her.

“You know, we shouldn’t be doing this at work,” Maggie said.

“Probably not,” Alex said.

Maggie leaned up and kissed her again, and Alex moaned into Maggie’s mouth when she felt Maggie press their bodies together.

“I missed you,” Maggie said when she broke the second kiss.

“I missed you too,” Alex said.

“Are you really okay?” Maggie said.

Alex shook her head. “No,” she said. “I’m scared out of my mind.”
“Talk to me,” Maggie said.

“Someone tried to kill Kara,” Alex said. “Not in the middle of a fight because Kara was out there being Supergirl. Someone targeted her, and used a weapon designed to kill her. And someone tried to murder you. Two people I love, on the same day.”

Alex barely registered the shocked look on Maggie’s face before she leaned down, touching their foreheads. “I’m scared,” she said. “I’m afraid of losing Kara, and Mom, and you, and I’m afraid they’ll do something to my Dad before we can get him back.”

“Hey,” Maggie said. “We’re not going to let that happen.” Maggie lifted her head. “Look at me.”

Alex looked up and met Maggie’s gaze.

“We are going to find your Dad. We’re going to bring him home safe. Then we’re going to find the bastards who hurt Kara, and we’re going to lock them up and throw away the key.”

“Then we get to start a war with an intergalactic police force before they kill three quarters of the human race,” Alex said.

“If the job were easy, anyone could do it,” Maggie said. She reached up and brushed a loose strand of hair out of Alex’s face, tucking it behind her ear. “Let’s deal with one problem at a time, okay?”

Alex nodded. “Yeah,” she said. “I think I can do that.”

“Good,” Maggie said. “Because the first problem is, I don’t know when our next date will be.”

Alex grinned. “Well, you never did meet my mom,” she said. “Want to come to dinner at Kara’s tonight?”

“I’d like that,” Maggie said.

“Good,” Alex said. She nodded towards the sparring mats on the other side of the gym. “Now, show me what you’ve got.”

“On the second date?” Maggie asked. “I’m shocked! What kind of woman do you think I am?”

“Lady Kara,” Kolex said, drawing Kara’s attention away from the neuron scanner that was currently mapping Eliza’s mind onto the AI substrate.

“Yes, Kolex?” Kara asked.

“I have two incoming calls for you,” Kolex said. “One from James Olsen, and one from Barbara Gordon.”

Kara sighed, having a feeling that the timing wasn’t a coincidence, and wishing she could just leave it and curl up somewhere to rest.

“Conference them, and put it through,” Kara said, glancing over at Lois. “You want in on this?” she asked.

“Sure, why not?” Lois said.

“Hey, Kara.” Barbara and James both said at the same time.
“Barbara, James, I’ve got you on conference, and Lois and Eliza here with me,” she said.

“Oh,” Barbara said. “Um, I kind of wanted to ask what might be a sensitive question.”

“Um, Barbara, you mind if I go first?” James said. “Mine’s time sensitive.”

“Go ahead,” Barbara said.

“What’s up, James?” Kara asked.

“Clark was just here,” James said. “You might need to find a minute to talk to him.”

“If he’s interested in yelling at me some more about the fight this morning, I’d rather not,” Kara said.

“That’s part of it,” James said. “He’s upset about you meeting with Lena Luthor, and no offense Barbara, but I think Bruce is making him paranoid.”

“No offense taken,” Barbara said. “And it probably *is* Bruce making him paranoid.”

“What’s going on with Bruce?” Kara asked.

“He had Tim and I trace the money you used to buy out CatCo and those other companies,” Barbara said. “We traced it all the way back, and I think the date of your first stock purchases threw him for a loop.”

Kara frowned, because she really thought she’d covered her trail well enough that no one could find it, but then, the AI Gideon had written was a level three, meaning it was smart at its assigned task but otherwise dumber than dirt, so it might have missed something.

“And what date did you find?” Kara said.

“You sure you want that out there?” Barbara said.

Kara glanced over at Lois, who looked disturbingly similar to Cat when Cat had caught wind of a story.

“If Bruce knows, Clark knows, and pretty soon, the whole damn League will be up in my business. I trust Lois and James more than a lot of them.”

“The earliest transactions were dated back to nineteen ninety-eight,” Barbara said. “Which is a bit surprising, since it’s five years before you landed.”

“/...zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho/” Kara said.

“I heard that, Kara Danvers,” Eliza said from inside the neural scanner.

Kara rolled her eyes.

“What did she say?” Barbara asked.

“Nothing she’s going to repeat to impressionable young ears,” Lois said.

“I’m twenty-eight,” Barbara said.

“And Short Stuff has a filthy mouth,” Lois replied.

“Blame Aunt Astra,” Kara said. “I learned all the best expletives from her. Barbara, James, can I put
you on hold for a moment?”

“Sure,” Barbara said.

“Yeah,” James said.

“Kolex, hold current call. Get Susan, J’onn, Alex and Maggie on the line.”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

There was silence for a moment while Kolex dialed.

“Hey, Kara,” Alex said. “Maggie’s here with me.”

“Are you two somewhere private?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Maggie said, and Kara raised an eyebrow, because she could almost see Maggie struggling not to laugh.

“Ma’am,” Susan said before Kara could ask Maggie what was going on.

“Hey Susan,” Kara said. “I’ve already got Alex and Maggie on the line. We’re waiting for J’onn.”

“I’m here,” J’onn said. “What’s going on?”

“I’m in need of adult supervision,” Kara said.

“One moment,” Susan said. Everyone waited in silence, until she said, “I’m clear.”

“I have Lois Lane and Eliza here with me,” Kara said.

“Understood,” Susan replied.

“We have an issue,” Kara said. “Clark and Bruce are starting to get suspicious. Bruce had two of his people dig into my finances after what happened on Friday. They tracked things back as far as ninety-eight, which is five years before my pod landed.”

“Damn,” J’onn said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “And Clark’s getting squeamish about how I handled the Cadmus assassins this morning.”

“How big a problem are we talking?” Susan asked.

“I can contain it, if I have to,” Kara said. “Diana’s the only one in the League I’d have serious trouble with, and even then, I’d win.”

“Kara, are you sure about that?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “It’d be a fight if I had to take the whole League at once, but I’ve been in worse scrapes. I’d rather avoid it if I can.”

“You want to read them in?” Susan asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I didn’t read them in before because I was pretty sure Clark and Bruce would soil themselves, then do something profoundly stupid if they knew what Myriad was, but with Myriad destroyed, I think it might be time to bring them in.”
“Understood. Just Clark and Bruce, or do you want to read Diana in as well?” Susan asked.

“I’m thinking we should expand the circle of trust a bit,” Kara said. “I want to read in Bruce’s entire support structure, Clark, Diana, Lois and Lucy Lane, Eliza, Zatanna, Astra, and Cat Grant.”

“You want to read in two reporters?” J’onn asked.

“No,” Kara said, “I want to read in Lois, who Clark is going to tell anyway, and I want to read in Cat because I am sick of lying to people I care about.”

“I understand that,” J’onn said, “but—”

“She can be trusted, J’onn,” Kara said.

“Fine,” J’onn said.

“How many people total?” Susan asked.

“Thirty-two at current count,” Kara said.

“That’s… a lot of trust,” Susan said.

“I know,” Kara said. “On the other hand, given the size of the threats once Cadmus is dealt with, I think it’s probably a good idea. The more people who know about what’s coming, the less chance Earth is unprepared if Cadmus gets a lucky shot.”

“That’s a cheerful thought,” J’onn said.

“Yeah, well, did you think Zatanna and Alex were picking candy out of a piñata Friday afternoon?”

“Point taken,” J’onn said.

“Susan, what does Adult Supervision think?” Kara asked.

“Adult Supervision thinks she wants a vacation,” Susan said.

“Tell you what,” Kara said. “If we live through all of this, I’ll set you up with the Presidential Suite on an Olivia cruise.”

“The fact that you felt the need to preface that with ‘if we live through all of this’ is *why* I need a vacation,” Susan said. “But I also think you’re right. I’ve been wondering if we should read the President in as well.”

“I don’t think that would be a good idea,” Kara said. “Not yet.”

“You got a reason not to?” Susan asked.

“I’m reasonably sure we can trust Olivia, but the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs signed off on the order to take Astra and the other Fort Rozz prisoners, so I’m pretty sure he’s at least Cadmus friendly. I have no idea how many people in the administration are compromised and to what degree. The last thing we want is for Cadmus to be aware of what we know.”

“Shit, fuck, damn and hell! I hate it when you’re right,” Susan said. “Where do you want to do this?”

“I was thinking we’d bring everyone to Sanctuary,” Kara said. “It’s the one place I’m sure Cadmus can’t reach.”
“Understood,” Susan said. “Director, opinions?”

“This is your call Susan,” J’onn said. “We all agreed to that.”

“Then we’re a go,” Susan said. “Kara, if you want to add anyone else to the guest list, I’ll leave that to your discretion, with the explicit understanding that Lena Luthor is NOT invited. I know you trust her, but I’m not there yet.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “I can live with that for now, with the understanding that we may need to revisit this down the road.”

“I’ll agree to it once J’onn has had a chance to have a look around in her head and he clears her,” Susan said. “Is that acceptable?”

“I don’t like it, but I was the idiot who put you in charge, so I’ll put on my big girl panties and deal with it,” Kara said. “I’ll be at the DEO shortly. The neural scan should be finished in the next ten minutes or so, and I don’t need to baby-sit it while the AI compiles. I’ll extend the invites to Clark and Astra personally. Can you let Lucy know about the briefing?”

“Will do,” Susan said.

“Alex, Maggie, you still with me?” Kara asked.

“We’re here,” Alex said.

“I’d like you both here for the in brief as well.”

“Of course,” Alex said.

“Thank you,” Kara said. “Susan, Alex, Maggie, can you drop the line?”

“Yes ma’am,” Susan said.

“See you soon,” Alex said.

“Bye Kara,” Maggie said.

“You wanted to talk to me?” J’onn asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “You seemed upset this morning after the fight. I didn’t get a chance to ask why.”

“Your cousin and I had a disagreement,” J’onn said.

“Okay,” Kara said. “Hopefully tonight will clear that up. Did you speak with M’gann?”

“No,” J’onn said. “I don’t think I’m ready for that yet.”

“I know it’s hard, J’onn, but please consider it,” Kara said.

“I’ll try,” J’onn said.

“That’s all I ask. See you soon. Kara out,” Kara said. “Kolex, end call, and switch back to Barbara and James.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Kolex said.
“You guys still there?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Barbara said.

“Still here,” James said.

“Barbara, can you do me a favor?”

“Depends on what it is,” Barbara said.

“Round everybody up,” Kara said. “And email me a list of what everybody eats. We’re doing dinner and an in briefing at Sanctuary tonight.”

“Sure,” Barbara said. “But who’s *everybody*? That term’s a bit vague.”

“You, Stephanie, Cassandra, Kate, Dick, Jason, Artemis, Tim, Alfred, Damian, Luke, Duke, Bruce, Selina and Diana. James, can you let Winn, Jackson and Cat know I need to meet with them tonight? Tell Cat I’ll cover the cost for the nanny to stay late,” Kara said.

“Um… are you sure you want to bring Cat in on this?” James asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Cat’s already a target. I think she deserves to know why.”

“Right. I’m on it,” James said. “What about Clark?”

“I’ll take care of Clark,” Kara said. “I need to invite some additional guests anyway.”

“I’ll get to work,” Barbara said. “Mind if I bring Victor Stone along too?”

“Victor’s in town?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Barbara said.

“Definitely!” Kara said. “He’ll be a huge help.”

“Great. And just for the record, Tim and I both wanted to just ask you what the hell was going on, right from the start.”

Kara laughed. “That’s because you, Tim, Alfred and Stephanie are the only ones in the whole bunch that have a lick of sense.”

“Eh,” Barbara said. “Kate’s not bad, as long as you keep her away from cute girls.”

“Oh, crap!” Kara said.

“What?” Barbara asked.

“I just realized I’d be putting Kate in the same room as my extremely gay sister and her even gayer girlfriend”

“Oh, sweetie, I’d worry more about your own virtue if I were you. Our girl Kate has a thing for blondes,” Barbara said.

“And on that note, I’m out of here,” James said.

“Coward!” Kara shouted, but her only answer was the click of a line disconnecting from the conference.
“Tell your robot to make popcorn,” Barbara said.

“Send a list,” Kara said.

“Will do,” Barbara said.

“You know Zatanna, right?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Barbara said.

“Call her and extend an invite. Tell her it’s from me, and it’s urgent,” Kara said.

“Will do. Anything else?” Barbara asked.

“Tell Kate we’re dating?” Kara asked.

“Yeah, you realize I’m straight, right?” Barbara said.

“Well, someone forgot to tell that to the way you look at Cassie’s ass,” Kara said.

“Shut up,” Barbara said.

“There was actual drool,” Kara said.

“I hate you,” Barbara said.

“I don’t blame you,” Kara said. “It’s a nice ass.”

“I will pay you to shut up,” Barbara said.

“Not as nice as Donna’s,” Kara said.

“I’m serious, I will give you all of Bruce’s credit card numbers if you stop,” Barbara said.

“You know you love me,” Kara said.

“I’m hanging up now,” Barbara said.

“See you soon,” Kara said.

“You too,” Barbara said.

“Kolex, end call,” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Kolex said.

“Monitor my email for the food list from Barbara and prep enough food for the guest list I just mentioned. Enough for two meals. Make extra, because I may add to the guest list. Pull files on Harleen Quinzel and Pamela Isley and prepare self-regenerating bioactive injections as appropriate. Also prep stasis capsules for the injections.”

“Understood,” Kolex said.

Kara looked over at Lois and Eliza who were both watching her.

“Would you guys mind waiting here for a couple of hours?” she asked.
“If that’s what you need,” Eliza said.

“I’m used to waiting,” Lois said. “But Kara, are you sure bringing Cat into this is a good idea? It’s going to pretty much give away everyone’s secret identity to the woman who runs one of the largest media companies in the world.”

“Lois,” Kara said, “You saw me tell her I’m Supergirl in the hospital the other night, but she’s known for a while. Most likely since she got the first pictures of Supergirl the Monday after I caught Alex’s plane. And she saw me speaking Kryptonian to Clark. If you honestly think Cat doesn’t know who Batman and Wonder Woman are at this point, you don’t know Cat at all.”

“That’s great,” Lois said. “Just great.”

“Yeah. That’s eight weeks she’s gone without outing the lot of us. And honestly, if I had to pick who to trust out of everyone who’s going to in the room tonight, Cat’s number three on the list, right behind Alex and Eliza.”

“I think I’m insulted,” Lois said.

“It it’s any consolation, you beat Kal and Bruce,” Kara said.

“I notice you didn’t say I beat Diana,” Lois said.

Kara just smiled back at her.

Lois sighed. “You’ve spent too much time with Cat,” she said.

“I’ll take that as a compliment,” Kara said. The neural scanner beeped, indicating it was finished, and Kara turned to Eliza. “We’re done. The system will take about an hour to compile, but after that, we should have a functional Level Twelve AI.”

Eliza stood up and looked at the display on the workstation Kara was at. “I hate to admit it, but don’t know what that means,” she said. “I’m a biologist, not a computer scientist.”

“It means we’ll have the third most advanced computer on Earth,” Kara said. “And unlike a mother box or father box, we’ll be able to trust this one.”

Kara stood up. “I’ll be back as soon as I can. Kolex will make sure you have everything you need while I’m gone.”

“Be safe,” Eliza said.

“I’ll do my best. Kolex, I need a transmat to the DEO.”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho
Literal: *Fuck the shadows*
Semantic: Fucking Hell
Discord

Chapter Summary

Kara returns to National City to Invite Astra, Clark, Bruce and Diana to Sanctuary for a briefing, but runs into a small problem along the way. Meanwhile, the Legends get their first glimpse of Supergirl.

Chapter Notes

For anyone who's interested, I'm started posting some of my notes on the setting in the Future Shock setting guide.

Kara appeared on the landing deck at the DEO’s downtown installation in a flash of light which felt a little like an ice pick being driven into her eye sockets. She waited for the searing pain to go away, sighing when it left behind a renewed throbbing in her hear. She took a moment to gaze out at National City, taking in the once familiar view to try to settle her nerves before she headed inside.

It didn’t do a lot of good, but she couldn’t wait, so she entered the DEO. The level of activity was a bit less frantic than it had been earlier in the day, and Kara smiled as she saw Leslie standing next to Susan, holding a tablet as the two talked back and forth. Leslie was the one who spotted her first.

“Hey, Sunshine,” she said, making Susan look up from the tablet. “You look like hell.”

“Thanks,” Kara said. “I love how you always have something nice to say.”

“No offence, ma’am, but she’s right. You’re looking pretty rough,” Susan said.

“I’m tired,” Kara said. “I haven’t had a moment’s rest since I woke up yesterday.”

“I’ve had days like that,” Susan said. “Anything we can do to help?”

“Tell me everyone will be ready for the briefing?”

Susan nodded. “I spoke to Assistant Director Lane. She’s currently at the desert facility, wrapping up the control transfer. I arranged with Konex to have her transmat from there. Everyone else should be fine.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “How are you doing Leslie?”

“I’m good,” she said. “Still itching to pound Henshaw’s face in.”

“We’ll find him,” Kara said. “Soon. I promise.”

“Good,” Leslie said. “Because we’re getting nowhere on this.”
Kara glanced at the tablet. “What are you working on?”

“We’ve been trying to eliminate either TychoTech or Lord Technologies as a suspect in the attempt on your life,” Susan said. “The problem is, all three repeater chains end in a location that can reach both facilities, so there’s no way to narrow it down, which means we can’t get a warrant to search either location.”

“I thought we already had warrants for Lord Technologies,” Kara said.

“Those have already been executed,” Susan said. “We can’t go back and search Lord’s building again without new warrants, and new warrants need new probable cause.”

“We couldn’t get anything from McGill?” Kara asked.

“Nothing that we didn’t already know,” Susan said. “He’s sending reports to Lillian Luthor about everything going on here.”

“Is that enough to pull Lillian in?” Kara asked.

“No,” Susan said. “J’onn got the information.”

“Ah,” Kara said. “And telepathic interrogation is not admissible in court.” She shook her head. “Well, give it a few days, and I’ll own the TychoTech and Lord Industries buildings.”

“I’m pretty sure Tycho and Lord are both busy cleaning up anything incriminating before the mergers go through,” Susan said.

“Probably,” Kara said, “but depriving them both of a base of operations is still worth it. We ID the shooters from this morning yet?”

“Yeah,” Susan said. “All four of them are ex-military, and all four had ties to the Planetary Hygiene Action Network.”

“The what?” Leslie asked.

“Lex Luthor’s little anti-alien club,” Susan said. “FBI keeps tabs, but most of the heavy hitters in the group got locked up right alongside Lex.”

“Fun times,” Kara said. “I don’t suppose a judge would consider that probable cause for a search warrant on all of Lillian Luthor’s holdings?”

“I suspect Maggie and Lucy would both laugh in your face for even suggesting it,” Susan said.

“I get no respect,” Kara said. She looked around for a moment. “Is Astra here?”

“No, ma’am. Tracking has her in the Village,” Susan said, referring to the unofficial nickname the DEO had given to the temporary housing set up for the surrendered Fort Rozz escapees. “Would you like me to get her on Comms?”

“No thanks,” Kara said. “I’ll do a couple of laps around the city, show the colors, find my cousin, and then head out to the desert myself.”

Susan nodded. “Have fun, ma’am. Watch out for the pigeons.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “That was one time,” she said. “And the pigeon was fine.”
“Traumatized, but fine,” Susan said.

Kara stuck her tongue out at her, before turning and heading back to the landing deck, tapping her ear piece as she kicked off into the sky.

“Konex, get Kal on the line,” she said as she began to take a slow lap around the city, checking for trouble as she went.

“Hey, Kara,” Kal said a moment later.

“Hey, Kal,” she said. “You with Bruce and Diana?”

“Not at the moment,” he said. “I was about to head over to your place and pick up Lois for dinner.”

“She isn’t there,” Kara said. “She and Eliza are out at Sanctuary.”

“Oh,” Kal said. “Any particular reason?”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “There were helping me with a project. That’s kind of what I wanted to talk to the three of you about.”

“Okay,” Kal replied.

“I’ve already got Barbara rounding up Bruce’s people, and mine are mostly taken care of. I’m headed out to the desert base in a few minutes to get Astra, but I think it’s time I got everyone up to speed on what’s happening.”

“That’s good to hear, Kara,” he said. “Because you’re making a lot of people worry.”

“A lot of people being you and Bruce,” Kara said, rolling her eyes as she curved around Nation’s Bay. “Seriously, Kal, I’m your family. You can’t give me the benefit of the doubt?”

“It’s not like that, Kara. I want to trust you-”

“Then trust me,” Kara said.

“Kara…”

“Trust is a choice, Kal,” Kara said. “I’m choosing to trust you, to tell you everything. Despite the fact that you’ve already demonstrated how little respect you have for my privacy.”

“That’s not fair,” Kal said.

“Neither was you telling James my identity,” Kara said.

“We’ve already been over this,” Kal said.

“Yeah, but we might as well go over it again, since you didn’t learn anything the first time,” Kara grumbled. “Just, not right now. Tonight is going to suck enough without having to listen to you justify making decisions for me without even bothering to consult me. Go, find Bruce and Diana. Konex will be ready to transmat the three of you out to Sanctuary in about ninety minutes, and I’ll tell you everything.”

There was silence on the line for a minute, before Kal finally said, “Fine,” in a tone that made it clear it wasn’t.
Kara took a deep breath as she flew towards the heart of down town, wondering why she was so cranky and irritable today. Maybe it was the headache. Maybe she was just tired. Falling asleep at CatCo certainly suggested that. Except she didn’t normally get irritable when she was tired. She normally got cuddly.

A small smile spread across her face as she remembered curling up in bed with Sara, cuddling her like she was a teddy bear, and falling asleep with her head on Sara’s shoulder. Sara used to call her “Alkawala al-Saghir”. The little koala.

“I’m just saying that maybe Gideon is wrong,” Sara said. “We’ve been here a day and a half, and she hasn’t been able to identify the time aberration yet.”

“I assure you, Miss Lance, something is definitely out of place,” Rip said as they walked down the sidewalk.

Sara was pretty sure Rip was right, if she were honest. The entire city felt tense, like they were waiting for the other shoe to drop. She’d noticed it the moment they’d left the Waverider, after sitting there for over a day while Gideon tried to sort out what the Time Aberration was. The problem being, Gideon didn’t have historical records for Earth 38 loaded. Gideon’s memory cores were huge, but even so, there were limits to how much data they could store, so the Time Masters would typically load in records for a specific universe only when a ship was being dispatched for a mission in that universe. Since the Waverider’s last Universe hop had been Earth 46, that left them critically short on data to work with for an Aberration on Earth 38.

“Maybe that’s it?” Jax said, pointing up.

Sara looked up, seeing a figure clad in red, yellow and black fly through the sky above them. The sight was like a kick in the gut. She saw the blonde woman’s face in her mind, saw her smiling, saw her laughing, saw her crying, saw her leaning in for a kiss that sat Sara’s heart and body on fire.

“Oh,” Rip said with even more annoyance than he usually managed to put in his tone. “It’s her.”

“You know her?” Sara asked.

“Unfortunately. She calls herself ‘Supergirl’,” Rip said in a contemptuous tone.

Sara had to stop herself from reaching for her knife. She took a deep breath, when what she really wanted to do was remind him, in the most painful way she could come up with, to keep Supergirl’s name out of his mouth. It took her a moment to shake off the impulse, and the memory of doing exactly that.

“‘Annoying Girl’ would be more like it,” he said. “She does get to be quite a good friend of your Mr. Allen.”

“She knows Barry?” Snart asked. “And you don’t think someone from Earth 38, where the Aberration originated, who just happens to be friends with someone on Earth 1, where the Aberration is having a major impact, might be involved?” Snart turned to look at Sara. “I didn’t realize it was Rip’s turn to be the stupid one today.”

“I didn’t say she *knows* Mr. Allen. I said she *will* know Mr. Allen. The two of them don’t meet until next April. And I’d like to avoid any contact with her if at all possible,” Rip said.

“Why is that?” Sara asked.
Rip closed his eyes and sighed. “If you must know, it’s because every time I’ve ever met the woman, she’s punched me in the face before saying so much as hello.”

Sara and Jax both tried to hold it in, but they looked at each other out of pure reflex, and the moment Sara saw the expression on Jax’s face, she completely lost it, laughing out loud. Jax lost it at the exact same moment, which set Ray off. Martin was trying to keep a stern look on his face, but even he was having trouble not smiling, and both Snart and Mic both looked like Christmas had come early.

“It looks like flying people aren’t uncommon on this world,” Stein said.

Sara looked up and felt like her heart stopped when a second form slammed into Supergirl in mid-air.

This time, Kara heard it coming, even over the near constant pounding in her head. A human form in flight produced a lot more turbulence that the far more aerodynamic shape of a missile, and Kara was watching for threats, expecting another attack. She rolled, spotting Metallo barreling towards her, and immediately decided to take the hit.

He slammed into her, his shoulder sinking into her stomach and shifting her course. If she hadn’t been ready, they would have torn through a residential tower. Instead, Kara grabbed him and poured on the acceleration so they flew wide of the tower as she started to climb. She reached down, grabbing the back of Metallo’s shirt and hauled upwards as she drove the elbow of her other arm down into his spine as hard as she could. The shirt tore away as the blow sent him slamming down almost thirty stories, barely recovering before he hit the ground.

“Supergirl to Base, I am under attack. Say again, I am under attack,” Kara said as she turned and poured on the speed, heading towards the desert base. Metallo followed for a moment, but as they reached the city limits, he pulled up and turned back, heading deeper into the city.

Kara turned and shot towards him, breaking the sound barrier to keep him from hearing as she approached. He still knew she was coming somehow and turned towards her, but she had momentum and experience on her side. She grabbed his leg as she passed, coming in under his guard and dragging him around to drive a kneecap into the side of his head as he flailed his arms, trying to regain control of his motion.

Kara let go and looped around for another pass, smiling when she saw the blow from her knee had split the skin covering his face, baring the Prometheum endoskeleton underneath. She hit him right in the face with a blast from her heat vision as she flew by, burning away the left side of his face, leaving the cybernetic replacements for the left side of his skull and jaw bare to the world.

She headed towards the base again, moving more slowly to give him time to recover. He chased her but stopped at the edge of the city and turned back.

“Supergirl,” J’onn’s voice came, “what’s happening?”

“Corben’s out here,” she said. “I’m trying to lure him out of the city, but he’s not biting.”

“He doesn’t care about collateral damage, but he knows you do,” J’onn said.

“Maybe,” Kara said as she turned and started to circle the city. Metallo followed, always staying over the edge of town, like he was taunting her. “Get Cat on the line.”

“What?” J’onn asked.
“I need to talk to Cat,” Kara said.

“On it,” Susan’s voice came.

Kara was just starting her second lap around the city when Cat spoke.

“Kara,” Cat said, “what’s happening?”

“I’m fighting the man who tried to kill my friend Maggie,” Kara said. “I can’t lure him out of the city, so I need someplace large and empty.”

“Siegel Stadium,” was Cat’s immediate response. “There’s nothing but closed parking lots, abandoned warehouses and empty hangers between the stadium and Otto Binder Airport. Nearly twenty city blocks. The whole area is scheduled for demolition in a few months.”

“Got it!” Kara said, turning towards Metallo, cutting the angle sharp and pouring on the speed.

She slammed into him doing nearly four times the speed of sound and carried him almost ten miles before they slammed down into the untended grass in the middle of Siegel Stadium. As they came to a stop, Metallo’s Kryptonite beam erupted from his chest, slamming into her face. The radiation shield held, but the sheer force of the beam knocked her off him.

She climbed to her feat, shaking her head as the pounding that had been there all day intensified.

“Supergirl, we have backup inbound,” Susan said.

“Negative,” Kara said, watching Metallo climb to his feet. “Kryptonite is in play. I have the situation contained.”

“That’s what you think,” a voice said from behind her.

Kara moved almost instantly, pouring on the superspeed. The heat vision beam missed her, slamming into Metallo, burning away the rest of his skin, leaving nothing but a bare endoskeleton with a Kryptonite heart.

“Henshaw,” Kara said.

“No,” he said. “I’m the new Superman.”

Kara shrugged. “Whatever,” she said, then she hit him full force with her heat vision. He stumbled back, but unlike Metallo, not all of his skin burned away. The skin covering the upper right part of his face, and his left hand were intact. His clothes burnt away, but he’d been wearing a guard’s underlayer from Fort Rozz under them. It was made of the same sort of barrier fabric as the Supergirl costume she’d been wearing until she’d been hit by the missile, and was unscathed.

“Sunshine, did you just say Henshaw was there?” Leslie asked.

Kara wondered for a second how Leslie had gotten on comms but decided not to question it. “Yes,” she said.

“On my way,” Leslie said.

Kara didn’t answer, both because she figured Leslie was already in the grid, and because she had to dodge another Kryptonite beam from Metallo. She jumped up, and back letting the green column of energy sail past her as she deployed her shield, bringing it up and deflecting a blast from Henshaw’s heat vision. She planted her feet, waiting for the next attack when she noticed one of the stadium
lights flicker on for a moment. She used a burst of super speed to slam into Metallo, knocking him across the stadium to slam into the bleachers, then turned to Henshaw, who was completely unaware of the furious woman standing behind him.

“You really shouldn’t have hurt Leslie,” Kara said.

“Why not?” Henshaw said. “Even you couldn’t stand her.”

“She’s actually kind of cool once you get to know her,” Kara said. “But I was more thinking about the part where she’s going to kick your ass.”

“That missile must have done more damage than you let on,” Henshaw said.

“Hey, asshole!” Leslie yelled.

Henshaw turned around, right as Clark, Diana and Bruce dropped out of the sky, riding to the rescue like the cavalry, only to find they were late.

Leslie’s lightning bolt hit Henshaw square in the chest, and his whole body instantly seized as all that nice, metal cybernetics carried the electricity places that electricity should never go. Sensitive places, like unprotected brain tissue, and the hand full of still-organic organs tucked into Henshaw’s body.

Kara, having fought Henshaw and Livewire both enough to know their strengths and weaknesses, knew that battle was over, and turned her attention to Metallo, who was digging himself out of the hole.

“Wonder Woman,” Kara called, “Kryptonite! Protect Kal!”

She shot across the stadium, shield in front of her as Diana summoned her own shield and stepped in front of Kal. Metallo, distracted by the new arrivals and focused on the shield plowing towards him, never noticed a handle drop into Kara’s palm and didn’t see the blade that extended from it until it was too late. The virtually indestructible sword forged from the same alloy as her shield swung out and passed through a joint in Metallo’s neck, decapitating him.

Kara landed about twenty feet behind Metallo, and turned around, just in time to see Henshaw stumble and collapse, blood leaking out of his mouth as smoke billowed from his cybernetics. She collapsed her sword and shield and stowed the sword handle back in the bracer on her right wrist, then started towards Leslie, tapping her ear piece.

“Susan, hostiles are neutralized. I need a cleanup crew with hazmat gear at Siegel stadium. I have loose Kryptonite on the scene,” Kara said.


“She’s fine,” Kara said. “She took Henshaw down like a boss.”

There wasn’t any response to that, but Kara didn’t give it much thought because Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman were headed her way even as she reached Leslie.

“That was awesome!” Kara said.

“Is he dead?” Leslie asked.

Kara turned and looked at Henshaw, letting her X-Ray vision get a good scan in.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Come of the cybernetics are still on line, but you cooked all the organic bits.”
“Good,” Leslie said.

“Kara,” Kal said.

“Not now,” Kara said, stepping closer to Leslie, and putting a hand on her shoulder. “You okay?” she asked.

Leslie nodded. “Yeah,” she said.

“Kara,” Kal said.

Kara waved her hand in acknowledgement. “You sure?”


“I could go a few days without getting shot in the head,” Kara said.

“Kara,” Kal said.

Kara’s temper snapped. She spun around to face Kal. “Not now!” she bellowed with enough force to knock Kal back a step. She regretted it immediately, because it only made the pounding in her head worse. She turned back to Leslie. “We’ll get you back to the DEO as soon as the containment team gets here.”

“I said I’m…” Leslie didn’t finish the sentence. Instead, she turned and vomited.

Kara caught her before she fell over, holding her up and rubbing her back. “Easy,” she said. “Easy. That’s just the adrenalin. Happens to a lot of people with their first kill.”

Leslie nodded, clutching her stomach and leaning into Kara as figures started dropping out of the sky. J’onn was first, followed by Astra and the Kryptonians from Fort Rozz. The chopper carrying Alex, Maggie, and the containment team sat down next.

“Astra, keep your people away from the corpse in the stands,” Kara said. “There’s a radioactive material from Krypton up there. The war suits should shield you, but I don’t want to take chances.”

Astra nodded and began giving instructions.

“Astra, it’s Corben. They converted him into a Metallo unit. Kryptonite heart. Get it contained.”

“On it,” Alex said.

Kara turned back to Leslie. “I know you hate helicopters, so I won’t ask if you want to ride back in this one. I can have someone fly you back, or you can take the electric lines.”

“I’ll take the lines,” Leslie said. “I hate flying.”

“You did great, Leslie,” Kara said. “He won’t ever hurt anyone again.”

Leslie looked up at her, and smiled, giving a little nod. “Of course I did, Sunshine.” She took a deep breath, and straightened up, pulling away from Kara. “I told you I was going to kick his ass.”

Kara nodded and smiled. “Yes, you did.”

“Kara,” Kal said.
Kara turned around, fury in her eyes. “WHAT?” she snapped.

“Was that a person?” Kal asked. He pointed to Metallo. “Did you just kill someone?”

“'/:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho” Kara muttered. “Yes, Kal, that used to be a person. He was a paid assassin named John Corben, and yes, I killed him. He shot Maggie in the back twice on Friday, and he was shooting a Kryptonite death laser at me, so I cut his head off.”

“You’ve killed before,” Diana said.

Kara looked at her for a moment, tempted to lie, but decided against it. The pounding in her head was making it hard to think clearly enough to come up with a believable lie, and everything would be out in the open soon enough.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“How many times?” Kal asked.

Kara reached up, rubbing her temples. “It’s a long story,” she said. “I’ll tell you everything when we get to Sanctuary, but we need to deal with all of this first.”

“How many?” Kal demanded.

“Hey, back off, Hair Gel,” Leslie said, taking a step towards Kal.

Kara suddenly noticed that everyone in the stadium, from the clean-up crew all the way up to J’onn and Astra were staring at her and Kal, and it hit her why. Kal was in an attack posture. Not quite a fighting stance, not yet, but he was getting ready to attack her.

She hadn’t noticed it earlier because the pounding in her head was distracting her, she was completely exhausted, and her fuse was so short she felt like she was two seconds away from punching him.

“Kal,” Kara said, forcing herself to use as calm a tone as she could, “there’s more going on than you understand. If you’ll let me finish here, we’ll head out to Sanctuary, and I’ll explain everything. Just like I said.”

“No,” Kal said. “You’ve gone too far.”

Diana reached out and put a hand on Kal’s shoulder. “Give her time to explain herself before you make a rash decision,” she said.

Kal shrugged her hand off. “No. I’ve waited too long, and now two people are dead.” He squared his shoulders and took a deep breath, and Kara knew exactly what was about to happen. She could see the disaster unfolding in front of her, and made one last, desperate attempt to stop it.

“Don’t,” Kara said. “Not here, Kal-El. Not now. If you do it, you can’t take it back when you find out what’s going on.”

“It doesn’t matter what’s going on,” Kal said. “I just watched you kill a man and condone the death of another.”

“Murders and assassins who were trying to kill me,” Kara said, forcing herself to stay calm, when all she wanted was to punch him in the face. She pointed at Henshaw. “Hank Henshaw drove a knife into Jeremiah Danvers’ stomach when Jeremiah tried to stop him from murdering J’onn. He
murdered dozens of aliens, and he tried to kill Leslie and I both last week.” She pointed to the corpse of Metallo. “John Corben was a paid assassin who tried to kill one of my best friends. He was raised from the dead by Lillian Luthor, modified with Nanotech and fitted with a weapon specifically designed to kill Kryptonians.

“Cadmus sent them here to kill me. Cadmus is bigger and more dangerous than you realize, Kal, and it’s not the only threat out there. Please, just let us process the scene. It will take half an hour, and then I’ll explain everything.”

Kal looked down at the still smoking corpse of Henshaw, then over at the spot where Corben’s severed head sat before turning back to her, his face set, and she knew she hadn’t gotten through to him. She shifted her gaze shifted to his left, to where Bruce stood there, staring at her like she was a threat.

“When this all goes wrong,” she said, “I want you to remember that you did this.”

“You did this, Kara,” Kal said. “I, Kal of the house of El, first born of the first born, and rightful heir stand today to request and demand my birthright as head of the House of El.”

“You son of a bitch,” Alex said.

Kara held up her hand, stopping Alex from interfering.

She glanced over at Astra, who looked ready to kill on her behalf. “It’s okay,” she said. “He can’t win.”

She saw the shock on Astra’s face, and watched as it was slowly replaced with satisfaction. Astra nodded her head.

Kara turned back to Kal. “Kal, son of Jor, son of Seg, son of Tel, son of Val, and son by uncounted fathers of Erok, founder of the House of El, I am Kara, first born of the second born, daughter of Zor, son of Seg, son of Tel, son of Val, and daughter by uncounted fathers of Erok, founder of the House of El, and I find you unfit to lead. I challenge your worth, by Intelligence, Wisdom or Strength. Name your measure.”

“I chose the Challenge of Strength,” Kal said.

“Then by your weakness shall I bring you low,” Kara said.

Kara turned to Astra. “Astra In-Ze, as the eldest member of the eldest house not directly involved in the challenge, I ask you to stand as judge. Will you accept?”

“I will,” Astra said.

Kara turned back to Kal. “I made challenge, and tradition demands immediate settlement. You, as the challenged, may request dispensation for a change in venue. I would suggest moving to Sanctuary in one hour’s time. I don’t want to fight you in the middle of a crowded city.”

Kal turned to Astra and nodded.

“Kal of the House of El stands Challenged for the leadership of his house. As the challenged party, he has requested one hour to prepare, and a change of venue. This will be moved to the fortress called Sanctuary, held by Kara Zor-El.”

Kara turned to J’onn. “Be at Sanctuary in forty-five minutes,” she said. “I’ll make sure Susan has the
J’onn nodded.

Kara turned to Alex. “Get the Kryptonite secure as fast as you can. I’ll need you there.”

“Done,” Alex said.

Kara turned to Leslie. “Want to watch me kick his ass?” she asked.

“Damn straight!” Leslie said.

Kara nodded and pitched her voice so everyone on the field could hear her. “All Kryptonians, prepare for transmat.” She reached up and tapped her ear piece. “Konex, scan my location. Identify all Kryptonians, Batman, Wonder Woman, and Leslie Willis. Initiate transmat of all targets to Sanctuary.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex said.

There was a flash of light, and Kara was gone, along with thirty-three other people.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian
.:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho
Literal: Fuck the shadows
Semantic: Fucking Hell
They materialized in the grand hall of Sanctuary.

“Kolex, seal the chamber,” Kara snapped.

Heavy Sunstone doors slammed down, sealing the room, locking out Eliza and Lois. Kara turned to face Kal.

“You brought this on yourself,” she said. “I love you, but when I fight you, I will not be your cousin. I will be your enemy. I will not be kind. I will not show mercy. I will hurt you. I will break you. And I will make you yield. I love you, Kal, but I will not yield, not to spare your life, not to spare my own. In order to win, you will have to kill me. Decide now if you want Lois to see either of those outcomes, because she will be in here the moment I open the doors, and I have too much respect for her to send her away.”

She turned away from him before he could answer. “Kolex, lift seal, and prepare two sets of dueling robes. One in my size, one for Kal-El.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Kolex replied as the doors slid open.

Kara looked at Astra. “Kolex will show you to the dueling chamber. I have things to attend too.”

Astra bowed slightly, and Kara could see it in her eyes that she wanted to say more but couldn’t. Her role as judge prevented her from offering support of comfort to either of them. Kara turned to Diana.

“This was Leslie’s first fight,” Kara said.

Diana gave her a simple nod. It was all Kara need to know Diana would handle things. She turned to Leslie.

“Stick close to Diana,” she said. “I need to take care of a few things, just in case.”

“I can take care of myself,” Leslie said.

“I know,” Kara said, giving her a smile that was only half forced. “But just because you can, doesn’t mean you should have too. I’d stay with you myself if I could, but I can’t. It would make me feel better if Diana stayed with you.”

Leslie nodded.

“Good,” Kara said. She looked up as Eliza and Lois came into the room.

“What’s going on?” Lois asked.
“Kal can explain,” Kara said. “I’ll be in the medical hall. Eliza, please send Alex my way when she gets here.”

“Of course,” Eliza said.

Kara turned and headed for the medical hall.

“Konex, I need you,” she said once she was out of the grand hall. There was a flash of the transmat system and Konex was floating beside her.

“How can I be of assistance?”

“Fire up the fabbers,” she said. “We have a lot to do, and very little time to do it in.”

General Braxton looked up at the sound of a knock on his door.

“Come in,” he said, and Phillip opened the door.

“Sir, you said you wanted to be apprised of any incidents regarding direct attacks on Supergirl,” Phillip said.

“What’s happened?” Braxton asked.

“Unclear, sir, but initial reports suggest she just threw down with Henshaw and a second, unknown individual in Siegel stadium,” Phillip said.

“Thank you, Major,” Braxton said. “Would you be so kind as to get SecDef on the line?”

“Of course, sir,” Phillip said.

Phillip disappeared, and Braxton waited a few minutes before his phone rang. He picked it up.

“Hey, Winston,” Braxton said.

“Hey, Abe,” Secretary Lewis replied. “What can I do for you?”

“Have you seen the news from National City?” Braxton asked.

“Supergirl fighting Cyborgs,” Lewis said. “Sounds pretty routine for a city with a cape.”

“Except one of those Cyborgs was supposed to belong to us,” Braxton said. “Hank Henshaw was part of the Cyborg Superman program approved for Project Cadmus.”

“I see,” Lewis said. “What are you suggesting?”

“We need to cut Cadmus loose before this splashes back on us,” Braxton said.

“We agreed that Cadmus is still vital,” Lewis said.

“We need something like Cadmus,” Braxton said, “but we’ve clearly lost control of the existing project.”

“The last yard of the race is not the time to change horses,” Lewis replied.

“Winston-“
“No,” Lewis replied. “Just give Lane whatever support he asks for.”

“Yes, sir,” Braxton said. “Good night.”

He hung up without waiting for a response and leaned back in his seat, staring ahead without really seeing. This was bad. Lane was enough of a bigot that he should never have been let near Project Cadmus. Unfortunately, when Braxton had taken over from his predecessor, Lane was too embedded. Oh, he didn’t have any connection on paper, but Braxton could read between the lines well enough to know who’d been setting the agenda. It didn’t help that Lillian Luthor had half the senators on the appropriations committee in her pocket.

He reached down and opened a drawer in his desk and pulled out the bottle of Dewar’s Blended Scotch he kept there. It was cheap, not the kind of stuff he’d serve a guest, but he’d picked up a taste for it back when he’d been a lowly Second Lieutenant, and he always went back to it when shit was about to hit the fan.

He just wondered how badly he was going to get sprayed.

“Lady Kara, Lady Alex is outside the medical hall,” Konex said.

“Is anyone with her?” Kara asked.

“Agent Sawyer,” Konex said.

“Let them in,” Kara said.

The door to the medical hall slid open as Kara stood up, the motion making her head throb. Alex marched right across the room and threw her arms around Kara in a fierce hug, and Kara hugged her back, just as tightly as she dared.

“I’m sorry,” Alex said. “I can’t believe he’s being this big an asshole.”

Kara sighed as she let go of Alex and stepped back. “I should have told him what’s going on,” Kara said. “I knew that it would come to this if I didn’t, but I just haven’t had a single moment since Cat texted Kaldur’ahm on Thursday.”

“Are you okay?” Maggie asked. “You look rough.”

“No,” Kara said. “I’m exhausted. I want to go home and sleep for a month, but I can’t, because everything’s gone to shit.”

“Hey,” Alex said, “we’re here. We’ll get through this.”

Kara nodded. “Sorry,” she said. “I keep flying off the handle today.”

“You’ve got a good excuse,” Maggie said. “The last few days have been one pile of shit after another.”

“And now I’ve got to go beat my baby cousin until he begs for his life,” Kara said. She looked at Alex. “This is what I meant when I said sometimes I think it would have been better if I hadn’t made it off Krypton.”

“Hey!” Maggie said, stepping closer and putting a hand on Kara’s shoulder. “None of that. You’re having a rough time, but we’re here. We’re your family, Kara, and we love you.”
Kara looked at Maggie for a moment, then looked at Alex, seeing the agreement and determination on her face, and it was all too much. The attack, seeing Barry and Oliver again, the moments she’d managed to steal with Cat, the declaration at the bar, and the attack that morning, the argument with Kal, seeing Lena again, talking to Lucy and Leslie, going to see Eliza, the decision to tell everybody about her future timeline, the fight with Henshaw and Metallo, and the challenge from Kal. Tears welled up, and before she could stop it, they were spilling down her cheeks, and she was crying in exhaustion, anguish and fear.

Alex immediately pulled her into a hug. “I’ve got you,” she said.

“It’s too much,” Kara said, squeezing her eyes shut, trying her best to stop the tears. She felt Maggie’s arms wrap around her as well.

“We’ve got you, Kara,” Maggie said.

“We don’t have time for this,” Kara said.

“That asshole can wait,” Alex said.

“I can’t,” Kara said. “If I’m not in the dueling chamber at the end of the hour, I forfeit the challenge. I’ll be expelled from the House of El.”

“I’m going to kill him,” Alex said.

Kara took a deep breath and pulled out of the impromptu group hug. “You might not get the chance,” she said, reaching up and wiping her eyes. “If he won’t yield, I’ll have to kill him.”

“Kara, you can’t,” Alex said.

“I might not have a choice,” she said.

“Kara, if you kill him, you’ll spend the rest of your life in a cell,” Maggie said.

“No,” she said. “The resolution that the UN passed to protect the Fortress of Solitude is a little broad. It says, ‘any enclave or refuge established beyond national borders by a descendant of Krypton shall hence forth be considered native Kryptonian soil.’ That’s why I convinced Kal to move the duel here. Sanctuary is governed by Kryptonian law. If I kill him in the Challenge of Strength, I’m protected.”

“Thank God for small favors,” Alex said.

“This is ridiculous,” Cat said, making Kara, Alex and Maggie all jump in shock.

Kara turned towards the entrance to the medical hall, where Cat and Winn stood.

“I tried to tell her she should wait with everyone else,” Winn said, “but…”

“But she’s Cat Grant,” Kara said, half exasperated, half amused.

“Yeah, that,” Winn said.

“You mind explaining what the hell you’re thinking?” Cat said. “A duel to the death? With Superman?”

“It doesn’t have to be,” Kara said. “If he yields control of the House to me, we can both walk away from this.”
Cat walked forward, anger clear on her face. “Please tell me this isn’t some macho pissing contest over who’s in charge,” Cat said. “I thought you were better than that.”

“It’s not,” Kara said, feeling her temper start to rise again.

“Well, that’s what it looks like,” Cat said.

“Those Kryptonians out there are willing to follow me,” Kara said. “If I let Kal take over as the Head of House El, I will have to answer to him.”

“Oh, for god sake, Kara, this isn’t Krypton,” Cat said. “This is Earth. You don’t have to listen to Clark Fucking Kent if you don’t want to.”

Kara closed her eyes, feeling the exhaustion and anger wash over her like an incoming tide. “There are twenty-nine Kryptonians out there who don’t care if we’re on Earth,” she said through gritted teeth. “They haven’t spent the last twelve years assimilating. They won’t follow Kal because he’s too human, but if I turn my back on the traditions of my people, they won’t follow me for the same reason.”

“I don’t care,” Cat said. “Not as long as you’re safe.”

“You don’t understand, Cat,” Kara said, opening her eyes to look at Cat, and feeling a fresh batch of tears roll down her face.

“Then explain it to me!” Cat said, stopping right on the edge of Kara’s personal space. “Explain why you’re willing to throw your life away?”

“To protect you!” Kara shouted. “I can’t watch you die. I can’t let you die. Not again.”

“What?” Cat asked. “What do you mean, ‘not again’?”

Kara closed her eyes, feeling herself start to sway. Alex and Maggie both grabbed her as her legs started to give out.

“Kara?” Alex said.

“I’m fine,” she said, a moment before she pitched forward and threw up.

“The hell you are,” Alex said. “Kolex, bring me the medical scanner. Maggie, help me get her onto the bed.”

Kara felt Alex and Maggie pulling her across the room to the diagnostic bed, lifting her up. She opened her eyes and saw Cat above her, speaking softly. Saw her crying. She reached up, trying to wipe the tears from her eyes, but her hand felt heavy, and it was getting dark.

Alex glanced up as J’onn entered the medical hall, followed by Clark, Winn, Eliza, Astra, Bruce, Diana and Leslie.

“Kolex informed us there was a problem,” J’onn said.

“What’s wrong?” Eliza asked.

“Kara passed out,” Alex said.

“Did the Kryptonite penetrate her shield?” J’onn asked.
“No,” Alex said. “She’s got a severe concussion.”

“That shouldn’t be possible,” Eliza said. “Her regenerative powers—”

“Are the only reason she was on her feet at all,” Alex said. “She burned out her powers.”

“What do you mean” Cat asked.

Alex looked over at Cat, who hadn’t left Kara’s side since she collapsed.

“Tell her,” Maggie said.

Alex turned to Maggie. “What?”

“Kara would want her to know,” Maggie said.

Alex wanted to ask what Maggie meant, because every instinct in her was screaming to pick up a weapon and run everyone except her mother as far away from Kara as possible, but there was a tiny little voice that kept reminding her that Maggie was almost as close to Kara as she was, and that there were things Kara might have told a friend that she might not have told her over protective big sister.

“She’s right,” Clark said.

Alex turned towards Clark, and only the fact that her mother stepped between them kept Alex from breaking her hand punching the asshole in the face.

“Don’t you dare come in here pretending you know a god damned thing about my sister,” Alex said.

“Alex,” Clark said, “I—”

“Shut up,” Eliza said without turning around. “You don’t get to speak to either of my children right now.”

Alex smiled as Eliza gave her a small nod and turned back to Cat.

“Kryptonians are basically big solar batteries. Their bodies collect sunlight and store it for later use. But the light of a yellow sun carries more energy than the light of a red sun. Kryptonians have superpowers because they are designed to run on a watch battery, and under a yellow sun, they are hooked up to a ten-megawatt reactor.”

“Normally, there’s no chance Kara could burn all the energy she’s collecting faster than she can take more in, but some abilities take more energy than others. Like rebuilding damaged tissue. Kara was hurt so badly when the missile hit her that her powers normally would have been spent entirely on cellular regeneration for months. We sped up the process using Kryptonian medical equipment.”

“You let her go before she was fully healed,” Cat said.

“Yes,” Alex said. “It shouldn’t have been a problem. She was mostly healed, and her normal regeneration should have taken care of the rest within a day or two.”

“But…” Cat said.

“But she got of out bed, flew all over the place at night, went to another universe for a few hours, then come home and spent the morning getting cats out of trees before getting in two fights, and this is the tricky part, using her heat vision, which is one of her most energy-intensive powers,” Alex said. “Kara is a big solar battery, and right now, she’s completely empty. The regenerative powers,
which were holding back the worst of the symptoms, are out of juice, and until she’s recharged, she’s going to exhibit all the symptoms of a concussion."

"Is there anything we can do?" Cat asked.

"I can put her back in the regeneration matrix," Alex said.

"I sense a ‘but’ coming," Cat said.

"There’s a reason we do not use the regeneration for minor injuries," Astra said. "The regeneration matrix accelerates a body’s natural reparative abilities. Too much time in it could permanently damage Kara’s ability to heal on her own."

"So, what do we do?" Cat asked.

"She just needs time," Alex said.

"She needs to get to the dueling chamber," Kara said from the bed, making everyone in the room jump.

Alex looked down at her and watched as Kara forced her eyes open. "You need a few days bed rest," she said.

"I need to get to the dueling chamber," Kara said.

"Kara, we’re not going to do this," Kal said.

Kara tried to sit up and would have failed miserably if Leslie, of all people, hadn’t stepped up and helped her. "You didn’t give me a choice," she said. "If I don’t, I forfeit the challenge."

"I’m not going to fight you while you’re like this," Kal said.

"So you will yield the Challenge to Kara?" Astra asked.

"No" Kal said.

"Then you will have to fight her," Astra said.

"Are you out of your mind?" Cat and Alex both asked at once.

"Kara invoked Challenge," Astra said. "If she does not fight, she forfeits. She will lose all standing as a member of the House of El. She will be /vrazhium/. An exile with no House."

"Wait, what about the other Houses Kara belongs too?" Alex asked, running the list in her head. "She’s a member of fifteen houses through her mother’s line."

"And seventeen through her father’s," Astra said. "It does not matter. She has Challenged the head of her Prime House. If she loses the Challenge, she will be a traitor. She will be banished and expelled from all her houses."

"I’ll lift the banishment," Kal said.

"I’ll still be expelled from the other houses," Kara said. "Even the House of Danvers."

"We’re not a Kryptonian House," Eliza said.
“Yes, you are,” Kara said. “Kal only claimed the House of El, so until the Challenge is resolved, I still hold fourteen of the twenty-five seats on the Ruling Counsel. I created Danvers as a Great House of Krypton about five minutes after we transmatted back from the Stadium.”

“Why would you do that?” Alex asked.

“Eliza adopted me,” Kara said. “So, I’m a member of House Danvers. I transferred ownership of everything from Kara Zor-El, to Kara Danvers. Under Kryptonian law, they are legally distinct. If I die, Sanctuary, Konex, Kolex, and the new computer, along with the contents of the armory, the hanger, and a little over a trillion dollars in assets all belong to you, Alex. I also issued formal, unconditional pardons for all of Astra’s followers except Non. You’ll have everything I can give you. The new computer, the data archive, the war suits, the armory, and a couple of other, special little surprises.”

“You sound like you’re giving up,” Alex said.

“Konex, bucket,” Kara said urgently. A bucket appeared in her lap in a flash of light, and Kara wrapped her arms around it and vomited into it.

“Oh, I have not missed this,” Kara said. She looked over at Diana. “Will you carry me to the dueling chamber? I promise I’ll do my best not to vomit on you.”

“You don’t have your powers,” Diana said.

“Won’t need them,” Kara said.

“Are you sure?” Diana asked.

“No,” Cat said. “This is insane.”

“Cat,” Kara said, “it will be okay. I got this.”

“You can’t even sit up on your own,” Cat said.

“And yet, I’m going to win,” Kara said.

“Kara,” Kal said, “at least name a Champion.”

“I’ll do it,” Leslie said.

Kara shook her head, which was a mistake, because it immediately made her vomit again. “No,” she said. “I’m going to beat him, just like this.” She turned back to Diana. “Let’s go.”

“I will stand as your champion, if you wish,” Diana said as she carried Kara to the dueling chamber. The entire crowd from the medical hall followed and all of them except Bruce were giving Kal dirty looks, which made Kara smile. She didn’t care much for being on the injured list, but this was actually going to work in her favor.

“No, need,” Kara said. “Just help me stand in the starting position, and hand me a sword.”

“As you will,” Diana said. “I hope I do not lose three friends today.”

“Not sure I follow your math,” Kara said.

“I do not believe you will yield,” Diana said. “Were you well, I believe you could defeat your
cousin. In your current state, I do not believe you could defeat a napping kitten. But if you will not yield, and your cousin will not yield, he will be forced to kill you, and then I believe your aunt will kill Clark and Bruce both, and I will let her, because they have brought this on themselves.”

“If I die, take care of Cat for me?” Kara asked.

“If she will let me,” Diana said.

“She’ll try not to,” Kara said, “but it would hurt her.”

“You love her?” Diana asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “Deeply.”

“Does she know?” Diana asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I’m not ready, and she’s not interested.”

“You are wrong about the latter, but I defer to your judgement on the former. Grief keeps its own schedule.”

“If it’s any comfort, I’ve seen universes where you and Steve lived a long, happy life together,” Kara said.

“I did not realize I’d told you about Steve,” Diana said.

“You haven’t,” Kara said. “But you did, years from now, on a clear night, when I’d just lost someone I loved.”

“Ahh. Time travel, then,” Diana said. “Why did you not tell us?”

“Bruce and Clark would have screwed it up,” Kara said.

“Men often do,” Diana said. “Your Sara, she was from the future?”

“And another universe,” Kara said. “You two liked each other.”

“Perhaps we shall meet each other someday,” Diana said.

“You won’t,” Kara said. “I’ve changed the timeline too much. If you meet Sara, she won’t be my Sara. But that’s a good thing, because my Sara had suffered almost as much as I have.”

They stepped through the threshold of the dueling chamber, and Diana carried Kara forward, placing her on the Challenger’s mark. It took a moment for Kara to steady herself enough to stand without Diana’s help, but eventually, Diana left her long enough to fetch a sword from the weapon’s rack. Kara took the blade, and rested it point down on the floor in front of her, leaning on it like a crutch as she took in the room.

It was crowded. There were over sixty people there, and to her surprise, almost all of them were seated in the Challenger’s Gallery. Only Bruce sat in the defender’s gallery.

She watched as Kal selected a sword from the weapon’s rack and took up the defender’s position. Both of them had changed, Kal out of his costume, Kara out of her war suit. They wore the loose pants and wrap-around vests of dueling robes, which offered no protection from the sharp edges of Kryptonian swords.
“J’onn,” Kara said.

“Yes?” J’onn asked.

“If I die here, see to it that Astra knows why, and that Marsdin doesn’t back out of our deal,” Kara said.

“I’ll see to it,” J’onn said.

“Astra,” Kara said.

“Yes, Little One?” Astra asked.

“If I die, don’t kill Kal,” Kara said. “Please.”

“Do not ask me to make a promise I will not keep,” Astra said.

Kara sighed. “Will you promise me you will at least listen to what J’onn and Alex have to tell you before you make your decision?”

“I promise I will listen to what they say before I kill Kal and his friend,” Astra said.

“Well,” Kara said, “I suppose that’s the best I’m going to get. Kolex.”

“Yes, Lady Kara?” Kolex asked.

“Activate red sun lamps,” she said.

Kal staggered slightly, his eyes widening as the room flooded with red sunlight, and his powers vanished.

“Surprised, cousin?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said. “Though I probably shouldn’t be.”

“All you had to do was trust me, and we could have avoided all of this,” she said.

“You could have told me the truth sooner,” Kal said.

“Trust is a choice,” Kara said. “I asked for yours.”

“It’s a choice you didn’t make,” Kal said.

“I had good reason,” Kara said. “Did you?”

“You killed a man,” Kal said.

“The man who stands in shadow should not preach the virtue of light,” Kara said.

“I’ve never killed anyone,” Kal said.

“But you are responsible for countless deaths,” Kara said. “Inaction is its own crime.”

“It is time,” Astra said as she stepped into the judge’s box. “Kara, daughter of Zor of the House of El and Alura of the House of Ze has Challenged Kal, son of Jor of the House of El and Lara of the House of Van for the right to lead the House of El. Kal has selected Strength as his measure.”
Astra turned to face Kal. “Kal of the House of El, will you yield at first blood?”

Kal looked at Kara for a moment, and she could see his thinking. He thought it was a way out. A way to end the duel without either of them getting hurt.

“I will,” Kal said.

Astra turned to face Kara. “Kara of the House of El, Kal will yield at first blood. Will you also?”

“I will not,” Kara said.

“Will you yield at first fall?” Astra asked.

“I will not,” Kara said.

“Will you yield when you lack capacity to fight?” Astra asked.

“I will not,” Kara said.

“When will you yield?” Astra asked.

“I will not,” Kara said.

“Very well,” Astra said. “Terms of the Challenge are set. The duel will continue until Kal’s blood is drawn, or until Kara is dead, or until one of them shall yield.”

There was a brief pause, and the dueling chamber was so quiet Kara could hear her own heartbeat, even without her powers.

“Begin!” Astra said.

Kal raised his blade in a defensive posture, waiting for Kara to make a move. Kara lifted the sword and tossed it aside.

Kal frowned, and Kara could hear whispers and sounds of shock coming from the gallery.

“What are you doing?” Kal asked.

“Winning,” Kara said. “You’ve read every word our parents sent on Kryptonian culture, but you’ve never lived it, and you don’t understand it.” She took a step forward. “This is a test of strength.” She took another step forward. “I am hurt, and my injury has left me weak.” Another step. “I cannot even lift my blade.” Another step. “So, I am being strong in the only way I can.” With one final step, the tip of Kal’s blade came to rest against the House of El Coat of Arms embroidered on her dueling robes. “This is not a test of the strength of body, Kal. It is a test of the strength of our convictions. I’m willing to die for mine. Are you willing to kill me for yours?”

“No,” Kal said.

“Then drop the blade,” Kara said.

Kal didn’t answer, so Kara leaned forward, letting the tip of the blade bite into her skin.

“Kara!” Kal said. He started to pull back the blade, but she reached up and grabbed it, gripping the sword’s guard with both hands, pulling it towards her, driving the metal deeper into her chest.

“Stop!” Kal said, trying to pull the blade away from her. She just held on to the guard, letting him
drag her along with the blade.

“I’m going to die on your blade, Kal,” she said as she dropped her weight forward, impaling herself on his sword.

“Kolex, help her!” Kal screamed.

He wasn’t the only one. She could hear Cat, Alex, Eliza, Winn and Maggie, all screaming. She knew someone must be holding them back, keeping them from interfering. She blocked it out and looked up at Kal as she tasted her own blood in her mouth. The sword had pierced her lung, and she was going to drown in her own blood if she didn’t finish this.

“He can’t,” Kara said. “The Challenge isn’t over until I’m dead, or you yield.”

“I yield!” Kal said. He turned to Astra. “I YIELD!” he screamed. “Somebody help her!”

She saw Kolex and Konex both swoop in, and felt an injector pressed against her neck, and then she saw only darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

vrazhium

exile/rankless. One who has no house.
Chapter Summary

Everyone is waiting to find out if Kara is going to wake up.

Cat was sure the benches hadn’t been there when Winn had led her to the Medical Hall earlier. It was a small detail, but one she focused on. She wondered who had thought to add them, and where they came from, because it was easier than to wonder what was happening behind the sealed door that separated her from Kara.

Her emotions were a confusing storm of mixed feelings. She was terrified that Kara was going to die in that room, but she was furious at the girl for what she’d done. What on Earth could possibly be so important?

Her mind kept going back to the moment Superman had screamed for someone to help Kara. She heard the terror and helplessness in his voice as she fought against the hands holding her back, keeping her from doing just that. She’s watched desperately as the two robots swooped down on her, and all three vanished in a flash of light.

The moment Kara was gone, whoever had been holding her back had let go, but by then it was too late. She couldn’t reach Kara, couldn’t help her. She’d followed the crowd that had rushed for the Medical Hall. Alex, Maggie, Winn, the older blonde who’d called Kara her daughter, J’onn, and Astra. When they’d gotten there, it had been sealed by a force field, and the field had only opened to admit Alex and Kara’s foster mother. Eliza, if Cat’s memory was correct. Once they were inside, the massive door had closed, and there was nothing to do but wait.

That’s when Cat had noticed the benches. The ones that hadn’t been there before. She’d sat down, and taken out her phone, surprised when she got four full bars worth of signal. She’d called the nanny and asked her to spend the night.

At some point, Cat was vaguely aware of Leslie sitting beside her. They hadn’t spoken, but somehow, Leslie being there calmed her nerves. Knowing that the technology in that room had brought her back from much worse than Kara had suffered gave Cat hope, even as she suffered.

It was almost two hours before the doors opened.

“I thought you might want some fresh clothes.”

Clark looked up at the sound of James’ voice, surprised to find him standing in the doorway of the defender’s room outside the dueling hall, holding Clark’s costume folded in his hands.

“You know,” James said, “something not covered in Kara’s blood.”

“I didn’t want this,” Clark said. “You can’t think I wanted this.”

“I don’t actually care,” James said. “Whether you wanted this or not, you had every chance to avoid it. All you had to do was have a little trust.”
“She killed a man in front of me,” Clark said.

“Yeah, she did,” James said. “But I didn’t say you had to trust her. I just asked you to trust me. To trust fourteen years of friendship.”

“James—”

“I used to think you were this perfect hero, you know? I thought you were a miracle. A man who flies out of the sky to rescue people. A literal answer to a prayer.” James shook his head. “Imagine my disappointment.” He walked over to where Clark was sitting and dropped the suit on the chair next to him.

“One of Kara’s robots ran this off for you,” James said.

“What?” Clark asked. He reached down and picked up the suit, only to notice almost immediately what was missing. There was no coat of arms on the chest. “James?”

“Astra took your suit,” James said. “She said you could have it back if Kara decides against expelling you from the House of El.”

Clark looked down at the suit again, a sinking feeling in his stomach as he realized there was a very real possibility he’d never get to wear his family’s coat of arms again. The thought alone tore him up inside.

“Tell me something,” James said.

Clark looked up at him. “What?”

“Was I ever really your friend?” James asked.

“Of course,” Clark said.

“Then why did you do all this?” James asked. “I know you and Bruce have been through a lot together, but I thought, after everything we’ve been through… You know what. Forget it.”

Clark started to say something, but he didn’t think James would be in the mood to hear it, so he just kept his mouth shut. He watched as James left, and wondered how everything had gone so wrong so quickly.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Jason asked.

Bruce didn’t bother turning around. He answered without stopping his examination of the computer in front of him. “Just taking a look around,” he said.

“Jesus fucking Christ, you don’t ever stop, do you?” Jason asked.

“I’m not sure what you mean,” Bruce said as he looked over what appeared to be some sort of biometric hand scanner.

“I mean Kara,” Jason said as he approached Bruce from behind.

Bruce shifted his stance slightly, preparing for the attack he was sure was coming. “She’s dangerous.”

“You didn’t think she was dangerous a few weeks ago,” Jason said.
“A few weeks ago, I didn’t know she’d been lying to us,” Bruce replied.

“Someday, you’re going to learn that there’s a difference between lying to you and not telling you something,” Jason said.

“When one of the most powerful beings on the planet suddenly starts building a technological and financial empire with resources she’s not supposed to have, I worry. I’m a worrier. It’s what I do.”

“And you don’t even have the decency to wait until she’s out of surgery to rifle through her things,” Jason said.

“If I waited until she was out of surgery, she might stop me,” Bruce said.

“What makes you think I won’t stop you?” Jason asked.

“You’ve been talking to me for almost three minutes and haven’t reached for your guns yet,” Bruce said.

“Maybe I just think it would be rude to spill blood in Kara’s house,” Jason said.

“You shot me in the leg in my own living room,” Bruce said.

“*You* deserved it,” Jason said. “And I apologized.”

“To Alfred,” Bruce said.

“He’s the one who had to clean up the blood,” Jason said.

“That’s… a fair point,” Bruce said. He reached out for an access panel on the hand scanner, intending on having a look at the mechanism. His fingers were a few millimeters from the metal when his arm felt like it had caught fire, and he found himself bouncing off the far wall before slamming down face first onto the floor.

“Warning,” a cool female voice announced, “unauthorized access to secure Sanctuary systems will be met with force.”

“That looked like it hurt,” Jason said. He squatted down next to Bruce. “Did that hurt? Because that looked like it hurt.”

“It was mildly uncomfortable at best,” Bruce said.

“Well, be sure to apologize to the robot,” Jason said.

“Why would I do that?” Bruce asked.

“Because it’s going to have to clean up your blood,” Jason said, before standing up. “And next time, when someone offers to explain something to you, try hearing them out before getting your boy scout to stab them in the chest.”

“That isn’t what I wanted to happen,” Bruce said.

“You didn’t want the Joker to beat me to death with a crowbar, either, but these things happen when you don’t listen to people,” Jason said. He reached into a pouch on his belt and pulled out two nosebleed plugs and tossed them to Bruce. “For your nose. Try not to stick it anywhere else it doesn’t belong.”
Bruce caught the plugs and watched as Jason turned and walked out of the room, waiting until he was gone to reach up and check to see if he’d broken his nose when he hit the floor.

Lucy glanced up from the half-eaten sandwich she’d been staring at for the past twenty minutes to find James standing over her. She glanced around the dining hall, noticing half the people in the room were staring daggers at James. She could understand the sentiment.

“I’m not sure I want to talk to you right now,” Lucy said.

“I didn’t have anything to do with this,” James said.

“Yeah, because I didn’t just watch your boyfriend stick a sword through Kara’s chest,” Lucy said.

“That’s not really what happened,” James said.

Lucy rolled her eyes. “You just can’t help yourself, can you? The great Superman can do no wrong!”

“That’s not what I meant,” James said.

“I don’t care what you meant,” Lucy said, pushing back from the table and standing up. “If you’re going to take his side, you can just fuck off.” She shoved him, making him stumble back a few steps.

“I’m not taking his side,” James said. “Kara’s my friend. I told him he needed to trust her, and I’m just as mad about this as you are.”

“That’s enough!” someone shouted. Lucy turned to see Wonder Woman marching towards them. She stopped just a couple of steps away. “Kara is fighting for her life, and you’re going to bicker in her House?”

“No,” Lucy said. “No, I’m sorry.”

Wonder Woman reached out, resting a hand on Lucy’s shoulder. “James speaks the truth,” she said. “He advised Superman to trust his cousin. This is not his doing.”

Lucy looked at James for a moment, then just shook her head. “I’d rather be alone right now,” she said. She picked up the remains of her food and walked over to the trash can, dropping the food in before she headed out of the dining hall.

“Of all the horrible things I imagined when she put on that suit, this wasn’t one of them,” Eliza said as she stared at Kara’s sleeping form.

Alex watched her, not sure what to say. Her own emotions were a storm of anger and fear. She wanted to put on her war suit, and tear Clark limb from limb. That much she understood. But there was another small part of her that wanted to wake Kara up and wring the life out of her for what she’d done.

“Is it worth it?” Eliza asked.

“What?” Alex asked.

“Whatever secret it is that you two have been keeping,” Eliza said. She turned around to face Alex. “Is it worth it?”
Alex shook her head. “This wasn’t about keeping a secret,” Alex said. “She was going to tell everyone tonight.”

“I know,” Eliza said. “But I don’t understand why she would risk her life to be in charge of something that barely even exists anymore.”

“The same reason she’s done all of this,” Alex said. “To save lives. To protect the people she cares about. To stop herself from having to watch her world die again.”

“Ash, what is going on?” Eliza asked. “Please.”

“It’s a long story,” Alex said, “and it’s not mine to tell. All I can say is that yes, it’s worth it. The things we’re facing… I know it might not seem like it these last few days, but Kara’s probably the only chance we have of getting through this but having the Kryptonians on our side means we’ve got a much, much better chance of coming out the other side alive.”

“This isn’t just about Jeremiah and Cadmus, is it?” Eliza asked.

“No,” Alex said. “It’s so much bigger than that. I try not to think about how big it is, because it’s too much. It’s overwhelming. It’s not just National City, or Earth. There are things out there that threaten entire universes, and everything Kara’s done has been to try to stop them.”

“How did she get wrapped up in all of this?”

“She survived,” Alex said.

She sat down next to him, and Clark waited for her to yell at him. To scream at him. What he got was much, much worse.

“What the hell were you thinking, Clark?” she asked in a voice that just sounded exhausted.

“She killed someone, right in front of me,” Clark said.

“And then what happened?” Lois asked.

“I claimed Head of House status,” Clark said. “I thought I could rein her in. Order her not to kill.”

He heard her sigh. “A good reporter doesn’t leave out the details, Smallville,” Lois said. “Walk me through the story.”

“Kara called and invited me to a meeting here at Sanctuary to discuss what’s been going on with the money, and Cadmus. Maybe some other things. I’m not sure. She wanted me to bring Diana and Bruce. We argued. She was angry because I questioned how she handled the situation at the bar this morning, and she brought up me telling James about her before he came out here.”

“Go on,” Lois said.

“One of the agents she works with, Vasquez, dialled Diana, Bruce and I in on comms a few minutes later. Kara was being attacked and needed backup. I grabbed Bruce and we headed for the stadium where Kara was going to take the fight. She tried to wave us off because there was Kryptonite in play. We ignored the wave off and dropped into the stadium just as Willis hit Henshaw with enough electricity to power Metropolis for a week. Before we could do anything, Kara called to Diana to protect me, because there was Kryptonite, then she charged Corben, and used a sword to cut his head off.”
“Go on,” Lois said.

“Kara went to Willis to check on her. She told Willis what she’d done was awesome. Willis asked if Henshaw was dead. Kara confirmed he was. I tried to get Kara’s attention, and she said, ‘not now’. She asked Willis if she was okay. Willis said she was and asked if Kara was okay. Kara said she could go a few days without getting shot in the head. I tried to get Kara’s attention again, but she yelled, ‘not now’ with enough force to stagger me. She turned back to Willis and told her they would get her back to the DEO as soon as possible. Willis threw up. Kara told her that it was just an adrenaline reaction. That it happened to a lot of people the first time they killed someone.”

“Go on,” Lois said.

“The other Kryptonians and the DEO arrived, and Kara gave instructions on how to handle the site clean-up. She offered to have someone fly Willis back to the DEO, or to let her travel using her powers. Willis said she would use her powers. Kara told Willis she’d done great, and Henshaw would never hurt anyone again. Willis said she had told Kara she was going to kick Henshaw’s ass, and Kara smiled and agreed with her.”

“Go on,” Lois said.

“I called Kara’s name again to get her attention. She turned and asked me what I wanted. I asked her if Corben had been a person, and if she had just killed someone. She swore in Kryptonian, and said yes, he was a person. He was a paid assassin who had tried to kill her friend Maggie on Friday, and that he was shooting a Kryptonite weapon at her, so she cut his head off.”

“Go on,” Lois said.

“Diana said that Kara had killed before. Kara admitted she had. I asked her how many times. She said it was a long story, and she would explain when we got here. I asked her again how many. Willis told me to back off. Kara said there was more going on than I knew. That if I gave her time to finish cleaning the site, we would come here to Sanctuary and she would explain.”

“Go on,” Lois said.

“I refused to wait. I said she’d gone to far. Diana told me we should give her a chance to explain, but I refused to wait. Kara knew what I was about to do. She tried to talk me out of it, but I claimed Head of House status. Kara immediately challenged me for it.”

“A little light on detail there at the end, but you got the salient points,” Lois said. “Not gonna win a Pulitzer for it, but it will sell a few papers.”

Clark closed his eyes, feeling what was coming before Lois said a word.

“What the fucking hell, Clark?” Lois asked.

“She killed someone!” Clark said, finally looking up at Lois.

“Yes, she did,” Lois said. “She killed someone. She did it right in front of you. Cut his fucking head off. I got that part of the story. But why the fuck was it so important for you to know right then? She was going to explain. She was going to tell you *everything*. Why the fuck was it so important that you know right then? Why couldn’t you wait thirty fucking minutes?”

“I don’t know,” Clark said.

“Jesus fucking Christ,” Lois said.
“If Kara dies, Astra will kill you,” Lois said, “and then she’ll kill Bruce, and I don’t think Diana is going to stop her. And when word gets out, everything that Kara accomplished will go up in flames. The alien amnesty, the pardons, the Kryptonian Medical Foundation. Everything.”

“You will have created an army of enraged Supermen, who will go to war with this world. All because you couldn’t wait thirty fucking minutes for an explanation.”

“You know the worst part? The part that really gets me?” Lois asked.

“No,” Clark said.

“If it happens, if Kara dies and it all goes to shit, I’ll be alone. You wouldn’t think that would be the worst part, but the idea of the world ending doesn’t scare me nearly as much as the thought of having to face it without you.”

“Lois-”

“Don’t,” she said. “Kara is your family, Clark. At least she wanted to be. But all you’ve ever wanted to do is fob her off on other people. First on Eliza, then on James, and then when you don’t like the person or the hero she’s become, you show up and start trying to dictate her life.”

“That’s not what I did,” Clark said.

“Damn it, stop fucking lying to yourself. That is exactly what you did. Well, newsflash for you, Smallville. If you wanted a say in the person she was going to become, maybe you should have actually bothered to be involved in her life.”

Lois stood up and started walked towards the door to the duelling chamber, stopping when she reached it, and turning back around.

“I love you Clark. I do, and I always will, but I don’t like you very much right now.”

Clark didn’t say a word as she walked out of the duelling chamber.

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The chapel was built along the same lines as a ship’s chapel. Normally, temples or chapels of Rao had a window called the Gate of Rao through which his light would shine during the long day, but chapels aboard ships, or at embassies on other worlds would place a small recess containing a hologram of Rao at an appropriate spot in the structure. Since Sanctuary was designed for Kara, the chapel was built on the Argo model, with the Gate of Rao set into the western wall.

It had been a very, very long time since Astra had knelt in a chapel. The last time had been the day before her sentencing. She had offered a few quiet prayers to Father Rao since then, but even those had stopped once word had reached the prison that Krypton was gone. Then, she had cursed Rao for allowing Kara to be taken from her. Now, she begged him to spare her life.

She ended her prayer as she heard soft footsteps enter the room.

“Yes?” she asked.

“I did not mean to disturb you, my lady,” Fendra said.

“You did not,” Astra said. “I am sure father Rao understands the exigencies of my duties.” She rose to her feet and turned to see Fendra standing near the doorway. “Is something wrong?”

“Forgive me,” Fendra said. “I was raised in Kryptonopolis. I’ve always found the chapels of Argo
and Erkol somewhat disconcerting. Watching Rao sit still on the horizon always felt wrong.”

Astra laughed. “I always felt the same about Kryptonopolis,” she said. “Looking up and seeing Rao so high in the sky always made me want to rush to the Temple of the Mass of Rao Transitioning, but he just sat there, unmoving in the sky.”

“I think that is why I find comfort in this world having a yellow star,” Fendra said. “I never confuse it with the face of Rao.”

“I suppose that is an advantage,” Astra said. “Did you need something, Lieutenant?”

“I thought you should know that there are murmurs among out people,” Fendra said. “They do not believe that Kal will keep Kara’s word regarding our promise of freedom. They believe that if she dies, we will all end up in cages, like Non.”

“That will not happen,” Astra said.

“Can you be sure?” Fendra asked.

“I can,” Astra said. “Where is the Martian?”

“I believe he’s in the communication hall.”

“It’s time we spoke,” Astra said.

“Do you want to tell me what the hell happened out there tonight?” Marsdin asked.

J’onn let out a sigh and reached up, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Supergirl was attacked by two cyborgs we believe were created by Cadmus—”

“Don’t be an idiot, J’onn,” Marsdin said. “I’ve already been briefed on the fight. What I want to know is why I’m getting reports of some sort of conflict between Superman and Supergirl.”

“Supergirl killed one of her attackers, and provided a distraction while Leslie Willis killed the other one.”

“Leslie Willis? As in the shock jock that Supergirl was accused of trying to murder four days ago?”

“Yes,” J’onn said.

“I thought she was in protective custody,” Marsdin said.

“Well, thanks to her new found metahuman abilities, Ms. Willis is able to convert her body into pure electricity and travel through power lines. When she heard the man responsible for attacking her was fighting Supergirl, she chose to intervene.”

“Oh, well, that’s just wonderful,” Marsdin said. “But how did that turn into a conflict with Superman?”

“Superman took issue with Supergirl’s willingness to kill her attackers,” J’onn said. “He tried to claim control of the House of El.”

“Wait, I thought he was already the head of the House of El,” Marsdin said.

“Not technically,” J’onn said. “Kal-El was an infant when his father died. Kara was of age, so she
became the head of House. Chatelaine is the term she used but think of her as a regent. She controlled the House until Kal was ready to assume that authority.”

“And he decided it was time tonight?” Marsdin asked.

“Yes,” J’onn said.

“I take it Supergirl didn’t react well,” Marsdin said.

“She challenged him for control of the House,” J’onn said.

“Oh, lovely,” Marsdin said. “What form is this challenge going to take?”

“The challenge is already over,” J’onn said. “Superman lost.”

“I honestly don’t know if that’s a good thing or a bad thing,” Marsdin said. “Superman’s always been reluctant to work with us, but he’s certainly a more predictable element.”

“I don’t share your confusion,” J’onn said. “Having worked with both, I can say with some certainty, this is the better outcome.”

“I hope you’re right,” Marsdin said. “Where is Kara? I’d like a word with her.”

“In surgery,” J’onn said.

“What?” Marsdin asked.

“She apparently wasn’t as recovered from Friday’s incident as she believed. The strain of the fights she was in today, along with the energy she was still spending on healing caused her to temporarily lose her powers.”

“Well, I imagine fighting Superman would take a good bit of energy,” Marsdin said.

“You misunderstand,” J’onn said. “She lost her powers before the duel with Superman.”

“She beat Superman without her powers?” Marsdin asked, and J’onn thought her face went a little pale.

“Yes,” J’onn said. “She used red sunlamps to negate his powers, then forced him into a position where he either had to yield to her or kill her.”

“Jesus Fucking Christ on a cracker,” Marsdin said. “J’onn, why is Kara in surgery?”

“She impaled herself on Superman’s sword. The only way she could receive medical attention was for one of them to yield the fight, and she refused to yield.”

“So, Superman yielded rather than watch his cousin die,” Marsdin said.

“Exactly,” J’onn said.

“J’onn,” Marsdin said. “Supergirl is starting to scare me. Are you sure this whole thing isn’t some sort of Xanatos gambit?”

“I’m… Not familiar with the term,” J’onn said.

“I feel like she’s set things up so that no matter what happens, she benefits,” Marsdin said. “The
interview with Cat is published, and she garners public sympathy. If I push for the Amnesty act while public sentiment is in her favor, she gets what she wants, and I owe her for the chance to get something I wanted pushed through. If I don’t push for the Amnesty act, I become the villain, while she becomes a hero to both the aliens and their sympathizers. If I pardon Astra and her followers, Kara gets all the Kryptonians and other aliens she wants free. If I refuse, then again, she becomes the one who’s the voice of reason, fighting for what’s right, and we’re the fear mongers. She manages to kick off the investigation against Lord and Tycho, but she’s not actually a cop. If the investigation sends them to jail, two of her biggest critics are behind bars, but if not, it hardly matters because the damage to their reputations have driven the stock prices of their companies so low she’s managed to buy the companies out from under them. She goes on Leslie’s show, and gives her a verbal beatdown, which would already make her a hero among all the people Willis has shit on over the years, but then she ‘slips up’ and reveals her sexuality but turns that into an even bigger win. Her enemies can either sit back and take it, in which case, Supergirl gains even more public support, but instead they decide to attack Leslie, which turns into a massive public relations boon for Supergirl *and* gives her the opportunity to pick up the second, third and sixth largest media conglomerates in the country, along with four massive tech companies.”

“It sounds like my niece has become adept at the subtler arts of war,” Astra said.

J’onn turned around, surprised to find her standing in the doorway of the communications hall. “This is a private conversation,” he said.

“Then I would advise you to have it somewhere you can be guaranteed of privacy,” Astra said. She looked over his shoulder towards the screen behind him. “There is a saying, passed down through the House of Ze since the War Queens. ‘You are sufficiently prepared only when all outcomes are victory.’ My niece may have been destined for the Science Guild, but as her eldest relative in the Military Guild, I did not neglect her education. I taught her to never choose battle until she could be assured that she would benefit, win or lose. It is a lesson that was difficult for her, but one it pleases me to hear that she has taken to heart.”

“You’ll have to forgive me if I am less ready to celebrate, given the events of the last few days,” Marsdin said.

“You are a politician,” Astra said. “It is the way of your kind to jump at shadows, while ignoring knives at your throat.”

Marsdin’s eyes narrowed. “Did you want something, General?”

“Assurances,” Astra said. “My niece might yet die from her wounds. I want your word that the agreements she negotiated will be honored if that happens.”

“Of course they will,” Marsdin said. “So long as your people continue to abide by those agreements, we will as well.”

“That is good. I am also led to believe that you recognize Kara and her cousin’s fortresses as sovereign Kryptonian territory. Is this so?” Astra asked.

“It is,” Marsdin replied with some trepidation in her voice.

“Then I also have your assurance that you will not interfere with Kryptonian matters settled on Kryptonian soil?”

“So long as those matters to not pose a threat to the rest of the world, you are free to do what you wish within those bounds,” Marsdin said.
“Very well,” Astra said before turning to face J’onn. “And what say you, Martian? Will you keep your promise if my niece dies?”

“I will,” J’onn said. “However, those are conversations to be had among family. Not with outsiders present.”

“Very well, Martian. Find me when you are free,” Astra said, before turning and exiting the room.

“You want to tell me what that’s about?” Marsdin asked.

“No,” J’onn said. “Kara asked me to convey certain information to certain people in the event that she was killed. But allow me to put your mind at ease. Kara Zor-El’s ultimate goal is nothing more or less than the safety and security of this world, and the people she loves. I know what she’s trying to do, I know where she’s getting her resources and intel, and I am satisfied that she’s on our side, so long as we don’t become a threat to those things she is trying to protect.”

“I’m not entirely sure I like the implication that you’re withholding information pertinent to national security, Director J’onzz,” Marsdin said.

“Madam President, if you needed to know, I’d tell you, and if you don’t know, you can’t be indicted for perjury when you tell Congress you had no idea what was going on.”

“That’s not comforting, J’onn,” Marsdin said.

“No, but it is the world we live in. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I need to go check and see how Supergirl is doing.”

“Lillian,” Max said as he stepped back, making way for Lillian to enter his house, “to what do I owe the pleasure of your company?” He smiled a little wider at the way she rolled her eyes.

“If you have to ask, you’ve had too much scotch,” she said. Her eyes dropped to the sling that held his arm. “What happened there?”

“Slipped on my rock-climbing wall and dislocated it when I hit the ground,” Max said as he closed the door.

“Really?” she asked. “You should be more careful.”

“No one ever became a billionaire by being careful,” Max said as he turned and headed into the den. “Given what happened to Henshaw and his playmate when they went up against Supergirl earlier this evening, I’m assuming this isn’t a social call.”

“No,” Lillian said. “I’ve come to ask you if you’d be willing to come into Cadmus as a full partner.”

“Really? I’m flattered, but why now?” Max asked, more than a little worried. He’d half expected Lillian to confront him about giving Cadmus up to Red Hood.

“Because we need to expand our skill set,” Lillian said. “I’m an expert in biology, and Simon is a genius at bio-engineering, and at reverse engineering alien technology, but you are a better chemical engineer.”

“Very true,” Max said. “But I have a feeling there’s more to it.”

Lillian dipper her head in acknowledgement. “Cadmus is no longer officially affiliated with the government, which has always been one of your main objections to working with us,” Lillian said.
“We still have support from the more… aware members of the administration, but the fact that we’re no longer under government oversight means we’re no longer bound by certain ethical considerations.”

“You mean you’re finally ready to play hardball,” Max said. The idea definitely had appeal. Working with them would give him a chance to deal not only with Supergirl, but also put him in a place where he might be able to strike back at Batman and his other little lackeys for what Red Hood had done to him.

“If you must reduce it to a sports metaphor, then yes,” Lillian said. “Supergirl’s a threat. A much bigger threat than I think anyone imagined when she showed up on the streets of National City in a miniskirt and go-go boots.”

“Agreed,” Max said. “And not just because of her strength. She’s clearly much more interested in manipulating the political situation to her advantage than her cousin ever was.”

“And she’s good at it,” Lillian said. “She’s managed to reduce Miranda Crane to a laughing stock.”

“To be fair, Miranda was always a bit of a joke,” Max said. “Build a dome. Really?”

Lillian rolled her eyes again. “She got votes, and she gave people permission to voice their fears, even with that alien lover in the White House. She was useful.”

“True,” Max said. “And while your offer is tempting, there’s the little matter of this Kara Danvers person trying to buy my company out from under me.”

“Ah, yes,” Lillian said. “I thought that might come up. Interestingly enough, did you know that Kara Danvers was adopted?”

“I remember seeing that in the report the private investigator put together for me,” Maxwell said.

“Did you know that she was adopted roughly twelve years ago?” Lillian asked.

“I’m not sure why that’s important,” Max said.

“Did you know that her sister was on National City Airlines Flight 237 the night Supergirl plucked it out of the air?” Lillian asked.

Max felt the pieces click together inside of his head, and a smile spread across his face. “Now that *is* an interesting piece of information.”

“I thought you might like that,” Lillian said as she reached down and took something out of her purse. “But I did bring you a host gift, as well.” She held up a glass tube with steel end caps. Suspended inside was a piece of concrete with dark, reddish brown stains on it.

“Is that what I think it is?” Max asked.

“A piece of blood encrusted concrete from the spot where Supergirl hit the pavement Friday. Why yes, Max, it is,” Lillian said.

“I’ll need a lab,” Max said. “My facilities at Lord Technologies are compromised.”

“I can provide that,” Lillian said.

“When do I start?” Max asked.
“How does tomorrow morning sound?” Lillian asked.

“Perfect,” Max said.

The first thing Kara was aware of was the pounding in her head. It felt just a little bit like she’d gone a few dozen rounds with a squad of Darkseid’s Hero Killers. The pain in her chest gave weight to that theory, as did the nausea, but the lack of itching she always felt in the wake of Kryptonite poisoning meant that the pain probably had a much more mundane source. Because Hero Killers always had Kryptonite weapons.

She felt a touch on her neck and felt the familiar bite of an injector. A moment later, the pounding eased up, and Kara wanted to kiss whoever had given her the injection.

“Take it easy,” Alex said.

Kara’s eyes opened wide as she looked around, and when she saw Alex hovering over her, everything came crashing back in on her. At first, she didn’t know whether to laugh, or cry. For just a few moments, she’d been back on the Waverider, but she was here, in Sanctuary, with everyone still alive. When Eliza stepped into her field of view, the tears won out. She reached out but wasn’t strong enough to lift herself up. Alex and Eliza seemed to understand and stepped in close enough for her to hug them both.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I hate that you had to see that.”

“I’d say it’s okay, but honestly, as soon as your well, I’m going to kick your ass for scaring me like that,” Alex said.

Kara laughed. “Wait until I teach you and Maggie how to use the suits first. Then it might be a fair fight.”

“I could take you,” Alex said.

“I know,” Kara said. “How long was I out this time?”

“Two hours,” Eliza said.

Kara let out a sigh as she let go and Alex and Eliza. “Is everyone still here?” she asked.

“Yes,” Alex said. “They’re all waiting to find out if you’re going to live.”

“Unfortunately,” Kara said. “Which means I still have to tell everyone what’s going on.”

“Better you than me,” Alex said.

Kara glared at her for a moment. “See if I set you up with any more hot girls.”

Alex immediately blushed. “I’m not sure I know what to do with the one I’ve got,” Alex said.

Kara laughed. “I’ve got books you can borrow. Some of them even have pictures.”

“Kara!” Alex shouted, but the glare Alex was giving her didn’t do any good. She and Eliza both laughed.

“Kolex,” Kara said once she’d finished laughing at Alex.
“Yes, Lady Kara?” the robot asked.

“What’s my saturation level?” she asked.

“Your solar radiation reserves at currently at one-point-nine percent,” Kolex replied. “Current absorption should have you back above five percent in three days.”

“Not good enough,” she said. “Have Konex start prepping the sun bath, load a sun suit profile into my war suit and get me a float chair.”

“Kara, sweetie, what are you doing?” Eliza asked in a tone that made it really clear that she knew exactly what Kara was about to do.

“My powers don’t kick in until my saturation levels are at five percent,” Kara said. “The sun suit is designed to keep me topped off in an environment with a red sun. It will take about an hour to get me up to five percent, but once it does, my accelerated healing will kick in. Once I’m above five percent, I can use the sun bath at maximum load, and it will have me topped off my morning.”

“Kara, you can’t be thinking about going out there again tomorrow,” Alex said. “You’ve been attacked twice in the last week.”

“No,” Kara said. “You’re right. I’m going to ask Astra to cover for me until Kolex can confirm that any residual damage from the missile is fully healed. For the next few days, I’m just Kara Danvers.”

“Good,” Alex said.

“Now, help me up. I need to convince our allies to actually trust us long enough for us to tear Cadmus apart.”

“That’s a plan I can get behind,” Alex said.

It took ten minutes, an argument with Alex and Eliza over whether or not Kolex and Konex were enough help, and a second injection of pain reliever to get Kara into the sun suit and into the float chair. Alex and Eliza had both been grumpy about having to wait in the hall with everyone else, but Kara really didn’t want to strip naked in front of anyone. Well, maybe Cat, but that wasn’t going to happen. Even if, by some chance, Cat was interested in her, she was about to find out pretty much everything she believed about Kara was a lie. She was honestly a little scared that she was about to lose several friends.

“Kolex,” Kara said as she settled into the float chair.

“Yes, Lady Kara?” Kolex asked.

“Have the fabbers run off eleven personal attendant constructs. Set gift protocols, full ownership. Designate two for Alex Danvers, one for Eliza Danvers, one for Maggie Sawyer, two for Cat Grant, one of which will be assigned to her son Carter Grant, one for Winslow Schott, Jr., one for Susan Vasquez, one for J’onn J’onzz, one for James Olsen, and one for Lucy Lane. Add the stealth, self-destruction and defense protocols we included in you, Konex, and the units given to Barry Allen and Oliver Queen of Earth One. Also add dimensional breach generators, and interdimensional communications abilities and tie them into our comm systems here and give them authorization to use the transmat system to evacuate their owners in an emergency. Use the standard gold color scheme for Cat’s units, black for both of Alex’s, and add the Danvers House Coat of Arms in gold. Eliza’s should be silver with the Danvers House Coat of Arms in black. Make Winn’s white with blue trim and J’onn’s green with black trim. Do the others in silver.”
“Yes, Lady Kara,” Kolex said. “All units should be ready within the hour.”

“Thank you, Kolex,” Kara said. “Also run off a dozen birthing matrixes for Kryptonian hounds and use the re-genesis archive to work up genetic profiles for the pups, but do not begin gestating yet.”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

Kara took a deep breath. “Kolex, run through the data we have on the surviving Kryptonians. Are any of them more directly in line to the House of Zod than Kal or I?”

“No, Lady Kara,” Kolex said after a moment.

“As the situation currently stands, if Dru-Zod were stripped of rank for his crimes, would the House of Zod pass to me, or to Kal-El?” Kara asked.

“You, Lady Kara. You are both related with five generations remove through Seg-El. As you have superseded Kal-El within the El line, that inheritance would now pass to you. In addition, Kal-El is related through Lara Lor-Van with nine generations remove, while you are related through Alura In-Ze with seven generations remove. In all cases, your claim is prime.”

“Thank you, Kolex. Who was my most recent Zod ancestor?” Kara asked.

“Shala Par-Zod,” Kolex said.

“Thank you,” Kara said. “Open the door.”
Chapter Summary

Kara deals with the political fallout from her fight with Clark, and the debriefing takes an unexpected turn.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Somehow, the fact that Cat was the first person Kara saw when the door opened didn’t surprise her at all. What was a surprise, and what sent a small stab of jealousy that she had no right to feel through her was seeing Leslie Willis sitting next to Cat, with an arm around her. She tried to tamp the feeling down, because it might well be completely innocent, and it was also none of her business, but something on her face must have shown, because Leslie just smirked at her.

Cat apparently missed it though, because the look on her face was pure rage, and for a moment Kara wished Kal had done the job right and finished her off, because it would have hurt less.

“Well, look who it is,” Cat said, standing up, and Kara suddenly felt every person in the hallway, and there must have been at least thirty, looking right at her.

“Well, look who it is,” Cat said, standing up, and Kara suddenly felt every person in the hallway, and there must have been at least thirty, looking right at her.

“Hey, Cat,” Kara said weakly.

“Don’t ‘Hey, Cat’ me, little miss ‘I can’t possibly go three whole days without ending up in a hospital bed,’” Cat said in a tone that made Kara wonder if she should deploy her shield.

“I’m sorry,” Kara squeaked. Cat’s eyes narrowed as she stalked forward, and Kara seriously considered calling for a transmat to somewhere safe, like the moon. Or Earth 46. Earth 46 Cat liked her, although the innuendo about a threesome with her and Powergirl had been vaguely disturbing.

But Kara could totally take one for the team.

“Sorry?” Cat asked. “That’s the best you can do? Sorry?”

Kara swallowed, and shrank down in the chair. “I didn’t mean for it to happen?”

Cat glared. “You didn’t mean for it to happen? You just accidentally challenged Superman to a duel? Then you just accidently went through with the duel without your powers, while you are concussed? You just accidently impaled yourself on a sword?”

“Oh, well, if it’s happened before, that makes it *so* much better,” Cat said. Cat raised a hand and jabbed her finger right into Kara’s chest. “People are relying on you! For safety, for protection, and thanks to your little corporate shopping spree, for their livelihoods and their futures. Some of us, for some reason I cannot currently comprehend, actually care about you. You do NOT get to throw your life away! You are not expendable, and I won’t have it. Not from an employee, and certainly not from a business partner.”
Kara stared up at her for a moment, and she knew. Cat was hiding it behind fury and bluster, but it was there, plain to see if you knew what to look for. Cat was scared.

“Everyone, give us a minute,” Kara said, somehow finding the confidence she normally projected. “Kolex, round everyone up and steer them towards the audience hall.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” the robot said.

Cat stood there fuming as everyone else quickly, though in some cases, reluctantly filed out of the hallway. Kara waited for the last of them to get out of line of sight, then hit a control on the float chair, making the foot rest fold up and out of the way. She placed her feet on the ground and used the power augments in the sun suit to lever herself up onto her feet.

“What are you doing?” Cat said, this time the fear clear in her voice. “You’ll hurt yourself!”

Kara just stepped forward and wrapped her arms around Cat. “I’m sorry,” she said.

It took a moment, but Cat’s arms slid around her. “You scared the life out of me,” she said. “Again.”

“I know,” Kara said.

“Don’t do it again,” Cat said.

“You know I can’t promise that,” Kara replied.

“Lie to me,” Cat said, the pleading in her voice so plaintive, it broke Kara’s heart.

Kara reached up, cradling the back of Cat’s head in her hand and turning to press her lips to Cat’s temple. “Never again,” Kara said. “I will never lie to you again. But I promise you, I will do everything in my power to come back to you.”

“That’s not good enough, Kiera,” Cat said. “I demand perfection. You know that.” The words were spoken in Cat’s classic bitchy boss voice, but the strength she put into hugging Kara made her real meaning clear.

Kara kissed her temple again. “Come on,” she said. “It’s time you found out why I took the risk,” she said.

Cat hesitated for a moment before letting Kara go. She stepped back, and gave Kara a once over, taking in the white and gold of the sun suit. “What fresh fashion hell is this?” Cat asked.

Kara laughed and shook her head. “Everyone’s a critic,” she said.

“I hate to say it, but I miss the primary color vomit,” Cat said.

“Such flattery,” Kara said. “I’ll see what I can do. Now, come on. We have an audience waiting, and this whole mess started because I was fashionably late.”

Cat entered the audience hall ahead of Kara and took a seat between Alex and Leslie. Kara followed her in and steered the float chair to the front of the hall, which was arranged as a small amphitheater. She was relieved to see that Konex or Kolex had replaced the podium with a table, so she wouldn’t have to stand. That would make things easier. She pulled the float chair up to the table and looked out over the sixty-odd people waiting for her.
“I’m sorry to have kept you later than expected,” she said. “Unfortunately, as you know, I had a family matter to attend to.” The comment brought a few chuckles, and the mood in the room eased up. She caught Cat’s eye for a moment and saw a hint of approval.

“I want to get this over as quickly as possible, however, only some of you are cleared for the full briefing, but there are matters that all of you should be apprised of, so we’ll get them out of the way first, then the Kryptonians, with the exception of Astra, will head back to the Village while I cover the matters relevant to the rest of you. Kolex, are you ready?” she asked the robot which had followed from the medical hall.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Kolex said.

“Let the record show that on this day, at this hour, an emergency session has been called of the Kryptonian High Council. At present count, I, Kara, Daughter of Alura of the House of Ze and Zor of the House of El, currently hold Head of House status for the following Houses. El, Ze, Ul, Ek, Ko, Re, An, Mer, Dar, Ak, Nu, Kann, Zar, Ran, Lor. Does any free person stand now to contest my claim?”

All eyes in the hall turned towards Astra and Fendra. Both stood, but Fendra nodded, yielding Astra the chance to speak first.

“You are my blood, and you have proven your worth in tests of Strength and Wisdom. I yield the House of Ze to your claim now, and before all of Krypton, so that none may challenge your right,” Astra said. She gave a small bow and sat back down.

“Thank you, Aunt Astra. I, Kara of the house of Ze, heir primus by the blood of Alura In-Ze, and rightful heir stand today to request and demand my birthright as head of the House of Ze. Kolex, let it be noted that the High Council has recognized my claim to the House of Ze, and that Astra of the House of Ze has yielded her claim. So it is spoken, so it is done.”

Kara turned to Fendra. “Fendra Kem-Kann, speak freely, and without fear.”

“Thank you, Lady El,” Fendra said. “I, Fendra of the house of Kann, second born of the first born, and heir primus by the blood of Kem-Kann, stand today to request and demand my birthright as head of the House of Kann.”

“Very well, Fendra of the House of Kann. The High Council recognizes your right as a free person to reclaim your House. You are, henceforth, Fendra Kann. May Rao light your way. So it is spoken, so it is done.”

Fendra gave a small bow. “Thank you, Lady El.”

“Kolex, does anyone else present have any claims that supercede my own.”

“Lady Fendra holds a claim to the House of Ran with two generations precedent over yours.”

Kara looked at Fendra. “Would you also claim the House of Ran?” she asked.

“No, Lady El,” Fendra said. “I wish only for my right to my Prime House.”

“Very well,” Kara said.

Fendra bowed again and took her seat.

Kara turned to Kal. “Kal of the House of El, stand.”
Kal stood up.

“Kal, you stand before me wearing no Coat of Arms. Is it your intention to repudiate your House?” Kara asked.

“No,” Kal said. “Astra took my suit. She said she would return it only if you decided not to exile me from the House.”

“I see,” Kara said. “There will be no exile.”

“Thank you,” Kal said.

“Your claim to the Head of the House of Van exceeds mine by ten generations of precedent. However, I have this very day defeated you in the challenge Strength and claim status as Head of House Van by right of conquest. Do you challenge?”

Kara watched Kal, seeing the confusion, and even a bit of anger in his eyes, but also a small bit of fear. Part of her felt guilty over it, but at this point, she was more concerned about how the other Kryptonians viewed her. The difference between how she treated Fendra and how she treated Kal would not go unnoticed.

“I do not,” Kal said.

“Very well,” Kara said.

“I, Kara of the house of Van, heir primus by the blood of Ta-Van, and rightful heir stand today to request and demand my birthright as head of the House of Van. House Kann, do you object?”

“House Kann recognizes your right as Head of the House of Van,” Fendra said.

“Kolex, let it be noted that the High Council has recognized my claim to the House of Van, and that Kal of the House of El has yielded his claim. So it is spoken, so it is done.”

“Noted, Lady Kara,” Kolex said.

“Kal, by the same right of conquest, I also claim house Vex, Am, Zu, Tor, Da, Do, Ur and Em. Do you challenge?”

“No,” Kal said.

“House Kann?”

“House Kann recognizes your right as Head of the House of Vex, Am, Zu, Tor, Da, Do, Ur and Em,” Fendra said.

“Kolex, let it be noted that the High Council has recognized my claims to the House of Vex, Am, Zu, Tor, Da, Do, Ur and Em, and that Kal of the House of El has yielded his claims. So it is spoken, so it is done.”

“Astra,” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady El?” Astra asked.

“Give Kal’s suit to Kolex,” she said. “It will be placed on display in the trophy hall.”

Astra nodded, but Kal looked like he’d been slapped.
“Kal, Kolex will provide you with a proper war suit,” Kara said. “But from now own, you will wear the proper coat of arms. You may sit.”

Kal dropped back into his seat.

“Let it be known by all that three hours ago, by fourteen votes, the High Council created a new Great House. This House shall now and forever be known as House Danvers, and that Alex of House Danvers shall be recorded as the founder and head of house. House Kann, do you have any objections?”

“Before I decide, Lady El, might I ask what this Alex has done to deserve such an honor?”

“Alex is my sister by adoption,” Kara said. “Her mother took me in and sheltered me when I was alone and adrift, abandoned even by my cousin. Her father died to protect me, and she has fought to defend me, fought alongside me, saved my life, and the life of my friends. She aided me in my efforts to secure the freedom and pardon of the prisoners aboard Fort Rozz, and she stands with me now against the murderers and assassins who have declared war on the last of the Kryptonian people.”

Every Kryptonian eye in the room except Kara’s turned to Alex, who blushed furiously, but sat up straight, and put on a look of supreme confidence.

“If she has accomplished all this, Lady El, I do not see any way I could object,” Fendra said.

“So it is spoken, so it is done. Alex of House Danvers, as head of a Great House, you now have a vote on the Kryptonian High Council.”

A small round of murmurs went through the Kryptonians in the room, and Kara took careful note of those who seemed unhappy with what had just happened.

“Thank you,” Alex said.

“As the Head of the House of El, I motion for a vote on the issue of stripping former general Dru-Zod of his rank and banishing him from his House in accordance with the judgement of treason against him. As the Head of House Van, I second the motion, and as head of twenty-three of the twenty-six houses, I vote in favor of stripping Dru-Zod of rank and banishing him from his House. House Kann, how do you vote?”

“House Kann votes in favor of stripping Dru-Zod of rank and banishing him from his House,” Fendra said, without hesitation.

“House Danvers, how do you vote?” Kara asked.

“House Danvers votes in favor of stripping Dru-Zod of rank and banishing him from his House,” Alex said.

“Kolex, let it be noted that Dru-Zod is hereby stripped of all rank and status, and is banished from the House of Zod so long as Father Rao’s light burns. So it is spoken, so it is done.”

“It is so noted,” Kolex said.

“I, Kara of the house of Zod, heir primus by the blood of Shala Par-Zor, and rightful heir stand today to request and demand my birthright as head of the House of Zod. House Kann, do you object?” Kara asked.

“House Kann recognizes your right as Head of the House of Zod,” Fendra said.
“House Danvers, do you object?” Kara asked.

“House Danvers recognizes your right as Head of the House of Zod,” Alex said.

“Kolex, let it be noted that the High Council has recognized my claim to the House of Zod. So it is spoken, so it is done.

“Also, enter into the record that on this day, at this hour, as the Head of the House of El, I motion for a vote on the repeal of the Eradicator Protocol. As the Head of House Van, I second the motion, and as head of twenty-four of the twenty-six houses, I vote in favor of repeal on behalf of each of those houses. House Kann, how do you vote?”

For a moment, every Kryptonian in the hall was deathly silent, then Kal was on his feet.

“Kara, you can’t!” he said.

“Kal, be silent!,” Kara said.

“But-” Kal started.

“Enough!” Kara shouted. “Our people are dying, and you would sit there and let them die because of your ignorance. Lifting the Eradicator Protocol is the only way to keep our people from becoming a footnote in history. I have the schematics to make birthing matrixes and Chrysalis chambers. I have a copy the Kryptonian genetic archives. I have everything we need to rebuild our society, except the freedom to do it. The yellow sun extends our lives. Every Kryptonian in this room could live to see Sol swell up to be a Red Giant, if violence doesn’t kill them first. But with the Eradicator Protocol in place, we don’t have a large enough gene pool for viability, even with all the time the yellow sun gives us.”

Kara turned and looked at Fendra. “If we lift the Eradicator Protocol, we can use the genetic archives to seed the birthing matrixes. We will have a gene pool consisting of seven hundred generations of Kryptonians.”

“You’re asking a lot,” Fendra said.

“I know,” Kara said. “I know the horror the Eradicator Protocol was enacted to prevent. But unless we lift it, the Kryptonians are finished, as a people.”

Fendra looked over at Alex, then back at Kara. “If she votes with you, you will have twenty-five votes.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Kara said. “The vote must be unanimous.”

“I will not support the creation of clones, just for slaughter,” Fendra said.

“I would not ask you too,” Kara said. “I have tissue regenerators that can regrow entire limbs in a matter for hours. No clones. No neural ghosts. You can draft a new law banning them, and I will gladly support it, but we need the genetic archive, and we need the Chrysalis chambers, or it isn’t just our world we’ve lost.”

“Very well,” Fendra said. “If you will ban cloning and neural ghosts, I vote in favor of the repeal of the Eradicator Protocol.”

“Thank you,” Kara said. She turned to Alex. “House Danvers, how do you vote?”
“I don’t know what the Eradicator Protocol is,” Alex said.

“It’s a law, enacted in the wake of the Clone Wars. Prior to the Clone Wars, Kryptonians would keep cloned duplicates of themselves in storage, and when their current body was injured, or grew old, they would transfer their mind into a young, fresh cloned body. This continued until a war broke out over whether clones had rights. After the war ended, the Eradicator Protocol was passed. It banned neuro-intact cloning, mind transplantation, and made it illegal to use the genetic profile of a dead person to create a child.”

“And you want to repeal that?” Alex asked.

“So that we have access to a larger gene pool,” Kara said. “I’m not looking to make a group of cloned zombies. But the law was passed unanimously and can only be repealed by a unanimous vote.”

“Okay,” Alex said. “I vote in favor of repeal, so long as new laws to ban cloning and neural ghosts are enacted.”

“Thank you,” Kara said. “Kolex, let the record show that by unanimous vote, the High Council has repealed the Eradicator protocol, and enacted a temporary, blanket ban on neuro-intact cloning and full-body cloning, with an exception for specific organ cloning for medical purposes as well as a blanket ban on neural transfer as interim measures until formal and codified laws can be passed. Such passage shall occur no later than one /lorakh/ hence. So it is spoken, so it is done.”

“So noted,” Kolex said.

“Fendra,” Kara said, “I had not originally planned on including you in the remainder of the meeting but given that you’re now part of the Kryptonian Government, I would ask you to stay. Byara, would you take the rest of the Kryptonians back to The Village?”

“Yes, Lady El,” Byara said. The Kryptonians, all of them former military, knew a dismissal when they heard it. All of them stood, and Byara, one of Astra’s lieutenants, led out of the audience hall.

“Kolex,” Kara said. “Seal the audience hall, implement privacy protocol zero and bring me the caskets.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Kolex said. A moment later, the massive door of the audience hall slid shut, and Kara breathed a sigh of relief.

There was a flash, and the white case appeared on the table in front of her. Kara reached up and pressed her hand to the top, and the surface glowed briefly where she touched it, then the top split lengthwise down the case, and the upper half of the case folded down, half on each side of the bottom, revealing the three ring caskets.

One the red of fresh spilled blood, one the blue of a bright new day filled with promise, and one the deep violet of a lover’s kiss bruised lips.

The reactions in the room varied. Cat, Leslie, Lucy and Zatanna looked on curiously. Diana’s eyebrows went up in surprise. Victor’s lips narrowed and he tilted his head slightly in a way Kara recognized as him thinking about something which surprised him. Pretty much the entire Bat Family physically recoiled from the sight of the red ring, while Clark’s eyes got as wide as saucers. Bruce was the only one who said anything.

“Where did you get those?” Bruce asked, and even without her super hearing, Kara could hear the stress in his voice.

“I took them off dead Lanterns,” Kara said. “I’ve used them all, at various times, but I keep them in
“That’s not possible,” Bruce said. “You can’t take off a red ring. If you did, it would kill you instantly.”

“Not if you have a Blue Lantern to purge the effects,” Kara said.

“If you have them, why not use the rings?” Kate asked. Kara glanced over at her. She couldn’t read Kate’s expression behind the Batwoman mask she was wearing but it was a good question.

“The red ring is hard to control,” Kara said. “Red rings are butcher’s tools. They let out every moment of rage, every violent impulse. The fact that I can wield it at all should tell you something about how much anger I have inside me. But I can only control it when I’m riding the rage. In the middle of a war, that can be useful, but on a day like today, if I were wearing the ring, I would have killed at least three people I love like family. I wouldn’t have been able to stop myself. So, the red ring stays in the box.”

“The violet ring hurts,” Kara said. “Love is wild and consuming and overwhelming. It can be wonderful, but when you’ve lost as much as I have, it’s like drowning in broken glass. All that love, doing nothing but cutting you every time you reach for it. Someone else might be able to use it, but honestly, I’d rather die than put it on again.”

Kara reached up and lifted the blue casket out of the box.

“And then there’s hope,” Kara said. “Hope burns bright. Hope can keep you going when everything else is gone.” She looked over at Cat as a smile tugged at her lips. “Hope is stronger than fear. You can lose yourself in hope. But hope lies to you. Tells you that you can have things that are out of your reach. Tells you things will be alright when they won’t be. Makes you imagine that you can come out of war with your soul intact.”

“I gave up on hope, because I had to live with reality, and the ring won’t work without hope. I couldn’t wield it anymore, because for a long time, I didn’t have anything to hope for. All that changed a year ago.”

Kara touched the Blue Lantern on the blue casket to open it. “I asked you all here tonight because I’ve been keeping secrets. I had good reasons to keep those secrets at the time, but those reasons don’t exist anymore, and the last few days have made it obvious that I need your help. But what I am going to tell you sounds insane. So, if everyone agrees, I’ll use the blue ring. It will let me show you proof that I’m telling the truth.” The ring rose up, floating above the casket for a moment. Kara reached for it, but before she could close her hand around it, the ring shot across the room, at the last person Kara ever expected, and a great, booming voice spoke from the ring.

“Cat Grant of Earth, you have the ability to instill great hope.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

lorakh
A unit of time roughly equal to sixty earth days, or roughly one Kryptonian day. The length of the Kryptonian day is actually variable due to the nature of Krypton’s orbit
and the tidal forces exerted on the planet by Rao, so a lorakh is more exactly defined as one third of two orbits of Krypton around Rao.
Chapter Summary

Cat deals with her new reality by being Cat Grant. Kara tells all. Sara remembers something.

Chapter Notes

Surprise chapter with surprise smut at the end. Honestly, I know that Thanksgiving can be a really, really bad time for a lot of people, so this is my way of trying to help be giving you something to tide you over. Enjoy it, and when you have to deal with those shitty relatives, just think about what Kara says about Diana's costume and think gay thoughts.

Kara just sat there, staring at Cat in a Blue Lantern uniform. She was sure she wasn’t the only one staring, but she couldn’t tear her eyes away from the sight, which filled her with both terror and wonder.

And then, of course, Cat, being Cat, had the most Cat Grant reaction in the history of Cat Grant reactions. She looked down at herself, becoming progressively more annoyed as she took in the details of the Blue Lantern uniform she was wearing.

“Well, this is atrocious. The color combination is almost acceptable if you enjoy looking like a pen factory vomited on you, but the cut is horrible, and the texture is a nightmare. It looks like bad CGI out of a Ryan Reynolds movie.”

Afterwards, Kara was never sure who lost it first. Leslie swore it was Lois, Lois swore it was Kal, Kal swore it was James, and James swore it was Kaldur’ahm, but everyone in the room who had worked with Cat, with the sole exception of Winn, burst out laughing, because of course Cat’s first concern was her sense of fashion.

“Kiera!” Cat snapped. “Get this ridiculous thing off me.”

Kara nodded and took a second to force herself to stop laughing. “Come here,” she said. She reached into the casket and took out the power battery.

Cat walked over to her and Kara could see impatience in her eyes, but also a touch of fear and uncertainty. It hurt to see that in Cat’s eyes.

“Point the ring at the Lantern,” Kara said.

Cat lifted her hand and pointed the ring into the Lantern.

“I’m going to go through the oath. Repeat it exactly as I say it.”
Cat nodded.

“In fearful day. In raging night. With strong hearts full, our souls ignite. When all seems lost in the war of light, look to the stars, for hope burns bright,” Kara said.

Cat gave her a look, and Kara could practically hear the ‘Are you fucking serious?’ itching to roll of Cat’s tongue, but she just rolled her eyes and repeated the oath, word for word.

“In fearful day. In raging night. With strong hearts full, our souls ignite. When all seems lost in the war of light, look to the stars, for hope burns bright.”

Blue light erupted out of the lens of the lantern, striking the ring and making it glow for a moment before the light dissipated.

“You should be able to take it off now,” Kara said.

Cat slipped the ring off, and held it out to Kara, but Kara shook her head.

“It’s yours,” Kara said.

“You can’t be serious,” Cat said.

“We’ll talk about it,” Kara said, “but for now, hold on to it.”

She could see the reluctance in Cat’s eyes, but thankfully, Cat just nodded and turned around, walking back to her seat.

Kara looked back out at the people in front of her. “We’ll have to do this a different way,” she said. She turned to Diana. “Would you?”

Diana nodded and stood up, taking her Lasso off her hip. “For those of you who do not know, this is The Golden Perfect. It was forged by the god Hephaestus from the Girdle of Hippolyta, strands from the loom of fate, and the golden essence of truth. Anyone who is encircled in its coils cannot lie and is compelled to tell the truth.”

Kara turned towards Diana and she approached, holding out her arms with her wrists crossed, and only blushed slightly when Leslie said, “Kinky,” in an exaggerated stage whisper. She turned and glared, but Leslie just smiled beatifically. Diana wrapped the Lasso around her wrists loosely, and stepped back, holding the other end as the rope glowed brightly.

“What is your name?” Diana asked.

“Kara El, born Kara Zor-El, also known as Kara Elaine Danvers, Kiera Danvers, Supergirl and Alkawala al-Saghir.”

“Who calls you that?” Alex asked.

Kara turned, glaring at her sister as she answered, “Sara Lance of Earth One,” she said, and because the magic of the lasso wouldn’t let her stop, “it means Little Koala.”


“This all starts about twenty thousand years ago,” Kara said.

Telling the story to thirty people took a lot longer than telling the story to three people. Part of that was the lasso’s influence. The lasso compelled her to tell the truth, so she ended up giving a lot of detail she would normally have glossed over. Without the lasso, she might not have told the crowd it
was Alex who ran Astra through with a Kryptonite sword, and she might have skipped the part
about how Carter had originally been on Max’s train, and she would have definitely skipped over the
part where Lucy and James broke up when Lucy realized James was in love with Kara, and James
and Kara’s subsequent break up, which involved a very loud screaming match ending with Kara
telling James to ‘just go fuck my cousin and leave me out of it’. She might have avoided both topics
if the first hadn’t been so closely tied into the aftermath of the Red K incident, and the second one
hadn’t been part of the fight over whether Lena had helped Lillian escape from prison, but they were
part of the story, and the lasso didn’t let her edit things.

Watching Eliza and Alex’s face as she described what happened to Jeremiah had been hard. She
couldn’t bring herself to look at Cat when she described leaving her to die in the CatCo building
collapse. Things got easier, once she got past Barry and Oliver’s deaths. The losses became fewer
and further between, because there were so few people left that she cared about. The last stand of
Vibe and Killer Frost wasn’t an easy memory, but in a way, it was a happy one. They’d died
covering the Waverider’s escape from New Genesis with the hypertime engine. Harley’s death had
been rough though. She’d seemed untouchable, like some god of chaos in the middle of a war, right
up until the moment she’d died. Then she explained about the trip to 1998 to set up the stock trading
AI so she’d have money, and the side trip to Krypton to retrieve the spy beacon, and about the plan
for the Waverider to self-destruct on Apokolips. Then she described the year she’d spent planning
and working in secret, and the careful and deliberate changes she’d made to Supergirl’s debut, right
up until she’d caught a missile to the back of the head. It was almost 1:00 AM by the time she was
done, and she was about to ask Diana to remove the lasso when Kara heard a question she was
honestly surprised no one else had asked yet.

“If the Waverider is a time ship, why did you wait so long to try coming back and stopping all of
this?” Eliza asked.

“Because it wasn’t enough to travel through time,” Kara said. “Apokolips and New Genesis are god
realms. They exist outside of time. Simply going back and making changes to the timeline wouldn’t
stop the war unless we defeated Darkseid and then made the changes to the timeline. In fact, changes
in a timeline don’t even affect other universes in the timeline, until something that has changed
actually crosses over. For example, my coming back in time didn’t change the Earth One timeline
until I actually went there last night.”

“But you’re here,” Eliza said, “and it doesn’t sound like you defeated Darkseid.”

“We got desperate,” Kara said. “We stole a hypertime engine from New Genesis.”

“What’s hypertime?” Alex asked.

“Hypertime is the timestream of the entire multiverse. When you travel in time, make changes to the
time stream, create time loops, they occur at specific moments in hypertime. The events leading to
this moment involve three separate timelines. The prime timeline, where Darkseid never invaded.
The alpha timeline, which is where I come from where Darkside invaded. The beta timeline where
we are now. The branching of the prime timeline and the alpha timeline occurred when Darkseid
invaded, which happened at a specific moment in hypertime. In order to change the war, or prevent
the war, we couldn’t just travel back within the alpha timeline, because any changes we made
wouldn’t change the timeline on Apokolips or New Genesis. We had to travel back in hypertime,
and the Waverider’s time engines couldn’t do that.”

“Okay, but why not do it sooner?” Eliza asked. “You said the people of New Genesis were your
allies, why not ask them for the hypertime engine?”

“Because hypertime travel is dangerous,” Kara said. “There are creatures that guard time streams.
They’re called time wraiths, and they are powerful. They live within the speed force, but mess with time too much, and they will hunt you down. I’ve seen them tear apart things that are a lot scarier than I am. Hypertime has guardians too, but they’re far, far more powerful than a time wraith. New Genesis called them ‘Monitors’, and they nearly destroyed New Genesis the first time they tested the hypertime drive. We waited as long as we did, because we were afraid that if we did try to make the trip in hypertime, the Monitors might destroy the multiverse. We didn’t try it until things escalated to the point where the destruction of the multiverse was actually less of a threat than Darkseid, but once we realized he was looking for ways to hop to other multiverses, we decided it was worth the risk.”

“What do you know about the prime timeline?” Alex asked.

“Not a lot,” Kara said. “The technology that we went to Earth One to retrieve is from the future in the prime timeline. The Waverider was built in the future in the prime timeline. The Reverse Flash, Rip Hunter, Booster Gold and the Legion of Superheroes are from the prime timeline. The Legion vanishes from existence the moment darkside invades, and the Waverider, Booster Gold, Rip Hunter and the Reverse Flash all become time remnants.”

“Why didn’t you tell anyone about this sooner?” Bruce asked.

“I did,” Kara said. “I told Alex, J’onn and Susan first, and when circumstance required it, I told Maggie, Winn and James.”

“But why not the Justice League?” Bruce asked.

“Honestly, you’re useless.” Kara said. “You’re more interested in preserving the status quo than making real changes. Kal’s had access to the files in the fortress for more than fourteen years, and done nothing to help the world, and you’re just as bad. How much advanced tech do you have access to that you’ve never even considered sharing with the world? The same goes for Diana. I adore her, and I have thoughts about that costume I’m not really comfortable discussing in front of Eliza and Astra, but sometimes I want to scream at her and shake her. Paradise Island is centuries ahead of the rest of the world, but the Amazons hoard advancements than could end poverty, disease, and hunger. She had access to all of it, understands all of it, yet she does nothing with it. And somehow, the rest of the League is okay with that. Sure, millions of people are dying every year from diseases that Clark could cure. Millions more from pollution that wouldn’t happen if Clark or Diana or Arthur or Victor shared the tech they have access too. But hey, the League got together and beat up ‘The Shaggy Man’, so they must be doing a great job.

“I did it your way the first time around, and I watched the entire world burn, again. I came back to do better, and you would have just gotten in the way,” Kara said. “If I had told you or Kal or Diana what Myriad was, then the three of you would have immediately gone after Astra, and I would never have had a chance to negotiate a surrender. Astra’s people may be soldiers, but the average Kryptonian child of ten Earth years is better schooled in science and technology than most PhD’s. They are an invaluable resource, and most of the League, with the exception of the Green Lanterns, have a punch first, ask questions never policy when it comes to aliens. And I couldn’t exactly go to the Green Lanterns for help since I have every intention of executing their little blue masters for murdering trillions of people.”

“You’re planning on killing the Guardians?” Kal asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I hadn’t intended to tell you that, but it’s true. I don’t like to kill. I don’t enjoy it, and I’ve never done it lightly, but the Guardians’ crimes extend far beyond Krypton. They owe Mars and Tamaran blood beyond counting, and we’re not the only species they’ve done this to. The Guardians have existed for billions of years and have murdered hundreds of millions of worlds in the name of preserving order. There are entire galactic super clusters that have been sterilized of all life
because of the Guardians, and they are currently plotting to convert every person on Earth into a mindless automaton as part of their third army. Death is hardly justice for their crimes but allowing them to continue to exist endangers trillions of lives.”

“If you’re talking about sector 666, that was the Manhunters, not the Guardians,” Bruce said.

“The Guardians created the Manhunters,” Kara said.

“The Manhunters rebelled,” Kal said. “When the Guardians realized what they’d done—”

“The Guardians ordered the sterilization of 666,” Kara said. “They had a prophecy telling them that one of their greatest enemies would be born in sector 666, so they ordered the Manhunters to kill everyone in the sector. The Guardians didn’t destroy the Manhunters because the Manhunters killed the inhabitants of 666. They destroyed the Manhunters because they left witnesses. The Five Inversions.”

“You can’t believe that,” Kal said.

“It’s true,” Kara said. “Ganthet himself told me.”

“Is there anything else that you haven’t told us?” Diana asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “Lots of things. Some nights, I miss Sara so much I cry myself to sleep. Sometimes, I catch a whiff of sulfur and it reminds me of the stench of the months I spent in one of the slave pens on Apokolips. Harley got torn apart by parademons, and when it happened, I got sprayed with her blood. Sometimes, I wake up in the middle of the night, and I can still taste it in my mouth. Killing Guy Gardner was easier than I thought it would be after the way he slaughtered Donna, Raven and Starfire. The morning I found Lucy—”

“Enough!” Diana said. “That’s enough.” She gave the lasso an urgent tug, and it slipped off Kara’s wrists. Kara sighed with relief as she felt the compulsion of the lasso fade, and looked around the room, taking in the expressions on everyone’s face. Most of the Bat Family were still hiding behind their masks but most of them just wore domino masks, so she could read them well enough. By and large, their faces were set in grim, determined masks. Victor looked thoughtful. Zatanna looked a little green around the gills. Astra and Fendra both wore blank expressions. Kal looked a bit like Doomsday had kicked Krypto. Lois and Diana were both putting on good fronts, but Kara could tell they were shaken. But it was Kara’s people that were the hardest hit.

She’d been through the story with a lot of them before, but if she hadn’t sugar coated it, she’d definitely avoided the really bad details, so even the people who already knew what was going on were sitting there in shock. Eliza looked devastated. Lucy looked broken. Leslie looked angry. Kaldur’ahm looked a little overwhelmed. It was Cat’s expression that surprised her. She’d almost been afraid to look. Afraid she’d see betrayal behind those eyes at the lies she’d had to tell. Instead, Cat looked determined, like she did before she delivered a dose of reality to a recalcitrant board.

“I think we should all take some time,” Diana said. “A lot has happened today.”

Kara looked up at Diana. “Agreed,” Kara said. “If you all head back to the great hall, Kolex will transport you back to where you need to go.”

The next few minutes were barely organized chaos. Everyone stood up, and seemed to move straight towards her, and for a minute, Kara was worried it was going to turn into a stampede. Diana, more insightful than most, just steered the crowd out of the audience hall, shooing people until all that was left were Alex, Maggie, Winn, James, Lucy, Eliza, J’onn, Cat, Leslie, Susan, Astra, Fendra, Kal and
Lois. Diana gave her a questioning look, but Kara nodded, and Diana left.

Kal was the first one to approach her.

“I feel like I owe you an apology,” he said.

“More than one,” Kara said. “I never wanted to take the House from you. I wanted you to claim your birthright and be the man your parents expected you to be. Now, that can’t ever happen, and if you’d just given me a couple of hours…”

“I’m sorry,” he said. “I’m still not comfortable with what happened out there tonight, but I understand now why you did it.”

Kara stared at him for a moment and resigned herself to the fact that she and Kal were never going to see eye to eye on this. It was nothing new. Their relationship had never been as easy as she’d wished.

“I have people waiting,” she said. “We’ll talk about this when I don’t have a hole in my chest.”

Kal flinched, but before he could say anything, Lois was there, pushing him towards the door.

“Take care of yourself, Short Stuff,” Lois said. “I’ll knock a bit of sense into this one’s head.”

“Thanks, Lois,” Kara said. Once they were gone, she waved Fendra over. Fendra stood up and approached cautiously.

“Lady El?” Fendra asked.

“Please, call me Kara,” she said. “Or Supergirl if we’re in public.”

“Of course, Kara,” Fendra said. “You may call me Fendra.”

“Thank you,” Kara said. “The Council model is unsustainable, given our current numbers, and the fact that I hold Head of House Status for twenty-four of the twenty-six houses.”

“I agree,” Fendra said. “I am also not sure how realistic it is to expect our people to accept humans as members of a Great House, much less as head of one.”

“That isn’t negotiable,” Kara said. “For now, I am the legal head of Krypton, but you’ve heard what I have in front of me.”

“Yes,” Fendra said.

“Then you understand that I am going to have to leave the actual process of rebuilding our society up to others,” Kara said.

“Astra has been our leader-”

“No,” Kara said. “You.”

“Me?” Fendra said.

“Yes,” Kara said. “Look, the truth is, I barely know you. We never spoke in the other timeline, and what Darkseid did to the Kryptonians on Fort Rozz still gives me nightmares. Dealing with you is unfamiliar territory for me, but you were the only one who was willing to challenge me tonight. I love my aunt, but she yielded her seat as head of House Ze. You are the only one who stood ready to
challenge me. The others will respect that. Besides, Astra will have other responsibilities. She will still act as our Military Chief of Staff, but I need her working with the human scientists to reproduce our tech with Earth resources, otherwise humans and Kryptonians will both need a new planet soon.”

“A point I cannot argue,” Fendra said.

“Then talk to our people. Find out which of them wish to become parents. Once we have a safe place to do so, we will build a genesis chamber, and seed the first birthing matrixes.”

“Very well,” Fendra said. “I’ll do that right after I draft my first piece of legislation.”

“Good,” Kara said. “But make sure they understand, we’ll preserve as much of our culture as possible, but there will be changes. Significant ones. We cannot simply re-create Krypton, because if we do, we’ll end up repeating our mistakes. I want a future for our people, but it has to be a better one, or there’s no point.”

“I do not think very many of them will object to a few changes,” Fendra said. “I’ll take my leave, now.”

“Be well, Fendra Kann,” Kara said.

“Be well, Kara El,” Fendra said. She gave a small bow and then left.

Kara waited until she was gone, then drove the float chair over to the spot where her family was sitting.

“Shit, Sunshine,” Leslie said as Kara stopped the float chair. “If I’d know you were that hard core, I might not have slammed you on the radio.”

Kara laughed. “I’d call bullshit, but Eliza would yell at me about my language.”

“Not worried about Grumpy Butt over there?” Leslie asked, nodding towards Astra.

“Who do you think taught me to swear?” Kara asked.

Leslie gave a small shrug. “I’m gonna head back to the DEO,” she said. “I have a feeling this is about to get mushy, and my stomach can’t take it.”

“I’ll go with her,” Susan said. “Make sure she gets back okay.”

“I’ll be…” Leslie stopped when she saw the look on Susan’s face, and after a second, nodded. “Okay. Come on.”

“I’m gonna go, too,” Lucy said as Leslie and Susan left.

Kara turned to her. “No, Lucy, we should-”

“Yeah,” Lucy said, “we will. I just… I need some time.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “I’m here when you’re ready.”

“Thanks,” Lucy said.

“I should leave you to talk,” J’onn said.
“I’d like to talk to you about Jeremiah, when you have some time,” Eliza said to J’onn.

“Of course,” J’onn said, giving Eliza as small nod before following Lucy out the door.

“I’m just gonna go too,” Winn said, standing up. He walked over and bent down, hugging Kara tightly. “Will you be okay?” he asked.

“I’ll be fine,” Kara said. “Get some sleep. Tomorrow is going to be busy.”

“Jackson,” Cat said, “I think I’ll be fine getting home. Why don’t you go get some rest.”

Kaldur’ahm looked at Cat for a moment, then glanced at Kara. Kara gave him a small nod, and he stood up. “Winn, wait up,” he said, moving quickly to follow Winn.

Cat looked at Kara. “We need to talk,” she said. “But if you’d like some time with your family, it doesn’t have to be tonight.”

“We’ll talk tomorrow,” Kara said. “My office, 10:00 AM?”

“Surely you’re not planning on coming in to work tomorrow?” Cat asked.

“I am,” Kara said.

“Now you’re just being ridiculous,” Cat said. “You’re injured. You already came back in before you were fully healed and look what happened.”

“I don’t have a choice, Cat,” Kara said. “I have promises to keep.”

“Well, if you’re going to insist on getting yourself killed, fine,” Cat snapped. She stood up, and Kara knew she was about to stomp off.

“Take the ring and the lantern,” Kara said.

“Don’t be absurd,” Cat said. “I’m not a superhero.”

“No,” Kara said, “and I don’t want you to be. But I also know you have a reinforced panic room in your apartment that connects through your and Carter’s closets, that you keep a Glock 17 in your night stand, have a concealed carry permit which is an absolute pain to get in California, and you carry a Glock 43 in your purse. The ring is safer, more powerful, and you can wear it all the time.”

“I don’t-” Cat starts to say, but Kara cut her off.

“I won’t do it,” Kara said. “Not again. I did what you told me, and I watched you die. I won’t do it again. I don’t care who it is. Vicki, or Snapper, or Lois, or Kelly from fashion, or your mother. I’ll save you, and I’ll save Carter, and if you don’t take the damn ring so you can save yourself, then the blood of whoever I leave behind will be on your hands this time. Rao knows I’ve already got enough on mine to bathe in it.”

Cat stares at her for a moment, looking like Kara had just slapped her across the face, and honestly, Kara felt a little like she did, but she’d be damned if she apologized for the truth. The blue ring selecting Cat Grant wasn’t something she hoped for or imagined, and definitely wasn’t something she’d planned on, but one thing Kara had learned a long, long time ago was that you use every advantage and every opportunity you had. A Cat Grant who could protect herself wasn’t an opportunity so much as it was a miracle, and she wasn’t above a little emotional blackmail to make sure that miracle stuck.
She saw it in Cat’s eyes, too. Cat knew exactly what she was doing, and Kara could see the rage boiling behind those eyes, but she knew she’d won, even if Cat didn’t speak to her again as she stood up and marched over to snatch up the power battery before she stormed out of the audience hall.

“She is *not* happy with you,” Maggie said.

“She can hate me all she wants, as long as she’s alive to do it,” Kara said. She looked over the last four people left there. Alex, Maggie, Astra and Eliza.

“Listen,” Kara said. “I’d love to stay and talk to all of you, but Cat is right about one thing. I’m not recovered. My powers have kicked back in, and it’s helping, but I need time in the sun bath to top off my reserves, so my powers don’t sputter out again.”

Alex nodded. “Kolex already has me set up in one of the rooms in the residence. I’ll bunk down there, and we’ll talk to you tomorrow,” she said. She stood up, and Maggie stood up with her. “Mom?”

“I’ll be along in a minute,” Eliza said.

“Okay,” Alex said. She leaned down and hugged Kara. “See you tomorrow.”

“You bet,” Kara said.

“No more fights,” Maggie said.

“I’ll try,” Kara said.

Maggie nodded, and she and Alex headed for the door.

“Astra,” Kara said, “this is Eliza. She took me in when I arrived on Earth and raised me as her own daughter.”

“Then I owe you my thanks,” Astra said.

Eliza shook her head. “No. Kara was a blessing,” Eliza said. “I couldn’t imagine our lives without her, and I never wanted to.”

“Even knowing all of this?” Kara asked, more than a little surprised by how small her voice was.

Eliza took one look at her, and Kara could see the pain in her face, but it was a pain born of sympathy, not resentment. Eliza was on her feet so quickly, it was almost as if she’d used super speed. She stepped forward and hugged Kara tightly.

“Don’t you ever think any of this is your fault,” Eliza said. “I heard everything you said, and I know you. You’re my daughter, and I know you. You did everything you could, and more than anyone had any right to expect.” Eliza pulled back, so Kara could see her face. “We’re going to do better this time. I promise you, we’re going to do better.”

Kara nodded, blinking tears out of her eyes as the relief Eliza’s words brought with them. It had been a long, long time since Eliza had been around to provide that kind of comfort, and Kara hadn’t realized how much she missed having a mother.

“Okay,” Kara said.

“Can your robot send me back to Midvale for tonight?”
“Yes,” Kara said.

“Good. I need to close up the house,” Eliza said. “I’ll need an apartment. Something close to the DEO.”

“You’re moving to National City?”

“Until all this is finished,” Eliza said.

“What about your job?” Kara asked.

“I’ll take a sabbatical. I think they’ll be glad to be rid of me, honestly,” she said.

“When will you be back?” Kara asked.

“Next Monday,” Eliza said. “I might need a place to stay while I apartment hunt.”

“I might have a place for you by then,” Kara said.

“I’d prefer to pick it out myself,” Eliza replied.

“Kolex,” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady Kara?” Kolex asked.

“Have Konex go back to the apartment and gather Eliza’s things. Uncrate Eliza’s attendant and send it with her when you transmat her back to the house in Midvale.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Kolex said.

“My attendant?” Eliza asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “It will help you close the house, and I’ll have Kolex run off another one to do the upkeep while you’re away. Just tell it what you want, and it will help design a layout for your apartment. I’m buying my own building, so we can fit you with everything you need. Even a lab.”

Eliza shook her head. “I’m not used to the fact that my little girl is a billionaire.”

“Both your little girls will be billionaires before too long,” Kara said. “You always told us we had to share.”

Eliza laughed and leaned down, kissing Kara on the head. “Get some sleep,” Eliza said. “I know better than to try to talk you out of work tomorrow, but please take it easy.”

“I promise,” Kara said.

Eliza hugged her again, and then headed out of the audience hall, leaving her alone with Astra.

Kara turned to look at her, not as all sure what to expect.

“I do not know what to say, Little One,” Astra said. “I had not dreamed that I’d been the cause of so much pain.”

“I know you didn’t mean to,” Kara said.

“/kaipahdh tov guhloghi krigiu w tov dovrrosho doliu/” Astra said. “Your distaste for Non makes a great deal more sense, now.”
“Non’s weak,” Kara said. “Pathetic. He allowed Indigo to lead him around by the nose. It’s not distaste, it’s contempt.”

“He truly gave you to a Black Mercy?” Astra asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“I should kill him, for that alone.”

“It’s done,” Kara said. “Non and Indigo will spend the rest of their lives in cages alongside Vril Dox, Facet Jens, and a lot of other people who deserve it.”

“I just wish there were some way I could make amends,” Astra said.

“You’re here,” Kara said. “You can make amends by being my family again. Be the good and noble woman who taught me so much about the universe.”

Astra nodded stiffly. “You would really have me in the lab with this Luthor woman, rather than on the front line with you?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “I might give you a name, the way Cat gave me one. Put you in a suit and have you rescue some kittens. Our people need all the good publicity they can get. But I can fight a war. I have more combat experience at this point than you do. But I can’t take myself out of play to spend my time adapting our tech to Earth. I need a scientist for that, and for all your time in the military guild, you’re almost as good a scientist as uncle Jor, and far better than my father ever was. Well, far less likely to commit genocide by bioweapon, at any rate.”

“You know about the Vohc virus?” Astra asked.

“I do,” Kara said. “Cadmus acquired it in the other timeline. They called it Medusa. That’s why I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I can trust Lena. Lillian came to her for help completing it, and Lena sabotaged it instead. One of the first things I did when I came back in time was purge all record of it from the computer in the Fortress of Solitude. Honestly, I think Kal would be shocked if he ever bothered to look and see just how much I’ve purged from the Fortress’ computers. He had everything behind a simple DNA lock. I spent days up there upgrading his security. It was an absolute nightmare.”

“Jor was many things. Paranoid enough wasn’t one of them.”

“My father was no better,” Kara said. “The original security protocols on this place were weaker than the ones on Kal’s. Sadly, I’m apparently insufficiently paranoid myself, if Tim and Barbara were able to track my finances.”

“I admit, I’m not comfortable with the people you brought here tonight,” Astra said. “They lurk in shadows, hide behind masks. They behave like thieves.”

“They’re soldiers,” Kara said. “They’re just fighting a different kind of war. One that often requires using the enemy’s own tactics. They’re good people though. Even Bruce.”

“You’re too forgiving, Little One,” Astra said.

“If I didn’t forgive the people who betrayed me, I’d have no one left,” Kara said. “That would be an awfully lonely way to live.”

Astra looked down, staring at the floor. “I think some days, I’ve forgotten what forgiveness feels
“Like hope,” Kara said. “Hope that you can feel joy at seeing them again. Hope that the hole they left in your heart can be filled again. Forgiveness, Hope, Trust. They’re all choices. All you’ve got to do is make them.”

“You make it sound so easy,” Astra said.

“It’s not. It’s hard. It is so hard to get back up when the world’s ended. But I have to get up. I have to go on. I have to make that choice, every day, because I’ve seen what happens when I don’t. I’ve seen the monster I become when I chose to despair instead of hope.”

“You could never be a monster, Little One,” Astra said.

“You haven’t studied this world well enough,” Kara said. “They have a fable about a servant of one of their gods. Lucifer. The name means light bringer. Sometimes they call him the Morning Star. Of all the servants, he was the most beautiful and the most loved, and so, when heaven was broken, and a full third fell into darkness, he became the leader of the fallen, and the most evil of them all. It’s not true, of course, but there is a bit of wisdom there. The greater the capacity for good, the greater the capacity for evil.”

“You sound as if you speak from experience, Little One,” Astra said.

“Yes,” Kara said. “There are other versions of me out there in the multiverse. I’ve looked the monster in the eye, more than once.”

“I’m sorry,” Astra said.

“What do you say, Aunt Astra? Will you help me stop all this?”

“Of course, Little One.” Astra said.

“You should head back,” Kara said.

“Would you mind if I stayed here tonight?” Astra asked.

“Not at all,” Kara said. “Kolex can show you to one of the guest rooms. If you need me, I’ll be in the medical hall.”

“You know, as a cop, I should be used to cancelled dates by now,” Maggie said as soon as they were out of earshot of the audience hall. Well, human earshot. Maggie wasn’t certain, but it was possible Kara could hear everything going on in the Fortress.

“I’m sorry,” Alex said, looking over at her. “I was really looking forward to tonight.”

Maggie reached down and took Alex’s hand in hers. “Not your fault,” Maggie said. “Though I’m going to have to have words with your sister. She spent months talking you up, and the moment I actually get up the nerve to ask you out, she turns into a gold medalist in the crotch block event.”

Alex laughed so loud it echoed of the walls of the corridor. “You’re terrible,” she said.

“I’m frustrated,” Maggie said, tugging Alex a little closer. “I have this brand new, beautiful girlfriend, who’s smart, funny, brave, beautiful, compassionate and wonderful in every way, and I’ve barely gotten to spend any time with her since our first date.”
Alex smiled at her and stepped in close. “I seem to remember us spending some time together this afternoon,” she said in a husky voice.

Maggie smiled. “I do too, and as much as I enjoyed making out in the supply closet in your lab, there’s still a lot I want to know about you, Alex Danvers.”

Alex squeezed Maggie’s hand. “We’ll make time,” Alex said. “I promise we will.”

“How about tonight?” Maggie asked.

Alex stopped walking and turned to look at her. “You want to stay?”

Maggie nodded. “No pressure,” she said. “I mean, don’t get me wrong, I want to, but not until you’re ready. But I would like to spend the night with you. Just to talk.”

“I’d like that,” Alex said. She stepped a little closer to Maggie. “But honestly, I might not object to the other part.”

“Patience, Danvers” Maggie said. She reached up and tucked a lock of Alex’s hair behind her ear. “I don’t want to rush this.”

“We’re apparently already a year ahead of schedule,” Alex said. “I think that ship has already sailed.”

“Maybe,” Maggie said, “but this is the world we live in, and I’m always careful with the things I care about.”

She watched as color rose in Alex’s cheeks, and a shy smile spread across her face.

“Come on,” Alex said. “My room is this way.”

Hands strong enough to bend steel slid over her skin with a touch light as a feather. Breath that could freeze lava blew hotly across her skin before she felt the mouth it was coming from close over her nipple. She arched her back, offering, seeking, pleading as Kara played her body like an instrument, driving away thought, fear, and memory, skillfully banishing every horror they’d seen, leaving Sara only the moment and the eternal now.

“/kahrah/” she whispered. “/sokao:zhao:lo:dh/” she begged.

Fingers parted her, opened her, filled her. She gripped the sheets as Kara drove into her. Cried out until Kara’s mouth covered hers, swallowing her moans and screams of pleasure as Kara took her.

She didn’t want to think, didn’t want to know, didn’t want to remember that this was it. This was their last night together. She wrapped her arms around Kara, holding her tightly and lifting her leg to press against Kara’s center as Kara straddled her thigh.

“/zhao:hirrip/” she whispered as she reached up, slipping her fingers into Kara’s hair and pulling her head back so she could look Kara in the eye as Kara fucked her. “/zhao zhindif w hirrip/” she whispered, a prayer, a benediction, a vow.

She could tell Kara was close, almost as close as she was, so she held back, just a bit, just enough to stretch it out until she could see the faint glow in the back of Kara’s eyes that always came with moments like this, and then she let go so this last time, they spilled over the edge together, coming undone as they stared into each other’s souls.
Sara sat up in bed, drenched in sweat, her body screaming with need as the memory faded. She tried to hold on to it, because it seemed like the most important moment in her life. The name, the face, the words spoken, and the vows sworn. The feeling of love and desperation and loss.

She knew it was the blonde woman. She knew the blonde woman was Supergirl. She knew she loved her, and she could almost feel it, like a limb that had been cut off but still hurt. There was so much she knew in the future and needed to know again. She wasn’t supposed to remember, because none of it was supposed to happen, but it did and she did, but not perfectly and it was killing her not knowing, because how could she feel like that, and not remember?

She looked down at the cuff on her wrist. The one she’d put on, and in three years, had never once taken off. The one she’d fought Ra’s al Ghul himself for the right to keep. The one she never let anyone look at or touch. She ran her fingers along the inscription that she’d only come to understand after the time quake. /.:zhao zhindif w rrip i khehshtom/ I will always love you, my captain.

She lay back in bed, exhausted, terrified, and hating herself because no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t hold on to the memories.

It was a long time before sleep came.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

\.kaipahdh tov guhlogho krighiu w tov dovrrosho doliu
Literal: The brightest aspirations can make the darkest shadows.
Semantic: The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

\.kahrah,
Kara

\.sokao:zhaolodh
Please, fuck me.

\.zhao w rrip
I love you

\.zhao zhindif w rrip
I will always love you

\.zhao zhindif w rrip i khehshtom
I will always love you, my captain.
Kara looked up at the sound of a gentle knocking on her office door and smiled when she saw Zatanna standing there.

“Hey,” Kara said. “Come in and have a seat.”

Zatanna smiled as she walked into the office. “You look like you’re feeling better,” she said.

“Much,” Kara said. “Not quite ready to jump back into the sky yet, but a night in the sun bath and I’m pretty close to fully recharged.”

“Good to hear,” Zatanna said. “I was worried about you.”

Kara shrugged. “I’m pretty tough,” she said.

“So I heard,” Zatanna replied. “Last night couldn’t have been easy.”

“Last night was a relief,” Kara said. “I’m not a huge fan of secrets.”

“That does seem to be something of a character trait for your people,” Zatanna said.

“Don’t believe it,” Kara said. “Krypton was just like any other old, decadent society. Full of corruption, secrets and lies. Kal is the product of a very good family who stumbled across a very lost baby, and I left Krypton before I grew out of the ideals and had to deal with the reality of it.”

“That’s a lot more cynical that I expected,” Zatanna said.

“I’m probably not at my best,” Kara said. “It’s always a bad morning when Cat’s upset with me.”

“Trouble in paradise?” Zatanna asked.

“Minor disagreement about safety precautions,” Kara said. “She’ll come around.”

“Cat’s stubborn,” Zatanna asked. “Or so I’ve heard.”

Kara raised an eyebrow.

“You know Clark and I used to date, right?”

“Uh, no… I didn’t know that,” Kara said.

“Oh, it was pretty short lived,” Zatanna said. “Lois was still seeing… Oh, who was that guy. Tall, blonde. Pretty cut. Liked to wear green, and had short, spikey hair. Dated Chloe for a while after he
and Lois broke up."

“Oh, yeah. I know who you’re talking about. Can’t remember his name though.”

Zatanna shrugged. “Could be worse. She could have dated Oliver Queen.”

“Yeah, that would have been worse,” Kara said.

“Anyway, Clark and I went out for about a month, and I heard a lot about Cat and Lois both,”
Zatanna said.

“That must have been fun,” Kara said, sarcasm dripping from her voice.

“About as fun as you’d imagine,” Zatanna said. “I’ll give it to your cousin. He’s loyal.”

Kara reached up, rubbing the spot on her chest where she’d been run through the night before.

“Not really feeling that today,” she said.

Zatanna winced. “Sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “Thanks for coming.”

“Hey, the woman in charge of saving the entire multiverse sends me a text saying it’s important, I
show up. What do you need?”

“Some more wards and glamours, like the ones you set up for me.”

“Okay,” Zatanna said. “How many more?”

“A lot,” Kara said. “I’d like protection for all of the Kryptonians, plus my sister, my foster mother,
J’onn, Winn, James, Maggie, Cat, Cat’s son, and Leslie Willis, if your magic will work on her.”

“That’s a lot, alright,” Zatanna said.

“I can pay,” Kara said. “I can pay really well, in fact.”

“That’s not really necessary,” Zatanna said.

“I insist,” Kara said. “I’m probably going to need location-based wards done as well.”

“Wow. It sounds like it’s a good thing my Vegas run is almost over,” Zatanna said.

“You have more shows lined up after?” Kara said.

“No,” Zatanna said. “It’s the off season. I finish in Vegas on the fifteenth, and I usually don’t start
booking my summer tour until late January.”

Kara leaned back in her chair. “How much to hire you for a full year?” Kara asked.

“Well, I’m not David Copperfield, but I still bring in about twenty million a year,” Zatanna said.

“Done,” Kara said. “I’ll make the arrangements.”

“Just like that?” Zatanna said, amusement in her voice.

“Just like that,” Kara said. “Have you got the time to do a set of the wards now?”
“Sure,” Zatanna said. “Who am I starting with?”

“My Aunt,” Kara said.

“Oh!” Zatanna said. “She’s the one with that cute white stripe in her hair, right?”

“Don’t,” Kara said.

“What?”

“If you need a date, I know someone,” Kara said. “Redhead. Pale skin. Got a real goth thing going. You’d be into her.”

“And here I thought all that flirting went right over your head,” Zatanna said with a grin.

“It really didn’t,” Kara said. “It’s just hard to date when you know you’d be getting in the way. Especially when you really like the person whose relationship you might be spiking.”

“Oh,” Zatanna said. “That never even occurred to me.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Kara said. She opened her desk drawer and pulled out a pen and a pad of paper, then quickly scribbled a name and a phone number. “Here,” Kara said, passing the sheet of paper over to Zatanna. “Her name is Kate. Tell her Kara gave you her number.”

Zatanna looked down at the paper, then up at Kara. “Is this what I think it is?”

“That depends… Do you think it’s the phone number of a woman you might fall in love with?” Kara asked.

“I was going to say ‘destined’,,” Zatanna said.

Kara shook her head. “Doesn’t work like that,” Kara said. “The two of you worked well in that other world, but you’ve got to live in this one.” Kara pointed at the paper. “Consider that an apology for me changing the events enough that you two might never have met. The rest is up to you.”

Zatanna looked down at the paper, and Kara could see her thinking hard about it before giving a small nod. “Thank you,” she said.

“Any time. I’ll call the DEO and let them know you’re on your way. Just ask for Astra when you get there,” Kara said. “Oh, and a word of advice.”

“Yes?”

“If you ever happen across a cocky Brit in a dirty trench coat, reeking of cigarettes and calling himself John Constantine, do yourself a favor. Kick him square in the balls and run the other way as fast as you can.”

“I… will keep that in mind,” Zatanna said. “Should I ask?”

“No,” Kara said. “Just go for the field goal.”

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 December 2015

Good morning National City! Look up to the skies today, and you’ll see some new faces. My Aunt and my good friend J’onn are out there, protecting the city. #flamebird #martianmanhunter
Vicki Vale @VickiVale 1 Dec 2015
You slacking off on us @SupergirlZorEl?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 December 2015
@VickiVale Trying to go a full day without getting a missile shot at me. #badguysaremean
#myhairbeggedformercy

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl sounds like you need a spa day.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@VickiVale I wish. I’m spending the day working on finding a new safe space for the aliens who were attacked yesterday.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl what kind of space are you looking for?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@CatGrant I don’t know. Maybe a community center, or a bar and grill? I’d like a space that could be open to children as well as adults.

President Marsdin @POTUS 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl @CatGrant That sounds like a wonderful idea. Have you talked to @NCMayorOfficial?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@POTUS @CatGrant @NCMayorOfficial No. I’m afraid I don’t know Mayor Gates

Mayor Gates @NCMayorOfficial 1 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl @CatGrant @POTUS We really should change that. I can have my secretary clear my afternoon, if you’d like.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@NCMayorOfficial I’d be honored. Is it okay if I bring @CatGrant along? Assuming Cat can get free.
“Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

Kara who was just finishing up the profile on J’onn, jumped slightly at the sound. She looked down at her phone, not yet used to the voice of the new AI and took a deep breath to calm herself before she responded.

“Yes Nimda?” she asked.

“I’ve completed the search,” Nimda said.

“Results?” Kara asked.

“Negative at all locations,” Nimda said.

“You haven’t found Jeremiah?” Kara asked.

“That is correct,” Nimda said. “Also, there is a data anomaly.”

“Explain,” Kara said.

“There is only a sixty percent congruence in Project Cadmus facilities listed in the future archives and Project Cadmus facilities identified from DoD, LuthorCorp, TychoTech, and Lord Technologies computers,” Nimda replied.

“At what level of confidence?” Kara asked.

“Only facilities with an eighty percent level of confidence were included in the comparison,” Nimda replied.

“Tighten parameters to one hundred percent level of confidence,” Kara said.

“Congruence falls to fifty-one percent,” Nimda said.

Kara leaned back in her chair, staring at the phone in shock. “Nimda, run a comparative timeline analysis and see if you can find a point of divergence,” Kara said.

“Tasking resources?” Nimda asked.

“Limit it to eighty percent,” Kara said.

“In process. Estimated comparison time, thirty-seven hours,” Nimda replied.

“Add bullion restriction,” Kara said. “Earliest comparison date nineteen ninety-eight.”

“Adjusting parameters and retasking. Estimated comparison time five hours, twenty-minutes,” Nimda said.
This was not good. If the timelines diverged prior to Kara’s arrival in the past, which the difference in which facilities Cadmus was using strongly suggested, then she had no way to know how much of her future knowledge might be rendered useless. Not that she hadn’t already blown the original timeline out of the water, but still, a lot of the information she depended on for her planning had assumed the timelines wouldn’t significantly diverge until after she came out as Supergirl. On the other hand, it would explain things, starting with Max’s more aggressive strategy with the bombings, and the way Cadmus had upped the stakes with the attack on Leslie. It might also explain why Clark, Bruce and Diana hadn’t found Jeremiah with the data she’d provided them.

She didn’t think her stock trading program could have caused a shift in Cadmus, but the butterfly effect might be in play. She’d just have to wait and see when the comparison of timelines came back.

Sara sat back in one of the chairs in the Waverider’s library, watching the argument between Rip and the rest of the Legends unfold with increasing annoyance.

“Look, I get it, you don’t like the girl,” Snart said. “But we’ve been here two days, and we’re no closer to figuring out what caused the time aberration then we were when we landed.”

“Yes, I am aware of that, Mr. Snart,” Rip replied.

“Then let’s go see this Supergirl. She’s bound to have some idea of what happened,” Snart said.

“As much as it pains me to say it,” Martin said, jumping into the argument, “I’m in agreement with Mr. Snart. We know the time aberration effects both our universe and this universe. We know this ‘Supergirl’ is connected to both our universe and this universe. She *is* the logical place to start looking.”

“If you don’t want to go, I could,” Ray said.

Snart rolled his eyes and looked over at Ray. “She’s not your type.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Ray asked.

“It means, they have google in this universe, and I looked our flying friend up,” Snart said.

“What’d you find?” Jax asked.

“That Rip’s superhero friend spends about as much time on twitter and facebook as she does getting kittens out of trees,” Snart said. “And that we’d probably have more luck sending Sara, than Ray.”

“Why’s that?” Ray asked.

“Because she’s gay, haircut,” Mick chimed in.

“Oh!” Ray said.

“What?” Rip asked.

“Gideon,” Snart said, “pull up Supergirl’s little facebook confession.”

Sara watched as the screen filled with a facebook post dated November 23, 2015.

“Who’s Leslie Willis?” Jax asked.

“Gideon,” Rip said, “see if you can find a copy of the radio show Supergirl mentions in the post.”
“I have it,” Gideon said a moment later. “The original broadcast is available on the CatCo website, while it has been posted in whole and in part approximately nine thousand, two hundred times on youtube. Many of those youtube posts also include additional commentary.”

“The original will suffice,” Rip said.

The recording started, and Sara listened to it, but she watched Rip’s face when Supergirl started talking, and she knew Rip had figured out the aberration was definitely connected to Supergirl. Something Sara had been sure of since the moment she saw Supergirl fly over them. She silently cursed the patchwork of future memories bouncing around in her head, wishing she had a clearer picture of who Supergirl was, and how they’d been connected, or would be connected, because it might help her head Rip off at the pass.

“Well, Mr. Snart, it seems I owe you an apology,” Rip said once the recording was done. “It would seem our aberration is connected to Supergirl after all.”

“How do you know that?” Sara asked.

“Well, the first clue was when she mentioned being a lesbian,” Rip said. “I was aware of her sexuality, but the first time I met her, which is three years from now by her personal timeline, she had not yet come to that realization. She’d only just met the woman who would eventually become her wife. A young speech writer turned reporter named Nia Nal. That, in and of itself is enough to let me know she’s connected to the aberration. However, she also mentioned the Vanishing Point, and the Tannhäuser Gate,” Rip said.

“I thought the Vanishing Point was in our universe,” Ray said.

“All universes have a Vanishing Point,” Sara said. “It’s not just the name of the base, it’s actually a feature of the way space time is constructed. If you think of each universe like a wheel, the Vanishing Point is the hole that the axel runs through. That’s why we were safe there from the Time Quake. The Vanishing Point exists outside of time, but is firmly imbedded in hypertime, which runs through all of the universes like an axel.” When she finished speaking, she looked around, noticing that everyone in the room was staring at her.

“What?” Sara asked.

“I’m just impressed, Ms. Lance,” Rip said. “That was an excellent metaphor for something you should know nothing about.”

“What do you mean?” Sara said. “I stood right here next to Ava the day she explained Hypertemporal theory to us. Nate stood there with a bored look on his face, while Zari rolled her eyes and Nora and Ray kept looking at each other like they were going to jump each other until John got fed up with it and told them to get a room. And I don’t know who Ava, Nate, Zari, Nora or John are, and that never happened, did it?”

“No, Ms. Lance. Or, at least, it hasn’t happened yet,” Rip said.

“/.:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho/” Sara muttered.

“What did you just say?” Jax asked.

“I said ‘Fucking hell’,” Sara said.

“No, you didn’t,” Jax said.
Sara sighed. “Gideon, could you play back what I just said?”

The recording started, and Sara heard her own voice fill the bridge with words in another language.
“/.:zhaolodh w tov dovrosho/”

“Gideon, what language is that?” Sara asked.

“/kryptahnuo/” Gideon said. “It’s a constructed language created on Krypton after the planetary unification to replace their five major languages in use at the time. The decision to move their culture to a constructed language was to prevent any one of their major city-states from gaining political advantage over the other. You’re speaking it with a text book perfect Kryptonopolis accent, which is the accent used by Supergirl’s Cousin, Superman.”

“Okay, I’m just throwing this out here,” Jax said, “but does anyone else think that Sara’s future memories and this time aberration might *both* be connected to Supergirl?”

“I think at this point, Jefferson, that might be stating the obvious,” Stein said. “But if that’s the case, it sounds like we’re already too late to prevent whatever caused the aberration in the first place.”

“One of the advantages of having a time machine, Professor Stein. Once we can ascertain when the change to the timeline occurred, we can go back and fix it. Once that’s accomplished, we’ll travel back to our own universe, and correct the aberration there, as well.”

“Won’t fixing the aberration here fix the aberration in our own universe?” Jax asked.

“No,” Rip said. “The temporal zones for the two universes don’t overlap. In order to fix things, we have to correct the aberration in *both* universes. We just need to find out what happens in this universe to cause the aberration in ours.”

“Right,” Sara said. “So, how do I find Supergirl?”

“You don’t, Ms. Lance,” Rip said. “Your memories are currently a mess of past and future events, and it will take time for you to sort out the here and now from the yesterday and tomorrow. Until that happens, you shouldn’t leave the Waverider. I’ll handle this.”

“Now wait a minute,” Snart said. “You said it yourself. This Supergirl doesn’t like you.”

“I, and the multiple breaks in my nose, are quite aware of that fact, Mr. Snart. What’s your point?”

“My point is, she doesn’t like you. Sara speaks her language, they obviously have some sort of connection. She probably stands a better chance of getting the information we need out of her,” Snart said.

“Under other circumstances, I might agree with you, Mr. Snart. However, in this particular case, the situation requires more delicate handling. If the timeline has been tampered with, then we can’t be sure that Supergirl won’t be hostile to any attempts to correct the timeline. It’s very possible she’ll see Ms. Lance as a threat. Add to that the fact that Ms. Lance is unable to control her flashes of transtemporal memory, and it’s a recipe for disaster.”

“Rip…” Sara said.

“No, Ms. Lance. I’ll handle it. Gideon, how long will it take to prepare an omnidirectional Kryptonite emitter, and a Kryptonite pulse pistol.”

“Approximately eighteen hours,” Gideon said.
“Why so long?” Jax asked.

“I will have to recycle several ounces of our semiconductor stock and reprocess it in order to create diodes with the appropriate band gap,” Gideon said. “The weapons will only take a few minutes to manufacture, but the LED for the Kryptonite emitter, and the Laser Diode for the pulse pistol will take seventeen hours, forty-three minutes from the moment I start the processing of materials.”

“What about a raw chunk of Kryptonite and Kryptonite bullets for a regular pistol?” Rip asked.

“Synthetic Kryptonite has to cook for approximately twenty-six hours at four thousand Kelvins under one hundred gigapascal’s of pressure,” Gideon said.

Rip let out a sigh and nodded. “Fine. Start on the emitter and the pulse pistol. It looks like my little chat with Supergirl will have to wait until tomorrow.”

Kara glanced up as the elevator opened and did her best not to swear under her breath as Kal stepped off it. She was a little surprised when Bruce stepped off a moment later and took a second to make sure her Kryptonite shield was in place. Trust might be a choice, but precautions never hurt.

She got a much bigger surprise when Winn, of all people, stood up and planted himself firmly in Kal’s path.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Winn asked.

Kal gave him a confused look. “To see Kara,” he said.

“I think you’ve already done enough damage,” Winn said.

Kara smiled, completely flattered by the fact Winn was standing up to Superman to protect her. On the other hand, it might do more harm than good, so Kara got up and walked over to the door as fast as she could without tapping her powers.

“Winn,” Kara said, making Winn jump a little in surprise.

“Yes?” he said, not taking his eyes off Kal or Bruce.

“It’s okay,” she said.

“You sure?” Winn asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “If either of them give me any trouble, I have a balcony I can throw them off.”

“That’s good,” Winn said as he stepped out of their way, “because I’m pretty sure both of them could break me in half without working up a sweat.”

“If it’s any consolation, I’m pretty sure you could hack circles around either of them,” Kara said.

“Doubtful,” Bruce said.

Kara looked at him. “I think we’ve already established who’s got a better understanding of the realities of our present circumstances Mr. Wayne. Now, would you like to step into my office, or should I give Mr. Schott the IP address of that little hobby computer you keep in your basement, and have him replace all your music files with copies of Achy Breaky Heart?”

Bruce visibly shuddered at the threat. “Of those two options, I’d much prefer your office.”
Kara smiled and gestured for Bruce and Kal to proceed her. She reached up and lifted her glasses as they walked by, giving them both a quick once over with her X-Ray vision to make sure there were no surprises. Bruce was Bruce. Better armed than a Seal Team, which wasn’t a surprise at all. Kal was rocking the Clark Kent. The only thing that looked out of place was the metal cuff of his war suit.

Kara closed the door behind them and followed them into her office. They took the seats in front of her desk, while Kara went around and sat down in her chair.

“I don’t have a lot of time,” Kara said. “Supergirl has a meeting with the mayor.”

“I thought you were taking the day off to rest,” Kal said.

“I am,” Kara said. “No flying. I’m taking the town car with Cat.”

“Are you sure that’s wise?” Bruce asked.

“Wiser than me getting in a fight right now,” Kara said. “I’ve had to regrow most of my spine thanks to that missile, and the upper lobe of my right lung thanks to you two. I’m not in a hurry to blow out my powers again because I have to regenerate another body part. Especially not when there’s going to be an Earth Quake on Monday.”

“What?” Bruce and Clark both asked.

“Earth Quake, Monday. Six point four on the Richter scale.”

“And you’re just telling us this because?” Bruce asked.

“Because I have twenty-nine Kryptonians all set to help me when it happens,” Kara said. “I think thirty of us will be able to take care of it. On top of that, I’ve already given J’onn a list of the areas hardest hit. We’re working on a way to present the information to the President that doesn’t blow our cover, but honestly, things have been getting in the way a lot lately.”

“And by things, you mean us,” Bruce said.

“No, I actually meant Cadmus, but if the armored boot fits,” Kara said.

“Point taken,” Bruce said.

“Why are the two of you here?” Kara asked, not able to keep the exhaustion out of her voice.

“To apologize,” Kal said. “Again. We messed up. I messed up.”

Kara turned and looked at Bruce.

“I’m the reason he messed up,” Bruce said. “Everyone on my team told me I should just ask you about the irregularities I’d seen. I didn’t listen to them, and I didn’t trust you, despite the fact that you’ve been nothing but helpful and trustworthy since the day we first spoke.”

“And?” Kara said.

“What more do you want, Kara?” Kal asked.

“Four things,” Kara said. “One. Next time listen to Diana. She’s much better at the whole trust thing than either of you.”
“Yes, she is,” Bruce said.

“Two. Understand that there is still a lot of things that I haven’t told you. It’s not out of a desire to keep secrets. It’s because there is over a decade of horrible, terrible things floating around in my memories, and honestly, it would take me years to go over everything that happened with any degree of detail. The timeline has already changed so much in just the last eight weeks I don’t know what’s relevant and what isn’t anymore.”

“That’s reasonable,” Bruce said. “Though I would ask for access to this data archive you brought back.”

“That can be arranged,” Kara said. “I’ll have Nimda set up a dedicated feed to the Batcave.”

“Nimda?” Bruce asked.

“Well, I wasn’t naming her Gideon,” Kara said. “It gets confusing enough with two of them.”

“You named it after our grandmother?” Kal asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I liked /uzheiu/ Nimda. She used to sneak me twellian jam cakes when mom wasn’t looking.”

“Are all Kryptonians as obsessed with sweets as you two?” Bruce asked.

“Yes,” Kara and Kal said in perfect unison.

“Anyway,” Kara said. “Three. If I give you an order, you follow it. No arguments or discussions in the heat of the moment. I’ll be more than happy to explain *after*, but if I give you an order, I will have a reason.”

“Given your stated goal includes executing the Guardians of the Universe, I’m not comfortable with that,” Bruce said.

“Given what the Guardians are guilty of, I don’t especially care how comfortable you are with it,” Kara said. “They are responsible for two genocides within living memory, for the end of all life in sector 666, and for countless other atrocities, both in the past, and the future. But if it makes you feel any better, I’m perfectly willing to let the Lanterns carry out the actual executions.”

“Is that what happened before?” Kal asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “At the end of the war of the third army, the Green and Blue Lanterns hunted down the surviving Guardians and executed them.”

“I’m still not comfortable with the idea of blindly following orders,” Bruce said.

“I’m not asking you to follow blindly. I’m asking you to trust me, and to understand that sometimes, I might need you to do something quickly. Even the Justice League understands the need for a clear chain of command in the field.”

“And you think you should be at the top of that chain?” Bruce asked.

“More like the field leader. I spent years fighting a Darkseid across dozens of different universes. I have more time in the field than either of you, and a better working knowledge of all of our enemies. Doesn’t mean I’ll always get it right, but it means that my decisions will be more informed than yours.”
“She’s got a point,” Kal said. “She knows a lot more about what’s going on than we do.”

“Agreed,” Bruce said. “For now.”

“Good. Four. Susan Vasquez gets final veto on policy decisions.”

“Why her?” Kal asked.

“She’s adult supervision,” Kara said. “She’s the closest thing we’re going to find to a neutral party in all of this. It may be a position we revisit later, but Susan’s been doing the job for about six weeks, and it helps having someone who can cut through the bullshit and the ego and make as close to an impartial decision as possible.”

“That sounds reasonable,” Bruce said.

“So, you agree to all four points?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Bruce said.

“Yeah,” Kal said.

“Okay. Then, it’s done,” Kara said.

“Just like that?” Kal asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Just like that. I don’t have time to waste being mad. The moment I took down Henshaw and Metallo, the clock started ticking. If we want to save Jeremiah, I need your help.”

“What do you need?” Kal asked.

“A strike team I can move without drawing attention,” Kara said. “Cadmus is watching me, Clark, and the DEO. When I have a location, the DEO stages a raid on a defunct Cadmus location, while Bruce takes his team in to extract Jeremiah.”

“Good plan,” Bruce said. “Did you get anything useful off the recording Jason sent you?”

“Recording?” Kara asked, before it clicked. “Oh, crap! I completely forgot about it.”

“You forgot?” Bruce asked.

“Yesterday sucked, okay.” Kara reached into her pocket and pulled out her phone. She opened up the recording Susan had emailed her after pulling it off the microSD card Jason had Alfred deliver to the DEO, and hit play.

When the screaming stopped and the recording went quiet a few minutes later, Kara leaned back in her chair and took a deep breath.

“/:zhaolium im zhaoghao/” Kara said. She reached up, rubbing her temples, trying to figure out if she actually felt her head pounding, or if it was just the memory of the pain from the day before. “/:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho/”

“Do I want to know what she just said?” Bruce asked.

“No,” Kal said.

“Oh, I haven’t even broken out the really good curses yet,” Kara said.
“Do you know what this ‘Brain’ is?” Kal asked.

“No clue,” Kara said. “We never got a look at Tycho’s lab or his records in the previous timeline.”

“Why not?” Bruce asked.

“He blew up the building with a point singularity bomb,” Kara said. “The whole building disappeared in a flash of Hawking Radiation. Took twelve agents with it.”

“That might have been something to include last night,” Bruce said.

Kara shrugged. “I’ve been through this with J’onn. This all happened a long time ago. Cadmus was ten years ago, at least, by my personal timeline. Some things slip my mind, especially if I wasn’t directly involved, and the raid on the Tycho building happened two hours after Lena was murdered. That’s why Alex and Maggie weren’t there. They were still processing the murder scene.”

Kara could tell Bruce still wasn’t happy with that explanation, but Kal’s face was stiff and frozen with that look he always got when he was horrified and trying to hide it. She picked up her phone, ignoring them both as she pulled up her contact list, and called J’onn.

“Yes?” J’onn said.

“Hey, J’onn,” Kara said. “Susan has a recording you need to listen too. Tell her to play you the file that was delivered to me yesterday.”

“Okay,” J’onn said. “What’s this about?”

“One of Batman’s team had a chat with Maxwell Lord,” Kara said. “It’s nothing we can use to get a warrant, but apparently, Lillian Luthor and Simon Tycho are developing a new weapon, code named ‘Brain’.”

“Any idea what it is?” J’onn asked.

“None,” Kara said. “We didn’t get to examine Tycho’s lab before it was destroyed in the previous timeline, so I don’t know what he might have. I’m going to task the new AI to hack his systems and see if we can pull his files, but that’s a long shot. If I were doing the kinds of things Tycho is doing, I would air gap any systems that had anything incriminating.”

“And Tycho’s smart enough to do the same thing,” J’onn said.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Any idea how bad this might be?” J’onn asked.

“Bad enough to scare General Lane,” Kara said. “Considering the man injected liquid Kryptonite into both Astra and myself, I doubt it’s anything we want to face in the field.”

“Point taken,” J’onn said. “I might go and have a word with Mr. Tycho and see if I can pull any details from his mind.”

“That’s an idea,” Kara said.

“I’m on it,” J’onn said. “And Kara…”

“Yes?” Kara asked.

“We will be holding a press conference in a few minutes, releasing the news about Henshaw and Corben,” J’onn said.

“Okay,” Kara said. “Thanks for letting me know.”

Kara hung up the phone and took a deep breath. “J’onn might take a run at Tycho, see if he can pick up anything on Brain. If that doesn’t work, we might need Tim and Barbara to break in and see if there are any air-gapped systems.

“We’ll look into it,” Bruce said.

“Okay,” Kara said, before turning to Kal. “When do you and Lois have to go back to Metropolis?”

“I’m not sure. Perry wants us to fly back tonight. Lois wants to fly back tomorrow.”

“What about you, Bruce?” Kara asked.

“Alfred, Damian, Dick and Luke are flying home tonight. Dick has a Batman suit in his size, so Batman will put in a few appearances in Gotham over the next few days. The rest of us can probably stay through the week before someone notices. If you want, I can probably leave Jason and Artemis indefinitely.”

Kara nodded. Tim, Barbara and Victor would have been more useful. Jason and Artemis were pretty firmly in the ‘good at hurting people and breaking things’ box, which she has covered. She really needed in-the-field hacking support. Winn was a monster behind a keyboard, but he was not a field agent. On the other hand, Jason had lasted a lot longer in the war than any of the rest of the Bat family. Maybe he could teach James how not to die in the Guardian suit.

“I appreciate it,” Kara said. “If you’d like, I can have Kolex run you off a Kryptonian Fabric extruder for the Bat Cave. I know you’ve got top of the line stuff now, but Kryptonian barrier fabric will be a huge step up.”

“I’d appreciate that,” Bruce said.

“I’ll have it delivered to the Manor in the morning,” Kara said. “Kal, give me a hug, then both of you need to go. I have a busy day.”

Kara jumped slightly when her messaging client pinged. She looked over at the message window.

Jackson: Ms. Danvers, Ms. Grant has asked me to inform you that she will be unable to attend your scheduled meeting this morning. She said to tell you, and I quote, “I had to rearrange my afternoon to accommodate an insufferably self-righteous superhero, so she’s just going to have to wait.”

Kara: Thanks for letting me know.

Jackson: Of course.

Kara leaned back and frowned. She’d known she pissed Cat off the night before, but she had hoped that Cat’s offer of help with the mayor meant she’d had time to calm down. Apparently not. Which meant the next few days were probably going to suck until she figured out how to get out of the dog house.
Translated from the Kryptonian

:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho
Literal: *Fuck the shadows*
Semantic: *Fucking Hell*

.kryptahniuo
*Kryptonian (language)*

uzheiu
*Grandmother*

.:zhaolium im zhaoghao
Literally: *It fucker*
Semantic: *Motherfucker*

:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho
Literal: *Fuck the shadows*
Semantic: *Fucking Hell*
Annoucements and Decisions

Chapter Summary

The DEO releases some information, and Lucy has a talk with James

KPJT Channel 3 News Special Report

Live From DEO headquarters

A door in the back of the lobby opened and the camera zoomed in as two short, dark-haired women stepped out it. Both were dressed similarly in black pants and black polos, with tactical belts around their waists, Glocks in drop holsters on their right thighs, extra magazines, snap batons, and flash lights in pouches on their left thighs, and DEO badges clipped to their belts. The only difference in the way they were dressed was that one of the women had a bluish metal cuff on her right wrist.

Both women walked towards the podium that had been set up in the middle of the room. The smaller of the two stopped at the podium. She was lighter skinned and had shorter hair, perfectly shaped eyebrows, and a jaw line that wouldn’t look out of place rendered in marble on a statue of Aphrodite. Her features hinted at a mixed heritage, just a hint of Middle Eastern in them, and the way she stared at the camera was fearless and unflinching. The second woman stopped a few steps back from the first, and she was just as striking, if a bit less classically beautiful. Her skin was darker, her hair longer and her features a mix that gave an ambiguity to her ethnicity that could have been any combination of Latino or Mediterranean, but which would be taken by most people in the US as the former, almost as a given. Her face had the character that didn’t begin to creep into most women’s faces until they got past thirty, giving her a softer look than the woman in front of her. Something only helped by the way she seemed almost unable to keep the corners of her mouth from turning upwards in the slightest of smiles.

“Good afternoon,” the smaller woman said. “My name is Lucy Lane, and I’m the Assistant Director of the DEO. Joining me today is Agent Maggie Sawyer, the DEO’s Local Law Enforcement Liaison. As many of you know, our existence was announced last by President Marsdin last Friday. At that time, the press was briefed on Hank Henshaw, a former government operative turned terrorist who was wanted in connection with the assault on Leslie Willis.”

“Yesterday afternoon, Supergirl left this facility intending to do a quick fly over of National City before proceeding to the temporary housing we’ve set up for the newly-paroled former Fort Rozz inmates where she intended to visit her aunt. During the course of her flyover of National City, Supergirl was attacked by a cybernetically-modified assassin named John Corben.

“If some of you recognize the name, it is because John Corben is the same assassin who attacked DEO Agent Maggie Sawyer in the parking garage of Police Headquarters Friday afternoon. Agent Sawyer, as you may recall, was shot twice in the back at point blank range. Her life was saved by the low-profile body armor she was wearing. She returned fire, striking and we believed, killing John Corben. He was pronounced dead on the scene and transported by the National City Medical Examiner to the National City Morgue.

“We know that Corben was logged in at the Morgue approximately twenty minutes after leaving the crime scene. After that, the Medical Examiner can make no accounting for his whereabouts until he
showed up in the skies above National City, heavily modified by cybernetic enhancements, and equipped with anti-Kryptonian weaponry.

“When confronted with Corben, Supergirl tried to lead him out of the city to avoid collateral damage, but Corben refused to follow. Supergirl then decided to fight Corben in the vacant Siegel Stadium and used all her strength to confine the fight to that location. During the fight, Hank Henshaw joined Corben in his unprovoked attack on Supergirl.

“At that time, a metahuman who had been assisting the DEO in their search for Henshaw joined the fight to assist Supergirl, while the DEO rushed to her aid. Superman, Wonder Woman, and Batman also arrived near the end of the fight to provide assistance. During the course of the fighting, both Henshaw and Corben were killed.

“The DEO regrets the loss of life, however, the agents and assets involved in the confrontation were faced with two individuals who were both individually as strong as Superman and Supergirl, and had no choice but to respond with overwhelming force. Henshaw and Corben’s cybernetic enhancements were so extensive, that it took an electrical discharge equivalent to five direct lightning strikes in order to stop Henshaw from attacking Supergirl further, while Corben lived for a full twenty-three minutes after being decapitated.

“As is standard procedure in cases like this, a full internal investigation is being conducted to make sure everyone involved in the fight conducted themselves in accordance with both the law, and DEO standards of conduct. However, because the DEO is still a small agency, at this time we lack the resources to place agents on administrative leave while the investigation is ongoing. However, as Supergirl and the metahuman previously mentioned were the primary combatants in this incident, they have been stood down until the conclusion of the investigation.

“To be clear, this will not prevent Supergirl from assisting in any purely local emergencies, during which she is acting on her own recognizance as a civilian Good Samaritan, however, until the investigation is completed, Director J’onzz and Supergirl’s Aunt Astra In-Ze, who are operating under the codenames Martian Manhunter and Flamebird, will be stepping in to take her place in any DEO operation we would normally have asked for Supergirl’s assistance with. I want to emphasize that this action is taken not because we lack faith in Supergirl, or doubt her actions, but to set appropriate precedent for any future instances when there are fatalities as a result of DEO action. This is already common and accepted practice among almost all Law Enforcement Agencies in the United States and will be standard procedure for DEO Agents as well once we have recruited sufficient agents to allow us to continue to function following such events.

“I will allow a few moments for questions.”

Every reporter in the room raised their hand, and Lucy scanned the crowd, and pointed at one of them.

“Tawny Young, CatCo WorldWide Media. Can you tell us the nature of the anti-Kryptonian weaponry used in last night’s attack?”

“Ineffective,” Lucy said. “Beyond that, no. Next question.”

“A follow-up,” Young said. “This is the second time in less than a week that Supergirl has been attacked with weapons specifically designed to target and kill Kryptonians. Where are these weapons coming from?”

“We believe they are coming from the same anti-alien extremist group which provided Hank Henshaw with his cybernetic enhancements. We are not able to release any details beyond that
because the investigation into their origins is ongoing. Next question,” Lucy said, pointing at a man in the crowd.

“Trevor Paxton, National City News. You said Supergirl and this metahuman were the primary combatants in last night’s attack. Does that mean that Supergirl killed Henshaw and can you tell us the name of this metahuman?”

“No and no. Next question,” Lucy said, pointing to a third reporter.

“Leyna Nguyen, KPJT Channel 3 News. Can you comment on the rumors that Supergirl was injured in last night’s fighting, and that the Martian Manhunter and Flamebird are patrolling the city in order to cover for Supergirl?”

“Supergirl was not injured in the fight with Henshaw and Corben. However, it is well known that Kryptonians can temporarily burn out their powers when they overtax themselves. This is something that’s been reported in the Daily Planet by my sister, Lois Lane. It’s my understanding that Supergirl decided that since she had the support available in the form of Flamebird and the Martian Manhunter, that she could kill two birds with one stone by taking a day to both recharge her powers before she reaches that point, and to work on advancing her less flashy, but no less important goals of helping to create a safe and welcoming environment for aliens here in National City. To that end, she is, in fact, meeting with the Mayor of National City later today to discuss the possible creation of an Alien Community Center.

“Ladies and gentlemen, please keep in mind that Supergirl first appeared in public on October 8th of this year. That is eight weeks and four days ago. In that time, she has caught a plane falling out of the sky, put out an oil fire that could have turned Nation’s Bay into an ecological disaster on par with the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, defeated Reactron, a supervillain even her cousin couldn’t take down, kept a cruise ship from sinking into the bay, prevented a bombing which would have collapsed an entire building, provided the world with a cure for cancer, negotiated the surrender of ninety-five alien fugitives, and the subsequent parole of ninety-three of them, saved Leslie Willis’ life after someone tried to murder her, survived an assassination attempt, foiled the attempted bombing of an alien gathering spot, and then fought and defeated two more supervillains nearly equal to her in strength. That doesn’t count all the people she’s helped and all the lives she’s saved, in addition to her very public stances against discrimination, and her efforts on behalf of aliens, refugees, the LGBTQ community and religious minorities. I think National City, and the rest of the world, owes her the chance to take things easy for a day. No further questions.”

Lucy and Maggie both turned around and marched out of the room, leaving reporters shouting questions after then, all of which went unanswered.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane Hey, girl. You give good speech.

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl They teach you that in law school.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane That explains so much about my mother.
Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl I had the same thought about Bootcamp and my dad.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane Did your dad also happen to watch a lot of Alien invasion movies? Asking for a friend ;)

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Aliens is the only one I remember. Those things scared the life out of me.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane You think the movie version is scary, you should see them in real life. The Kryptonopolis Zoo had a colony. Always wondered how Ridley Scott found out about them.

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl They’re REAL?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane No, but the expression on your face right now is priceless.

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Not funny! And how can you see me?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane I’m hilarious, and someone sent me a picture.

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Does said person have short hair, or dimples? I want to know who’s going to spend the rest of their career writing parking tickets for flying saucers.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane I’ll never talk!

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl I’ll buy you donuts.
Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane Weak.

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl I’ll buy you Pot Stickers.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane It was dimples!

Maggie Sawyer @MaggieSawyerNC 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl I would have bought you pizza *and* pot stickers. @TheBetterLane I plead the fifth.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane Did I say dimples? I meant short hair. ( @MaggieSawyerNC Think she bought it?)

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@SupergirlZorEl I did not. @MaggieSawyerNC You don’t mind working nights from now until forever, right?

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 1 Dec 2015
@TheBetterLane @MaggieSawyerNC @SupergirlZorEl it’s heartwarming to see that our tax dollars are going to pay you to play on twitter with dangerous alien subversives.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 1 Dec 2015
@MirandaCrane When the government starts paying me, you can complain about how I spend my time.

Lucy Lane @TheBetterLane 1 Dec 2015
@MirandaCrane I know time zones can be confusing, Senator, but I am legally entitled to a lunch break.

Maggie Sawyer @MaggieSawyerNC 1 Dec 2015
@MirandaCrane I got shot on Friday and I’m supposed to be on admin leave until next week, but I’m here working. You’re supposed to be paying attention to the remarks Senator Shoemaker is making ten feet in front of you, but you’re playing on twitter #cspanseesall #potkettle
Lucy sat the conference room table, staring at the mountain of files piled on the table between her and Maggie with a sort of hopeless resignation. Pretty much any defense attorney worth the paper their law degree was printed on was going to have an absolute field day with any of these cases. There were aliens in the holding cells who were, in all probability, going to go free simply because none of the evidence was going to be admissible in court.

In a lot of the cases, that didn’t bother Lucy much. No one was hurt, and the crimes were largely crimes of necessity. In those cases, she was just putting the files into a pile that she and Maggie had labeled ‘rehab’. They weren’t even going to try to prosecute as long as the aliens in question agreed to go through a re-integration program and a period of monitoring.

In some cases, however, the aliens were genuinely dangerous. If she and Maggie didn’t find some evidence that was admissible then those aliens were going to walk free, and chances were, people would die. It was stressful, to say the least, and filled her with a burning desire to strangle every single agent at the DEO.
Oh, she could absolutely admit it wasn’t their fault. After all, you couldn’t exactly ask a judge for a warrant when your agency didn’t officially exist, but that didn’t stop it from being an absolute mess. One she and Maggie were working to clean up.

“This is fucking hopeless,” Maggie said as she tossed the file she’d been reading down on the table. “I adore Alex, but if I have to read any more of this, I’m going to have to arrest her on general principal.”

“That bad?” Lucy asked.

“California is a two-party consent state. She is, by her own admission, guilty of nine counts of felony wire-tapping in this file alone,” Maggie said. “After the first conviction, all subsequent convictions carry a ten thousand dollar fine and three years in prison. At the rate this is going, she’ll be eligible for parole about the time I’m ready to retire.”

“Well, the good news is, qualified immunity will shield her, so she can’t be prosecuted,” Lucy said. “The bad news is, that probably means everything is going to be inadmissible under fruit of the poisonous tree.”

Maggie sighed and picked up the file, tossing it into the rehab pile. “You know what, the guy was making alien moonshine. I can live with him walking.” She reached for the next file.

“Was it good moonshine?” Lucy asked, perking up.

“If you don’t mind drinking fermented Clorox,” Maggie said.

Lucy shook her head. “Alien biology is weird.”

“I figured that one out the first time I saw someone getting drunk on cooking spray,” Maggie said.

“I’m not even going to ask,” Lucy said. “I-”

A knock cut her off, and she turned around to see James standing in the open doorway of the conference room.

“You know,” Maggie said, “I think I need coffee. Can I bring you back anything?”

“An Americano,” Lucy said.

Maggie stood up and headed for the door, mumbling a hello to James as she slipped past him.

“Hey,” James said.

“Hey,” Lucy said, trying to keep her tone as neutral as possible.

“You have a minute?” James said.

Lucy looked at the files on the table and sighed, giving a shrug. “I’m not going anywhere for a few months,” she said.

James walked into the conference room and took the seat next to her. “That bad, huh?”

“There are people who’ve been in holding for shoplifting for twelve years, and there are people who’ve committed multiple murders, and belong behind bars for the rest of their lives. Guess which ones I might, maybe, have a chance of convicting,” Lucy said.
James had the decency to look sympathetic. “That sounds like it sucks.”

“A little,” Lucy said. “And last night isn’t taking the pressure off.”

“Yeah,” James said. “That’s kind of why I’m here. I wanted to apologize.”

“For what?” Lucy asked.

“For not telling you about all this,” James said.

“When did you find out?” Lucy asked.

“The day of the industrial park bombing,” James said.

Lucy thought back to it, and the timeline made perfect sense. When she’d gone to Kara and said she was thinking of breaking up with James, and Kara had said she’d read James in on something big.

“That makes sense,” she said, leaning back in her seat. “We had a fight that night, because you wouldn’t talk to me about Kara and the whole Supergirl thing.”

“Yeah,” James said. “It’s hard, keeping secrets.”

Lucy stared at James for a moment, biting her tongue when she really wanted to point out to him that he seemed to enjoy it a bit too much.

“It wasn’t your secret to share,” Lucy said. “I get that. And honestly, if you’d told me, I would have had to tell my Dad, which wouldn’t have ended well at all.”

“No, it wouldn’t have,” James said.

“I owe you an apology too,” Lucy said. “I wasn’t fair to you last night.”

“You were upset,” James said. “And you weren’t entirely wrong. If I didn’t know what I know, I probably would have been on Clark’s side.”

“Well, that’s something we can agree on. Information definitely changes your perspective,” Lucy said.

“What do you mean?” James asked.

“I mean, I thought I wanted to give this… give us another try,” Lucy said. “But hearing what Kara said last night, about how we split up because you wanted to date her. It made me rethink things.”

“But none of that’s going to happen,” James said.

“I think the splitting up is going to,” Lucy said. “James, I love you. I do. I think I always will. But I deserve better than spending my life as someone’s emotional consolation prize.”

“Lucy, you’ve never been that to me,” he said.

“Yes, I have,” Lucy said. “Since day one. I just didn’t see it. Now I do. I’m not Clark Kent, and I never will be, and no one else is ever going to be good enough for you.”

“I’m not in love with Clark,” James said.

“Maybe, maybe not, but for years you dropped everything the moment he called, and you hold up
everyone else in your life to the standard he sets, and unless you learn to stop doing that, you’re going to be alone for the rest of your life. I’m sorry, James. I’m not going to spend the rest of my life playing second fiddle to my sister’s boyfriend,” Lucy said.

“Lucy, the whole point of Kara coming back here was to help us make better choices, and to keep us from making the mistakes we did before.”

“And she’s doing that,” Lucy said. “Before, I moved here to be with you, I moved in with you, we were together, and I still wasn’t enough. Now, I don’t know everything that happened in that other timeline, but I do know that if we were that involved, and you still went looking elsewhere, then something is wrong, because yeah, I might like flirting with Kara, but I *love* you, and I would never do that to you. And knowing that you did it to me… I’m done, James. We’re done.”

“So that’s it then? All that talk about not liking how we left things, about wanting a second chance, we’re just done because of something that happened in another life?” James asked.

Lucy nodded. “Yeah,” she said. “I want something you can’t give me. I don’t know why. I don’t know if it’s just me, or if you don’t have it in you, but I want someone who actually loves me. You don’t, and after hearing about that other timeline, I don’t think you ever will.” She turned away from him and reached for another file. “I have to get back to work.”

James didn’t say another word. He just stood up and left. Lucy forced herself not to look, to focus on the file in front of her. She wasn’t sure how long it was before Maggie came back, but when she did, she closed the door and the blinds before she sat an Americano and a box of tissues in front of Lucy, then sat down next to her, and got back to work.
Kara stared at the hologram of herself in front of her. She still wasn’t used to the crew cut, and missed the long hair, but she had to admit, the short haired look worked on her. Especially the way she was dressed for the meeting. She wore a long-sleeved royal blue turtleneck sheath dress that fell to mid-thigh. It had a gold belt around the waist identical to the one on the original Supergirl suit, gold detailing at the shoulders, and gold piping along the top and bottom edges of the collar, and of course, the House of El coat of arms was set on the chest in the usual red with yellow detailing. Under the dress, she wore black leggings and knee-high boots. The outfit lacked a cape, but since she was going to be sitting in a meeting for who knew how long, it was a lot more practical than her regular suit or the war suit would be.

Her phone beeped with the alarm she’d set, letting her know it was time to go, so she gave herself one last, quick once over, then deactivated the phone’s holoprojector, and slipped the phone into the compartment in her boot, and headed for the door to her office.

“T’m headed to the meeting with Cat and the Mayor,” she said to Padme.

“We’ll hold down the fort, Ma’am,” Padme replied.

“Winn, stop playing Minecraft,” she said.

“Shit!” Winn squeaked, jumping in his seat a little. “I mean, I’m not playing Minecraft. Where did you get that idea?”

Kara rolled her eyes. “You’re a worse liar than I am,” she said as she hit the call button on the elevator.

“I am not!” Winn said.

Kara just smiled as the elevator opened and she stepped inside and hit the button for the fortieth floor. The ride was short, and then she stepped out and headed for Cat’s office, except Cat wasn’t there. She was standing by the entrance to her private elevator, staring at her watch with an annoyed expression that Kara might once have thought was real.

“There you are,” Cat said, drawing looks from everyone in the bullpen.

“Sorry I’m late, Ms. Grant,” Kara said with a smile, knowing she was fifteen minutes early. “I try not to break the sound barrier in town if I can help it.”

“Hmph,” Cat replied. “Well, at least you dressed like an adult,” she said. She turned around and hit the call button for the elevator. The door slid open, and Cat stepped inside. “Well, come on. I don’t have all day, and neither does the Mayor.”
Kara followed Cat into the elevator and turned around to face the door as Cat pressed the button for the lobby. She waited until they’d dropped a couple of floors, then looked over at Cat.

“Are you mad because I lied to you?” she asked. “Because I don’t know where ‘I’m a Superhero from the future and we used to be friends before you ordered me to let you die in order to save the life of a two-bit hack of a journalist who just happened to work for you,’ goes on a resume.”

Cat glared at her for a good ten floors before turning away. It was another five floors before the corners of her lips tugged up in an involuntary smile, only to be replaced a moment later by a forceful scowl.

“If I were mad,” Cat said, “which I’m not, it wouldn’t be because you kept that from me. If you’d tried to tell me that in an interview, I’d have called security and had them put you in a padded cell.”

“Be honest. You would have had them burn my outfit too,” Kara said.

“Well, yes,” Cat said. “The pattern of the dress wasn’t terrible, but the sweater was hideous, and the pleather belt made me want to break out in hives on principal alone.”

“Well, I’ve been told, now that I’m a billionaire, that I have to look the part, so I might be ready for some of that patented Cat Grant fashion advice,” she said.

“They’re called personal shoppers, dear,” Cat said. “I can recommend a service.”

“I might take you up on that,” Kara said. “Now, if you were mad, which you’re not, but speaking hypothetically, why would you be mad?”

“Hypothetically, I would be mad about your ham-handed attempt at emotional blackmail last night,” Cat said.

“Ah,” Kara said. “Well, ham-handed or not, you’re wearing the ring.”

“Yes, well, last time I had a ring I didn’t want anymore, I tried flushing it, and ended up spending three thousand dollars to repair the plumbing. Besides, it seeks out people who inspire hope. I was afraid if I took it off, it might accost some homeopath, or someone running a diet clinic.”

Before Kara could say anything else, the door opened, and Cat marched out of the elevator. Kara followed, taking the opportunity to think of what to say. The limo was waiting for them curbside, along with a whole crowd of paparazzi. Security was doing a good job of keeping them back from the entrance, but there was a good thirty feet from the front of the building to the curb.

“Open the doors,” Kara called to the two security guards standing by the entrance. They nodded and swung the doors wide. The moment they were open, Kara stepped into super-speed, turning and scooping Cat up in her arms. She smiled when Cat let out a little yelp of surprise and threw her arms around Kara’s neck, only to look around in wonder at the world that seemed to have stopped.

“See,” Kara said, walking forward at what seemed like a leisurely pace, “the ring has other benefits too.”

She carried Cat past frozen security guards, waiting paparazzi, and sat her down next to an impatient limo driver, careful to keep a hand in the small of Cat’s back so Cat would remain in super-speed with her as she opened the door of the limo. Cat, realizing what was going on, maintained contact with Kara as she climbed into the limo, and as Kara climbed in and closed the door after them. Once
the door was closed, Kara dropped them out of super speed, and hit the button to roll down the window.

“Excuse me,” she said, making the limo driver jump in shock, “we’d like to leave before they realize what’s happened.”

The driver nodded, obviously a little shaken. “Of course,” he said, then turned and headed for the other side of the car.

“I hope you didn’t scare him into forgetting how to drive,” Cat said.

Kara rolled her eyes and reached up to hit the button that lowered the privacy partition.

“Sorry if I startled you,” she said to the driver.

“It’s okay, ma’am,” the driver said.

“If you need a second to settle your nerves before we go, that’s fine,” Kara said.

“I’ll be okay,” he said, sounding much calmer. “Will you be exiting the car the same way?”

“If we do, I’ll give you a bit of warning,” Kara said.

“I appreciate that, ma’am.”

Kara raised the partition and reached back to pull on her seatbelt. She glanced over at Cat.

“Buckle up,” she said.

Cat shook her head as she reached for her seatbelt, fastening it around her.

“What was that?” Cat asked.

“Those rings are designed to make the wearer able to go to-to-toe with some of the most powerful beings in the universe,” Kara said. “When it detected someone using superspeed on you, it accelerated your sense of time, your reactions, and your perceptions to match. As long as we were in physical contact, the ring kept our time scales matched. If you learn how to use the ring, you will be able to do that on your own.”

“I still don’t want to be a superhero,” Cat said.

“Good,” Kara said. “I don’t want you to be one. Too many people I love are already out there on the front line. My sister, my aunt, at least two of my best friends, a man who’s like a father to me. I want you safe, and that ring will make you safer than just about anyone else on the planet.”

Cat looked at her for a moment, and Kara could see the wheels turning behind those eyes she loved so much.

“You said we were friends before,” Cat said.

“Friends. Family. The lines were always blurry where you were concerned,” Kara said. “Not long after Myriad, you promoted me, made me a reporter. Then you took a sabbatical. Left for a few months. You being gone felt like someone had cut my legs out from under me, and when you came back, it was like I could breathe again. That was when things turned around, and we started winning. We started driving Cadmus back. We found their bases, uncovered their spies. You were better at helping me figure out what they were doing than all the analysts at the DEO combined.”
Kara closed her eyes and let out a sigh. “Sometimes, I wonder what would have happened if I’d left Snapper on that balcony instead of you. I was *so* broken after you died.” She opened her eyes, looking at Cat. “The hardest thing in the world is getting back up when the world has ended. The morning after you died was the third time I had to do that.” She looked down at the floor, not able to look at Cat as she remembered how it felt when she failed to save her.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

“Kara, what happened wasn’t your fault,” Cat said.

“No for that,” Kara said. “Or, well, not just for that. It was my fault. I couldn’t figure out how to disable Myriad. I pushed Fort Rozz into space. I gave Darkseid the final piece of the weapon he needed to conquer all of reality.”

“Kara-”

“I’m sorry I’ll never be who you thought I was,” Kara said.

“Kara, look at me,” Cat said.

Kara did what she always did when Cat gave her an order. She followed it. She turned and looked at Cat, who was staring at her through unshed tears.

“You are so much more than I ever dreamed you were,” Cat said. “You went through all of that, through years of hell, and then, you risked having to do it all over again, just for the chance to do better. I can’t imagine a better example of hope.”

Cat reached out, taking Kara’s hand in hers and intertwining their fingers.

“I’ll wear the ring,” Cat said. “And I’ll let you teach me to use it.”

“Thank you,” Kara said.

They did not end up having to repeat the super-speed dash at city hall. Apparently, all the paparazzi had decided to stake out CatCo. As a reporter, Kara thought it was a dumb move, but as Supergirl, she was relieved. She wasn’t really supposed to be using her powers today, and one less burst of super-speed meant that much less of a chance she’d blow her powers again before she was fully healed.

Kara waited for the driver to open the door, then stepped out and offered her hand to Cat, who took it. A moment later, she was smiling at the fact that Cat could make something as simple as getting out of a car look graceful. She was sorely tempted to just pull Cat into her arms and kiss her, but that would be a bad idea, for any number of reasons, not the least of which was that forcing her unrequited feelings on Cat would destroy the friendship she needed nearly as much as she needed oxygen.

Once Cat was steady on her feet, Kara reluctantly let go of her hand, but on a whim, she turned and bend her arm, offering it to Cat, who smiled and reached up, resting both her hands in the crook of Kara’s elbow. Kara returned the smile as she led them up the steps, stopping at the security checkpoint only long enough to give their names. Kara supposed she should have asked directions, but she remembered the way, and figured anyone who wondered about it would assume Cat had guided her. Truthfully, it had been an emotional few days, and she was having trouble finding the energy to keep up the pretense.
When they stepped into the reception area for the Mayor’s office, a woman Kara didn’t recognize greeted them, and Kara assumed she was Mayor Gates’ assistant. She’d never met the woman, because Kara had never been invited to city hall during Gates’ tenure. He’d been voted out at the end of her first year as Supergirl. In fact, Supergirl’s first visit to city hall had been the day after Mayor Simone’s inauguration. Kara wasn’t sure why her brain was dredging up that particular detail, but it suddenly seemed important.

“Please, have a seat,” the assistant said. “The Mayor will be with you shortly.”

“Thank you,” Kara said, forcing herself to keep smiling as she steered Cat over to a couch. They body sat down, and Kara took Cat’s hand in her own, entwining their fingers. A quick glance at Cat’s face told her she’d already picked up on what Kara was thinking. Something was off.

Kara turned her head as if she were looking at Cat, but looked past her, using her X-Ray vision and super hearing to peel back the wall. It took all the control she had not to flinch at what she saw.

Lillian Luthor was seated across from the Mayor.

Kara used a burst of speed to pull out her phone, and activate the record feature, turning the sensitivity up to match her hearing.

“What do you expect me to do, Mrs. Luthor?” the Mayor asked. “I practically have a Presidential order telling me to accommodate the alien bitch.”

“So, give her what she wants,” Lillian said. “There’s plenty of vacant real estate. Just put her little community center somewhere out of sight, and once it’s out of mind, Cadmus will do the rest.”

“Where did you have in mind?” Mayor Gates asked.

“How about South Bay?” Lillian said.

“We’ve got a major redevelopment project in South Bay,” Gates said.

“Yes,” Lillian said. “The demolition of Siegal Stadium, Otto Binder International, and all those blocks between them is going to cost the city almost a billion dollars. Think how much easier it will be to redevelop after the government has to cough up disaster relief funds to deal with reconstruction in the wake of the alien menace. That’s almost five thousand acres on the Federal dime.”

“Are you really going to cause that much damage?” Gates asked.

“We hadn’t planned on it, until Supergirl went and turned herself into some kind of saint,” Lillian said. “Thanks to Cat Grant, she’s a media darling, so it’s going to take something truly horrific to turn public opinion against her and her little band of alien degenerates.”

“It’s too bad we couldn’t lock her up for the attack on Willis,” Gates said. “That would have turned things around.”

“That’s your Police Commissioner’s fault. He knew Sawyer had ties to Supergirl. He should have never let her come anywhere near the case,” Lillian said.

“It was a question of optics,” Gates said. “Sawyer’s known to be pro-alien. Her arresting Supergirl for murder would have kept people from claiming it was a frame job. No one knew she’d be willing to torpedo her career over it.”

“Then you’re all idiots,” Lillian said. “An alien lover who’s openly gay protecting an openly gay
alien should come as a shock to no one. Besides, her career hasn’t exactly suffered, has it. The DEO probably promised her the job if she cut Supergirl loose.”

“You’re not doing so hot yourself,” Gates said. “I heard someone bought that company right out from under you *and* your daughter.”

“Watch yourself,” Lillian said. “I put you in that chair. I can put someone else there just as easily.”

“No need for that,” Gates said. “I’ll put them right where you want them. You just make sure you deliver.”

“I always deliver,” Lillian said.

“Good,” Gates said. “They’re waiting. You want to use the side door?”

“Why would I do that?” Lillian said. “I’m just one concerned citizen, speaking with an elected official in a city where she has numerous holdings.”

“Suit yourself,” Gates said, standing up.

Kara turned off her X-Ray vision and super-hearing and leaned back, waiting for the door to open. Cat gave her a small look, but she just gave Cat’s hand a small squeeze. Cat squeezed back, right about the time the door opened, and Lillian Luthor and Mayor Gates walked out. Kara felt Cat stiffen, but she forced herself to smile as she stood up. She offered her hand to Cat, helping her up before turning to Lillian and Gates.

“Mr. Mayor,” she said. “I’m sure you know Ms. Grant.”

“Of course,” Gates said. “Cat and I go way back, even if the Tribune did endorse the other guy.”

“Well,” Cat said, “you know me, Gavin. I’m a single-issue voter.”

“Oh, I hadn’t realized,” Gates said. “What issue sways Cat Grant?”

“Basic human rights,” Cat said. “Something you didn’t seem very big on during your time as District Attorney.”

“My job as DA was to put criminals behind bars,” Gates said.

“Yes, but how many of the people you put behind bars turned out to *not* be criminals?” Cat asked.

The already plastic smile on Gates’ face became noticeably more forced in response to Cat’s question. He didn’t reply, instead turning to Lillian.

“I believe you and Lillian know each other, don’t you Cat?” Gates asked.

“We’ve met a few times,” Cat said.

“Usually when you were trying to dig up some piece of gossip about me or my family,” Lillian replied.

“Oh, come now, Lillian. I *was* a gossip columnist. You can’t blame me for being exceptionally good at my job,” Cat said.

“Mr. Grant,” Kara said, “aren’t you going to introduce me?”
“Of course,” Cat said without missing a beat. “Supergirl, this is Lillian Luthor.”

“Oh,” Kara said excitedly, forcing the smile on her face even wider. “I’ve heard so much about you. It’s a pleasure to finally put a face to the name, Ms. Luthor.”

Lillian looked down at Kara’s hand with something close to revulsion written on her face. She looked back up, a touch of confusion written on her face.

“Are you sure you know who I am?” Lillian asked.

“Oh, yes!” Kara said. “You invented almost all of LuthorCorp’s early products, and your name appears on something like half the patents they’ve filed. And you’re Lena Luthor’s mother.”

Lillian looked at Cat. “Did that missile addle her brain?”

“No,” Cat said, the grin on her face now genuine. She turned to Kara. “I think she’s a little confused because you didn’t mention Lex.”

“Oh,” Kara said, dipping her head slightly and throwing her hands up in a show of embarrassment. “Sorry. On Krypton, it’s considered bad manners to mention someone’s embarrassing relatives. I mean, my father’s third cousin Jax Ur accidently blew up one of Krypton’s moons, which made family reunions uncomfortable. Let me tell you, no one wants to be the one to come right out and say, ‘don’t let Auntie Jax near the twellian brandy, we’ve only got two moons left,’ but you could kind of tell everyone was thinking it. That’s why I didn’t mention Lex. Opening the conversation with, ‘oh, didn’t my cousin’s testimony get your son two hundred and thirty-four consecutive life sentences?’ is bound to make things weird. Not to mention that you’ve built two cyborgs, one of whom tried to frame me for murder, and both of whom tried and failed to murder me. Like, bringing that up would just make things *super* awkward, am I right?”

Kara watched as Lillian turned red in the face, and just before she looked ready to explode, Kara turned to Gates, who was standing there with his mouth open.

“Would you like to get started? I don’t want to take up too much of your time.”

“I… um…” the Mayor sputtered.

“Cat and I will just wait in your office,” Kara said. “Take your time.”

Without waiting for a response, Kara offered Cat her arm again, and once Cat had taken it, they walked into the Mayor’s office like they didn’t have a care in the world.

It was almost ten minutes before the Mayor walked back into his office, and Kara used the time wisely. The moment they were seated, she pulled her phone out and texted a series of commands to Konex. Less than 30 seconds later, Konex reported back that he had cloned Lillian’s phone and copied all the data off it, that the room had been swept for bugs and three had been found and neutralized. There was a small flash of light as a bag appeared on the Mayor’s desk, and Kara let go of Cat’s hand long enough to grab the bag and attach the items inside to all the windows in the room, as well as putting one in each corner. Once she was done, the room was proof against any form of surveillance, up to and including laser mics, and the only signal getting in or out of the room would be her phone.

Once that was done, Kara sat back down, dropped out of super-speed and took Cat’s hand in her own. A quick glance into the outer office told her they weren’t going to be interrupted for a few minutes, so she turned to Cat.
“I know I asked you here, but I’m about to commit several felonies, so if you’d like to be somewhere else for a while, I can have Konex transmat you back to CatCo,” Kara said.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Cat said, giving Kara’s hand a firm squeeze.

They waited the rest of the time until Gates walked into the office. He closed the door and then took a seat behind his desk.

“I’d heard you’re a lot more blunt that your cousin, but accusing Lillian Luthor of being involved with attempts on your life in front of other people… You don’t mess around do you?” he asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I don’t.”

“Well, that’s refreshing,” he said. “A lot of the people I deal with can be a bit wishy washy.” He gave a little chuckle, as if he were laughing at his own joke. Kara leaned forward and sat her phone on the desk, then pressed the play button. An instant later, Gates’s own voice filled the room.

“What do you expect me to do, Mrs. Luthor? I practically have a Presidential order telling me to accommodate the alien bitch.”

The recording kept going, playing back Gates and Lillian’s words right up until the door to the outer office opened, at which point, Kara tapped the stop button.

Gates stared at her, his face white as a sheet. Kara just smiled back at him.

“Blackmail is such an ugly word, Mayor Gates,” she said.


“Oh, no one. But, I’m about to blackmail you, so I thought we’d just get that out on the table,” Kara said.

Cat let out a small snort of laughter and reached up to cover her mouth.

“What do you want?” Gates asked.

“Most days, just to sleep through the night without having to watch the deaths of thirty billion people on instant replay, but today’s your lucky day, Gavin. Today, I want things you can actually give me.”

“You know that will never hold up in court,” Gates said. “California is a two-party consent state.”

“Oh, please. I don’t need it to hold up in court. I have a YouTube channel with four million subscribers, and, better still, I have Cat Grant. You’d be impeached by morning, and the FBI and DEO would have a field day going through your records. Oh, and let’s not forget that you implicated the Police Commissioner. I imagine he’ll roll over on you, and probably the DA, faster than you can say guaranteed immunity deal.”

“I…”

“Let me tell you what’s going to happen,” Kara said. “You are going to offer me Siegel stadium, Otto Binder International Airport, and the two-block by ten-block strip of warehouses and parking lots that separate the two, and you’re going to throw in Plastino Park. The city will waive escrow, and close on the sale tomorrow morning. You’re going to spend the afternoon on the phone getting the city council’s approval for the sale and getting the governor’s approval to waive all building
codes and inspection requirements for the redevelopment. You are going to do it all for the low, low bargain-basement price of ten billion dollars, and you are going to get up on stage at a press conference tomorrow after the closure of the sale, and you are going to tell the people of National City all about it.”

“That land’s worth ten times that!” Gates said in a tone not much removed from a whimper.

“Yes. Yes, it is,” Kara said. “Which is why you’ll be telling the entire city the reduced price was *your* idea.”

“I’ll be run out of office,” Gates whined.

“Oh, good. You understand. It’s so much better when I don’t have to explain the joke,” Kara said.

“You fucking bitch,” Gates growled.

Kara smiled as she leaned forward. “Gavin… I can call you Gavin, right? Of course I can. Gavin, I came here today, fully intending to have a nice, civil negotiation that would benefit us both. I would have asked for a small space which I could convert into a community center for the alien inhabitants of National City, and I would have paid you a fair price for it. But I sat out in that reception area and listened to you and Lillian plot to murder or imprison my entire species. Not to mention what that level of violence and destruction would do to the minority populations in the surrounding neighborhoods.

“Now, normally, I would just release the recording to the media, let the wolves strip you to the bone, and deal with your replacement, but as it happens, I’m under a bit of a time crunch. I promised someone I would find the aliens in the city a safe refuge by Thursday. So, as much pleasure as I would take in watching you get exactly what you deserve, you get off light.”

“Oh,” Kara said. “And once the deal is done, you’re going to demand the resignation of the Police Commissioner, the DA, and the Captain of the Science Division of National City PD over their gross mishandling of the Leslie Willis incident. I’ll send over a list of acceptable candidates for their replacements. And you won’t run for re-election. In fact, if you ever run for so much as dog catcher, that recording goes straight to the press. Do we have a deal?”

Kara sat there, watching the impotent rage build behind Gates’ eyes, and she saw the moment when he broke. When he realized she had him dead to rights.

“Yes,” he said. “Yes, we have a deal.”

“Good. You’ll receive an email within the hour with all the details on how to prepare the deeds for transfer, and who the new legal owner will be,” Kara said. “We won’t take up any more of your time, Gavin. But, just in case you’re thinking of selling me out the moment I’m gone,” she reached up and tapped her ear, “just remember, I can hear everything, and I *will* be listening.”

Kara stood up and offered Cat her hand. Cat took it and Kara helped her up, not letting go when Cat was on her feet. She turned back to look at Gates.

“Hate me all you want, but you did this to yourself,” Kara said. She reached up and tapped her ear piece. “Konex, two for transmat to Ms. Grant’s office.”

Before Gates could say another word, his office vanished in a flash of white light.

By the time the flash of the transmat died, Kaldur’ahm was already in the doorway, one hand in his
jacket, no doubt gripping one of his water bearers, the other hand holding a liter bottle of water with the cap off.

“We’re good,” Kara said. “Please call Ms. Grant’s driver and let him know she’s made other travel arrangements for her return from city hall.”

“Oh course,” Kaldur’ahm said. His eyes shifted to Cat, who gave him a small nod.

Kara felt a small sense of relief at the interaction. Relief that Kaldur’ahm still looked to Cat, because she was one of the things Cat needed protection from.

She turned, releasing Cat’s hand and heading for the balcony. Cat was right on her heels, and Kara wished she knew a way to tell her to stay away that didn’t sound angry or cruel. She dropped onto one of the sofas and closed her eyes.

“Are you okay?” Cat asked.

Kara shook her head, taking slow, deep breaths, trying to calm herself as the adrenaline faded, and the shaking started.

Kara shook her head again and leaned forward, taking deep breaths.

“What’s wrong?” Cat asked, sitting down next to her.

“It’s happening again,” Kara said, tightening her arms around herself.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, holding it in as the confrontation played back in her mind. Lillian Luthor. She’d walked right up to her, and she’d let Cat poke the bear, and get it just annoyed enough that Kara could punch it right in the nose. She’d let Cat put herself in the crosshairs, even though she’d just sat there and listened to Lillian plotting to murder people.

How could she have been so stupid?

The screams came back to her, unbidden. She’d been down by the docks, putting out a fire, and looking forward to the lunch she shared with Cat almost every day since her return from Sabbatical. She’d just barely finished with the fire when she heard the first screams, coming from a place all too familiar. Coming from CatCo. She’d turned in mid-air and shot off towards CatCo plaza.

In the short time it took her to make it across town, it was already too late. The Metallo circling the building had cut structural supports in the CatCo building and Kara could see the stress fractures spreading through the other supports. The building was going to come down, there was no way to stop it, but if she could get the Metallo off her back for a few minutes, she could slow the process. Weld reinforcements in place, shore the building up long enough to make sure everyone was evacuated.

She reached for her ear bud, planning on calling in J’onn. She’d just opened the channel when Henshaw had slammed into her back.

What had followed was one of the most vicious fights Supergirl had ever been in, and her mind replayed every moment of it. Realizing the Metallo was Jeremiah. The sounds Henshaw made as Kara tore his head off. Lifting off the balcony with Carter and Snapper, and watching the building come down, knowing Cat and James were still inside. Jeremiah dropping in among the rescue workers and grabbing one of the doctors. The sickening moment Kara realized it was Eliza. Eliza’s screams as Jeremiah ripped her heart out, and the way the light faded out of Jeremiah’s eyes as Kara shoved the section of I-beam through his chest. The smug look on Lillian’s face, right up until
Maggie had pressed a shotgun to the base of her skull and pulled the trigger.

The look on Alex’s face when she realized it was Jeremiah.

It played again and again, out of order. Jumbled. People who weren’t there making guest appearances. Sometimes she was leaving Alex on the balcony or running James through with the I-beam. Sometimes it was Barry tearing Sara’s heart out. Sometimes, it was Oliver shooting Harley in the head. Sometimes Cat was one of the mothers shielding their children in the plaza as Non burned them alive with his heat vision.

The only part that was consistent was that she was never fast enough, never good enough to save anyone.
Chapter Summary

Kara recovers from her panic attack, Lillian and the rest of Cadmus are evil, and several people make bad life choices.

Chapter Notes

This chapter contains smut.

If you speak Arabic, I am sorry for the crimes I have committed against a perfectly innocent language. Please, blame Google Translate.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

She came out of it slowly, aware first of the arms wrapped around her, the way she was being rocked, gently. She was aware of music, a soft voice singing a song she remembered from childhood. She was wrapped in her old, weighted blanket.

The balcony came into focus, and she saw Cat, sitting across from her, a worried expression on her face. Alex and Maggie where there too. She turned her head, to look at the person holding her.

“All is well, Little One,” Astra whispered. She leaned forward, kissing Kara on the forehead. “All is well.”

“Sorry,” Kara said. “I’m sorry. That hasn’t happened in a long time.”

“What was it?” Cat asked.

“Flashback,” Alex said.

Kara nodded. “How long was I down?” she asked.

“About twenty minutes,” Alex said. “What happened?”

“It’s been so long, I didn’t spot the signs,” Kara said.

“Trigger?” Alex asked.

“I saw Lillian Luthor,” Kara said, leaning into Astra’s embrace.

“Cat mentioned that,” Alex said, “but I wasn’t sure.”

“Lillian was there,” Kara said. “The Battle of CatCo Plaza.”

“That’s what you were reliving?” Alex asked.

Kara nodded. “She was there,” Kara said. “The day it happened.” She looked up at Cat. “I’m sorry.
If I’d known she was going to be there, I never would have taken you near the place.”

“I’ve dealt with Lillian Luthor before,” Cat said.

“Not like this,” Kara said. “Lillian lost it when Lex went to prison, and she’s trying her best to build her own army of Kryptonite-powered murder cyborgs. Please, please don’t stick your head in the hornet’s nest.”

“Can I at least destroy that little toad Gates?” Cat asked.

“If you give me until Monday,” Kara said, “you can end him.”

“This Lillian,” Astra said. “She’s the mother of the one you wish me to work with?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “But please don’t hold that against Lena. In the other timeline, Lillian murdered Lena because Lena sided with us.”

“The enemies you make do you credit, Little One,” Astra said. “As does your loyalty to your friend.”

Kara gave a gentle tilt of her head, resting her temple against Astra’s. “Family, too,” she said. “Speaking of which, Konex…”

“Yes, Lady Kara?” the reply came through Kara’s phone.

“Patch Nimda through,” Kara said.

“Hello, Lady Kara,” came a soft, feminine voice.

“Is that mom?” Alex asked.

“This is Nimda,” Kara said. “She’s the AI we built based on the Gideon design.”

“How may I be of service?” Nimda asked.

“How are you doing on the timeline comparison?” Kara asked.

“I’m at eighty-three percent,” Nimda said. “I expect to be finished within the hour.”

“Excellent,” Kara said. “How much of your capacity is currently occupied?”

“I am currently using eighty percent of available resources,” Nimda said. “Shall I retask?”

“Negative. Konex is going to pass you a data set, which includes a cloned cell phone belonging to Lillian Luthor. I need all location data for the phone as far back as possible and see if you can locate corresponding data from cell phones belonging to Simon Tycho, Maxwell Lord, and Sam Lane. Cross-reference with all indexed data associated with known project Cadmus holdings. See if any corresponding sites indicate a significant probability that prisoners are being held on site, and that biological research is being conducted on site.”

“Minimum confidence threshold for Cadmus sites?” Nimda asked.

“Seventy-five percent,” Kara said.

“Working,” Nimda said. “I have found five sites which fall within parameters specified.”

Kara didn’t look up. She couldn’t stand to see the hope she knew would be on Alex’s face.
“Email the list of sites to Bruce, then get him on the line,” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

“Hello,” Bruce said, a moment later.

“Bruce, this is Kara. You remembered the search and rescue op we discussed this morning?”

“Yes,” Bruce said.

“I just emailed you a list of five candidate sites,” Kara said. “How quickly can you confirm target location?”

“Let me look at the list,” Bruce said. The line was silent for a moment. “I can vet the three in California tonight. The ones in Maryland and Peru will have to wait until tomorrow night.”

“What if I give you access to Sanctuary’s transmat system?” Kara asked. “Its effective range is the Earth/Moon L2 point.”

“That would help,” Bruce said.

“In fact, if you don’t mind a construct in the Batcave full time to manage it, we can probably fit you with your own transmat hub,” Kara said.

“I’ll think about it,” Bruce said. “If I can have access to the transmat system now, we can hit all five locations simultaneously, and confirm presence of the target. Do you want us to extract if we find him, or hold off for the diversionary strike we discussed?”

“Use your judgement,” Kara said. “If you think you can extract him without engaging the enemy, do it. Otherwise, withdraw and we’ll coordinate to extract.”

“Understood,” Bruce said.

“Kolex will handle transmat coordination,” Kara said. “Talk to you later. Nimda, connect Bruce with Kolex and end call.”

Kara finally looked up, letting herself take in Alex’s face, full of both hope and fear.

“It’s a long shot, Alex,” Kara said. “This is nowhere close to a hundred percent.”

“I know,” Alex said.

“I don’t know what kind of shape he’ll be in. We never found him, before. Not until he showed up… modified,” Kara said.

Alex nodded.

“You’re going to get your hopes up anyway, aren’t you?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Alex said.

“We should get you home, Little One,” Astra said. “You need rest.”

“Probably not a bad idea,” Kara said. “We could do a game night. Invite Lucy, Susan, James and Winn.”
“That’s probably not a good idea,” Maggie said.

“How not?” Kara asked.

“Lucy kind of dumped James,” Maggie said. “And by kind of, I mean hard enough that he left the building with a single manly tear running down his cheek.”

“You know, how about a girl’s night?” Kara said. “We can go out, hit the Basement…”

“You know about the Basement?” Alex asked, looking a little stunned.

“You’ve been to the Basement?” Maggie asked, sounding impressed.

“What is the Basement?” Astra asked.

“It’s a bar,” Kara said.

“It’s a skeevy bar,” Alex said.

“It’s not skeevy,” Kara said, more than a little defensively. “It’s decorative.”

“It’s definitely skeevy,” Cat said.

“Okay, it’s skeevy,” Kara said, pulling away from Astra and wrapping her arms around herself. “It reminds me of Sara.”

The tone on the balcony changed instantly, and Kara hated it. Cat’s teasing smile was gone, Alex looked like a kicked puppy and Astra looked guilty. Maggie was the only one who didn’t have pity written on her face.

“You’ve been holding out on me, Danvers,” Maggie said. “How come you never invited me along?”

Kara looked up at Maggie, who’s grin was only a little forced. “There’s a waitress there named Anna. I was afraid she’d take one look at you and snatch you up, and I was saving you for Alex.”

Maggie shook her head. “My own best friend, crotch blocking me. That hurts.”

“Hey!” Alex said, elbowing Maggie.

Maggie gave an exaggerated wince and curled around the spot where Alex’s elbow had made contact. “You didn’t tell me your sister likes it rough,” Maggie said, faking a pained tone.

Kara snorted, laughing, and just like that, the spell was broken and the pity on everyone’s faces vanished.

Lillian looked up as Tycho, Lord and Lane walked into her office.

“Gentlemen,” she said, “have a seat.”

The three of them sat down.

“How did the meeting with Mayor Gates go?” Tycho asked.

“About the way I expected,” Lillian said. “He called me a few minutes ago to let me know that he’s going to sell Supergirl Siegel Stadium, Otto Binder International Airport, and the strip of condemned buildings between them.”
“That’s a bigger area than we expected,” Lane said.

“That actually works to our advantage,” Lillian said. “The larger the area devastated by the incident, the bigger the public outcry, the stronger the support for anti-alien enforcement.”

“We have to keep the situation contained,” Lane said. “We want a show, but civilian casualties are unacceptable.”

“Sam, we all agreed that collateral damage is unavoidable,” Tycho said.

“I am aware of that, but you agreed that it would be kept to a minimum,” Lane said.

“I have to agree with General Lane, here,” Lord said. “Our purpose here is to get rid of aliens to *protect* humans, not kill them.”

“That’s what the Red Tornado units are for,” Lillian said. She looked at Lane. “I presume you’re going ahead with the testing?”

“I am,” Lane said. “He wasn’t happy about it, but Braxton signed the order today. It will take months before the DEO is transferred from Defense to Justice unless Marsdin signs another Executive Order, so the DEO will have no choice but to comply.”

Lillian nodded. “And Dr. Morrow is certain Red Tornado will be able to defeat a Kryptonian?” she asked.

“He is,” Lane said, “though I have my doubts. So far, every weapon we’ve fielded against Supergirl has been a disappointment.”

“Any nut can be cracked,” Tycho said. “You just have to apply the right pressure.”

“What do you mean?” Lane asked.

“Cat Grant,” Tycho said. “Surely you noticed at the Gala.”

“I noticed her hanging onto Supergirl’s cape, trying to make herself seem like something more than a gossip columnist with delusions of grandeur,” Lane said.

Tycho sighed. “You always think it brute force terms, General,” Tycho said. “But Supergirl has a little crush on Cat. It’s plain as day.”

“Simon’s right,” Lillian said. “I saw it myself, today. They were holding hands like a pair of middle schoolers. It was a bit nauseating, honestly.”

“What do you suggest?” Max asked.

“Grant’s obviously the brains behind Supergirl’s little media blitz,” Tycho said.

“Don’t underestimate the girl,” Lillian said. “She’s already blindsided us, more than once.”

“I’m not,” Tycho said. “She’s talented, and apparently some sort of financial wizard, but the media campaign is pure Cat Grant. If we eliminate her, then we’ll cripple Supergirl, *and* we’ll leave this new company she’s trying to build bereft of leadership, which will make it that much easier to take back what’s ours once Supergirl is dead, or better yet, locked up in a lab somewhere so we can dissect her.”

Lane frowned, and Lillian knew was he was thinking. It would have to be a messy operation. Grant
was too careful for something as simple as a mugging gone wrong. The only times she was really exposed were when she was dropping her son at school, or when they spent the weekend at her beach house. A home invasion, maybe? If they did it that way, the boy would have to go too. Unfortunate, but it would be on Cat’s head. She was the one who got in bed with an alien. Possibly literally.

If it was literally, then a home invasion was out of the question. If Supergirl was there to stop the attackers, they might be linked back to Cadmus.

An anti-alien extremist attack at CatCo had possibilities. Lure Supergirl away, then have the extremists murder Cat in her office. Oh, the propaganda value of that alone made it ideal. The great Superhero, unable to protect her reporter.

“Give me the time you plan on having Supergirl fight the Red Tornado unit. I’ll arrange an unfortunate situation at CatCo that will leave our little alien without her mouth piece.”

“What about the other Metallo units?” Tycho asked. “Are we still planning on going ahead with that?”

“Yes,” Lillian said. “That’s why we decided to bring Max all the way in. He’s a better chemical engineer than I am. I still can’t get the synthetic Kryptonite to stabilize.”

“Why go ahead with the Metallo’s?” Lane asked. “The first one didn’t work.”

“I’m not convinced of that,” Lillian said. “No one saw Supergirl use her powers at all today, and one of my sources at CatCo said that they saw her sister and her aunt arrive not long after Supergirl returned. My source said it looked like Supergirl was having some sort of fit.”

“You think the Kryptonite hurt her?” Lane asked.

“I do,” Lillian said. “And I think the effects are lingering. Whatever immunity she has, it’s limited, and may be confined just to her. Remember, our source in the DEO confirmed they had Kryptonite emitters arranged along the President’s escape route. In fact, it’s possible the immunity is the result of a device. Something she carries with her. Possibly something that’s part of her suit.”

“So, if we can figure out what it is, we can figure out how to get around it,” Tycho said.

“Exactly,” Lillian said.

“I’d also like to make a suggestion,” Max said.

“Oh?” Lillian asked.

“I’ve spent the morning looking at the DNA samples you’ve provided, and I think I’ve found something that might be useful,” Max said.

“Really?” Tycho asked. “What might that be?”

“I think it might be possible to map Kryptonian DNA onto a human host,” Max said. “The process would be unpleasant, to say the least, and it might take me some time to work out the details, but if I could get some test subjects, I could be ready to deploy in a few weeks.”

Lillian looked at Max. “Full Kryptonian powers mapped onto a human?” she asked.

“That would be the ultimate goal of the program, yes,” Max said.
“How many test subjects would you need?” Tycho asked.

“Ten would be a good number to start,” Max said.

“Human test subjects?” Lane asked.

“Yes,” Max said.

“It can be arranged,” Lillian said. “You’ll have your first subject by the end of the week.”

“Perfect,” Max said.

“There’s one other issue I need to bring up,” Lillian said. “Somehow, the DEO made McGill.”

“Any clue as to how that happened?” Lane asked.

“My guess is that the Martian must have realized we were tipped off to the location of the press conference and started reading minds until he found one of our moles,” Lillian said.

“What about the other assets?” Tycho asked.

“That’s a bit of good news,” Lillian said. “When the DEO moved primary operations to the downtown facility, Reynolds was promoted to post commander for the desert base,” Lillian said. “That means when the time comes to clean house, we’ll have the security codes for the prison and the village.”

“And Hamilton?” Lane asked.

“Safely ensconced at the downtown facility,” Lillian said. “Right where she can do the most damage.”

“Look, guys, I appreciate the thought, but really, I’m just getting a little stir-crazy sitting on the ship,” Sara said as they walked down the street. “I think I can handle one night in National City without a body guard.”

“We know,” Ray said. “I mean, there’s the whole League of Assassins thing-”

“Which would be a lot more secret if you wouldn’t announce it in a loud voice,” Jax said.

“Right, sorry,” Ray said in a bad stage whisper. “There’s the Black Canary thing.”

“She got killed being the Black Canary,” Snart said.

Sara rolled her eyes. “Well, unless one of you are drugged, and planning on shooting me and shoving me off a building, I’ll be fine. You can go back the to Waverider.”

“Normally, we wouldn’t worry about it,” Jax said, “but with the memory thing messing with your head-”

“I’m fine,” Sara said in an exasperated tone. “I’ve had a couple of memories get mixed up, but I’ve never lost situational awareness.”

“Did it ever occur to you that maybe some of us are here because we’re a little stir-crazy too?” Snart asked.
“That doesn’t explain why you all decided to follow me around all night,” Sara said.

“You always find the best bars,” Mick said.

“He’s got a point,” Jax said.

Sara rolled her eyes, and seriously considered heading for Girlbar, figuring the bouncers outside a lesbian bar would solve the problem of her little band of followers. The problem was, her future memories were pointing her somewhere else. A place she could see in her memory, and feel calling out to her, which ruled out ditching them by going into a lesbian bar.

On the other hand, she knew from experience that Jax and Ray were both lightweights. Snart had a higher tolerance, but Mick was really the only one that could sort of keep up with her. Such were the advantages of the Lazarus pit. She’d still barely be buzzed by the time Jax, Ray and Snart were passed out, and once Mick found a spot with a steady supply of booze, he wouldn’t care if she set herself on fire, as long as it didn’t keep him from getting his next beer.

She spotted the sign for the place her future self wanted to go to and headed for it, smiling as she saw Ray frowning out of the corner of her eye. Of course, that probably had to do with the bouncer, who looked roughly the size of a gorilla.

“What did you say this place we’re going is called again?” Ray asked, despite the sign right in front of him.

“The Basement,” Sara said.

“I was afraid you’d say that,” Ray replied.

“Hey,” Sara said to the gorilla. He just nodded as Sara walked past, but held out a hand, stopping Jax from following.

“ID,” he said.

“Really?” Jax asked.

“ID,” the bouncer said.

Jax reached for his wallet and pulled it out, showing the guy a very fake ID that said he was twenty-two. The bouncer stared at it for a minute, then shrugged and handed it back before nodding his head in the direction of the door.

Jax and Ray started forward, but the bouncer put his hand on Ray’s shoulder.

“Don’t start any trouble,” he said.

“Me?” Ray asked.

“Yeah,” the bouncer said. “Reporters are always trouble.”

“Oh, I’m not a reporter,” Ray said.

The bouncer frowned. “Aren’t you that guy from Metropolis?” he asked. “The one always hanging around Lois Lane?”

“Nooo,” Ray said.
The bouncer gave Ray a look that said he clearly didn’t believe a word coming out of Ray’s mouth. “Whatever. Don’t start trouble.”

The bouncer didn’t give Mick or Snart any trouble, so Sara led them down the stairs and through the door to the bar.

“Well, this looks like a place full of people who made bad life choices,” Snart said.

“Then we should fit right in,” Sara said.

The place was so hideous it was actually charming. Like a dive bar, a rave, and a goth club had all gotten drunk, had an orgy, and then in the morning puked in the same bucket, and someone had come along and decided to open a club in the bucket. The Bar was black granite, with a wooden lip stained deep red and fronted with diamond plate steel panels and purple neon under the lip of the bar. The tables were also black, with corrugated metal wrapped around the central pillar, which at least matched the support columns holding up the roof. Off to one side, there were a dozen pool tables, covered in bumper stickers that ranged from NASCAR to ‘I’m sorry I missed church, I was too busy practicing witchcraft and becoming a lesbian’. The felt color of the tables was mismatched. Some were red, some were blue, some were green, one was even black, and for just a moment, she remembered being lifted up and perched on the edge of one of those tables, while the blonde of her future dreams stood between her legs and kissed her. Gargoyles were attached to the walls above booth-like areas made up of big leather couches in red and black, but no two couches matched, which went with the theme apparently, because no two chairs matched either. The dance floor on one end of the room was obviously maintained, though Sara wasn’t sure it qualified as ‘well’ maintained, given that she could spot at least six different shades of wood used to patch it, but that didn’t seem to matter to her future self, who was filling her head with memories of dancing with a partner who knew her every move and matched it in ways that made her mouth water. There was a stage that was behind a floor to ceiling chain link fence, though to Sara’s surprise, the girl singing was actually really good.

The décor, though, was obviously not this place’s attraction. The servers, and you could spot every one of them, were absolutely gorgeous. They all wore painted on leather pants, and boots. Some of the women opted for high heels, others for flats. Some of the men opted for heels, too. Both the men and the women wore corsets. Some of the men wore ones with straps, some of them wore waist corsets over mesh t-shirts. All of the woman had a generous amount of cleavage on display.

She remembered sitting in the blonde’s lap as they watched the waitresses and whispered into each other’s ears about which one they should take home for the night. They’d never actually done it. She was sure of that. It was just a game. A way to tease each other, to work each other up, to forget the nightmares they had to go back too. Though she did remember a red and blue haired girl curled up naked between them.

She shook off the memory and looked around. When she spotted an open booth, she headed for it. It was one of the larger ones, three love seats arranged in a horse shoe with a large table in the center. She slid in and sat down in the middle of the love seat at the back of the booth, with its back against the wall, leaving Ray and Jax to take the love seat on her left, while Snart and Mick took the one on her right.

A brunette in spiked heeled boots and fuck me-red lipstick appeared the moment everyone was seated, and Sara smiled as she spotted the Labrys tattooed on the woman’s bicep.

“Hey,” she said, “I’m Anna. You guys ready to order, or you need a minute?”

“Tequila,” Sara said. She wasn’t entirely sure why, but it felt like a Tequila sort of night.
“Well shots are two dollars, called shots are four, top shelf varies,” Anna said.

“Is the well any good?” Sara asked.

“Depends,” Anna said. “It will get you fucked up, but your mouth will taste like ass for a week.”

“What do you recommend?” Sara asked.

“You paying, or you sucker these guys into it?” Anna asked, giving Sara a grin.

“I’ve got my boss’ credit card,” Sara said.

“Well, if you don’t care about having a job in the morning, Patron Gran Platinum is the best bottle we’ve got. We only sell it by the bottle though. Two hundred each, and you pay first.”

Sara reached into her pock and pulled out the credit card Gideon had run off for her and slid it across the table.

“How many glasses?” Anna asked as she scooped up the card.

“Just one,” Sara said. “These knuckleheads can get their own booze.”


“Johnny Walker, blue label. Bring the bottle,” Snart said.

“Just a coke,” Jax said.

“Designated driver?” Anna asked.

“We walked, but somebody’s gotta be sober enough to remember how to get home,” Jax said.

Anna gave Jax a smile. “Designated drivers drink for free, sweetie, so if anyone asks, you said yes.”

Jax smiled back at her in a way that made Sara decide she needed to pull the poor boy aside and give him a brief lesson on lesbian iconography.

“I’ll have a Zima,” Ray said.

Five heads pivoted as one to look at Ray.

“What?” Ray asked.

Anna turned back to Sara. “Brother?” she asked.

“Coworker,” Sara said.

Anna gave her an ‘I’m’ sorry look.

“Anything else? Chips and Salsa, Tappa’s, peanuts, pretzels?”

“Three orders of the chips and salsa, two sampler platters and an order of potato skins,” Sara said.

“Separate checks?” Anna asked.

“Put it all on the card,” Sara said. “Our boss is an asshole.”
Anna smiled and disappeared as quickly as she appeared, leaving Sara to sit back, watch the crowd, and reconsider her plan. Jax deciding to stay sober wasn’t that big a hindrance. She’d wait until Ray was three sheets to the wind, and ask Jax to walk him home, which should happen after the second Zima, which made Snart the hold up.

Kara knew she was getting looks as they walked down the sidewalk towards the bar, but it was annoying that most of them were coming from the group she was with. Astra was vaguely scandalized by the backless red mini dress Kara had picked, but there was absolutely *nothing* vague about how completely mortified Alex was by it. Maggie, thankfully, had replied with a whistle and a comment about being lucky she already had a date, but Lucy and Susan had both been staring at her ass the whole walk, and Leslie had been staring daggers at her the whole way. Sadly, the one person she actually wanted to see her in the dress had begged off, saying that she needed to go home to her son. She couldn’t really blame Cat, and it wasn’t like Cat was going to see her in a slinky outfit and decide she was in love, but that didn’t mean she couldn’t enjoy showing off a little.

She’d considered inviting Lena and Sam along, and if it had been the other timeline, she would have, but one of the advantages of the group they had was, everyone was in the know. There was none of the subtle tension you got when half a group was in on a secret and half wasn’t.

She took a deep breath and let it out, trying to release the nerves with it. They’d go in, get some drinks, Kara would chat with the pretty waitresses, get a phone number or two that she’d never call pressed into her hand. And hey, Lucy and Susan were both single, and both of them looked hot, in completely different ways. Susan was in a white V-neck t-shirt, a classic black biker jacket, tight jeans and biker boots and had her hair spiked up like some kind of butch goddess. Lucy, on the other hand, was in a green satin number with a plunging neckline that made Kara seriously reconsider her rule on being someone’s rebound.

“Hey, Greg,” Kara said as she spotted the bouncer.

“Kara!” he said, holding his arms out. “Where have you been, girl?”

Kara smiled as she stepped into his arms and gave him a hug that would have shattered human ribs. “Oh, you know, here and there,” she said.

“I like the new hair color,” Greg said.

“Thank you,” Kara said, reaching up to touch the wig a little self-consciously. “How’s Mark?”

“That man, let me tell you,” Greg said. “I swear, the pregnancy hormones are making him nuts.”

“Did you see Brota about the Jogan fruit, like I told you?” Kara asked.

“Oh, honey, yes. It’s been a god send. It is the only thing that stops Mark’s pouch from hurting.”

“What about Becca?”

“Hibernating, the poor thing,” Greg said. “I kept telling her she needed more arsenic, but she kept complaining about how expensive it is.”

“Was she still drinking weed killer?” Kara asked. “Greg Bovinar, why didn’t you go down to the docks and see Bek?”

“I did!” Greg said. “Gave him your name, too. He still wanted three fifty a gram.”
Kara let out a heavy sign and reached for her purse. She pulled out a pen and one of her business cards.

“You call this number tomorrow. Kolex will answer. You give him your name and address, and you tell him Kara said to give you one kilo of arsenic powder and give him your address. He’ll have it to you by the end of the day.”

Greg threw his arms around her, again, giving her another hug that would crack a human’s bones. “Thank you!” he said before sitting her back down. “Who are your friends?”

“This is my *adoptive* sister, Alex,” she said, stressing the word adoptive to make sure Greg watched his strength as he shook her hand. “My friends Lucy, Leslie, Susan and Maggie.”

“Maggie Sawyer?” Greg said, surprise on his face. “Wow, it’s been what?”

“Two years,” Maggie said. “Glad to see you’re keeping out of trouble.”

“I’m trying,” Greg said. “I’m hoping it will get easier now that the laws have changed. I was really glad to see you on that stage though. Someone to keep the DEO honest.”

Kara looked over and saw Alex start to bristle, but just shook her head slightly.

“Greg, this is my Aunt Astra,” Kara said.

Greg turned, and Kara saw him pale a little. “Um, General, ma’am,” he said.

“It’s okay, Greg,” Kara said, reaching out and placing a hand on Greg’s shoulder. Greg nodded, but Kara could still see a small hint of fear in his eyes. “We’re going to head in,” Kara said.

“Be careful,” Greg said. “There’s a reporter in there. That one from Metropolis that hangs out with Lois Lane.”

“Clark Kent?” Kara asked.

“I think so,” Greg said. “He claimed he wasn’t, but it sure looked like him.”

“I’ll keep it in mind,” Kara said, before turning and heading down the steps.

“I didn’t realize and there were any Trinons on Earth,” Astra said as the descended the steps.

“There are about six hundred,” Kara said. “Most of them were born here, but Greg, Mark and Becca are among the oldest of the triads. He fought at Gangaran’s Star.”

“No wonder he recognized me,” Astra said.

“Not all Trinon’s supported the government,” Kara said. “They conscripted the bulls like Greg and held their mares and roos hostage for good behavior.”

“What’s a roo?” Leslie asked.

Kara opened the door and lead them into the bar, heading for her usual table before correcting herself and heading for one of the larger ones closer to the wall.

She pulled out a chair and sat down in a spot that let her scan the room, and took out her phone, dashing off a quick text to Clark, asking him where he was.
“Roo is short for Kangaroo,” Kara said. “Trinons are a single-sexed species that sexually differentiate when they form mated triads. Mares present as fairly close to human females. Close enough to pass as long as they wear loose fitting clothes. Bulls are like Greg. They grow to almost twice their previous size, and present fairly close to a human male. Roos are a bit more androgynous. Some of the ones on earth present male, and some present female. Either way they develop pouches. Once the mare delivers, the roo puts the litter in their pouch and carries them for about sixteen months, until they’re old enough to survive outside the pouch on their own.”

“How do you know them?” Alex asked.

“I got Greg his job here,” Kara said. “When I met him, he was junking cars for six bucks an hour because he didn’t have any papers. I tried to get him to let me introduce him to J’onn, but the DEO killed a bull about eleven years back. The whole Trinon community is terrified of them.”

“I didn’t realize you’d been interacting with the community before you came out,” Maggie said.

“I stayed away from Darla’s,” Kara said. “Avoided any place where large groups congregate. I know J’onn officially backed off the surveillance, but I didn’t want to risk leading the DEO to anyone.”

“You say that like the DEO’s a bad thing,” Alex said, and Kara could hear the hurt in her voice.

“It is,” Kara said. “It’s getting better but think about your reaction the first time Maggie took you to Darla’s.”

Alex turned to Maggie, giving her a betrayed look. “You told her about that?”

“No,” Kara said, “you did. Or, at least, you did before.”

“Oh,” Alex said, frowning slightly.

“That’s why I suggested Maggie take you there, Alex. You needed to have that reaction. Because the DEO will only get better if we make it better, and things will only get better for people like Greg if the DEO gets better,” Kara said. “You’re thinking like a soldier, because you’ve been trained like a soldier. The problem with that is, the DEO is a police force now.”

“She’s right,” Astra said. “They have a great deal of overlap, but the military guild kept the police units separate for a reason. The mindset is different.”

“You know,” Kara said, cutting off the conversation, “we came out to have fun tonight. Let’s not spend the whole time talking about work.”

“Finally, something you and I can agree on, Sunshine,” Leslie said.

Kara looked up, smiling as Anna appeared by the table. She didn’t even bother to ask, just threw an arm around Kara’s shoulder and squeezed. “Sweetie, I love the new hair.

“Thanks,” Kara said.

“Please tell me you’re finally here to make an honest woman out of me,” Anna said as she let go and pulled out her order pad.

“Afraid not,” Kara said. “Rough night?”

“Not too bad,” Anna said. “There’s a real hottie over at table twelve, but her friends could teach a
master course in crotch blocking.”

Kara frowned. “Which one’s twelve?” she asked as she looked around, but suddenly, she knew. She knew, because the entire world went away, and Kara only saw one thing.

Sara.

“I know, honey,” Anna said. “I had that same reaction when she walked in the door.”

Kara didn’t say a word. She just stood up, and circled the table, her eyes never leaving Sara. She didn’t stop at the sound of the voices asking if she was okay, or where she was going. She didn’t stop until she was standing right in front of Sara.

Sara looked up. Kara could feel Sara’s gaze run over her, and her body reacted viscerally. She wasn’t sure how Sara was here, wasn’t sure why, but she saw something in those eyes, confusion, curiosity, but only a hint of recognition. This wasn’t her Sara then. A quick glance around. Snart, Jax, Mick, Ray. That meant fairly early on, Kara was never clear on the timeline, but she honestly didn’t care. Sara was there. Sara was wearing the war suit cuff.

Kara’s eyes dropped down to the glass in Sara’s hand. A shot of tequila. Kara felt the smile spread across her face, one she usually reserved for when she was in bed with Sara, as she leaned over the table, giving Sara a view that made her lick her lips and swallow. Kara plucked the shot glass out of Sara’s hand and lifted it to her own mouth, throwing it back like water before she looked down at the empty glass.

“Looks like you need a drink,” Kara said. She looked up at Sara, and saw a coy smile spread across her face as she reached out and pushed aside a bottle of tequila that was still three quarters full.

“Why don’t you buy me one?” Sara asked, challenge in her tone and the lift of her eyebrow.

“The drinks here are terrible, but I’ve got a fantastic Scotch back at my place,” Kara said as she held out her hand.

Sara didn’t even hesitate. She reached out, taking Kara’s hand as she stood up. Kara reached down with her free hand and pushed the table over enough that Sara could slip by without Ray or Jax having to move, ignoring Snart and Mick’s shouted protests.

As soon as Sara cleared the table, Kara gave a little tug, and Sara fell into her arms. Kara caught her easily, hands and arms finding familiar places as Sara smiled up at her, tilting her head back at the perfect angle for Kara to lean down and cover Sara’s lips with her own.

It felt like coming home after a lifetime away, and she wanted to stay there forever, lost in every detail. The way Sara’s breasts felt pressed against her, the way Sara’s fingers curled, digging nails into her shoulder blades as Kara nipped at her lower lip, the taste of the cherry flavored lip gloss that Sara always wore, the smell of the shampoo they both used, the low moan and the way Sara wrapped a leg around her as Kara sucked gently on her tongue, and the breathless and glassy eyed look on Sara’s face when the kiss was over.

Kara didn’t say anything else. She didn’t have to. She just took Sara’s hand and led her towards the door.

“What just happened?” Ray asked.

“I don’t know,” Mick said, “but it was hot.”
“That was either the smoothest pick up I’ve ever seen in my life, or the worst, and I honestly don’t know which,” Jax said.

“If all three of you are done being idiots, we need to get back to the Waverider,” Snart said.


“Because I’m pretty sure that Sara just went home with Supergirl,” Snart said.

Alex tried not to let Kara’s words sting, but the DEO had been such a huge part of her life for the last two years, and hearing that it was hurting people was a bitter pill to swallow. Of course, that was the problem. She hadn’t been thinking of the aliens she’d been going after as people. It had never even occurred to her. She wondered how much of that was because she’d stopped thinking of Kara as an alien a long time ago, and just started thinking of Kara as her sister.

At the same time, it also hurt to see so much evidence of how much Kara had been hiding from her the past year. She understood the reasons, but she and Kara had been so close that seeing the easy, comfortable way Kara had gotten along with the bouncer outside, who Alex wouldn’t even have known was an alien, had come as a shock. Just like watching the casual way the waitress threw an arm around Kara and how easily Kara responded to the blatant flirting.

“There’s a real hottie over at table twelve, but her friends could teach a master course in crotch blocking,” the waitress said, nodding her head towards the booths.

“Which one’s twelve?” Kara asked, turning to look in the indicated direction.

Alex was still watching Kara, thinking about the differences in her little sister’s personality over the last year when Kara’s face changed. Alex couldn’t place the expression, at all. It was focused, intense in a way Alex had never seen Kara.

She was a little surprised when Kara got up.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Kara, are you okay?” Maggie asked.

“Little One?” Astra asked.

The words seemed to roll off Kara like water off a duck’s back as she walked away from the table. Alex started to stand up, only for Susan, of all people, to reach across Maggie and put a hand on her shoulder.

“Don’t,” Susan said.

Alex gave her a look, but sat back down, turning to watch as Kara stopped in front of a blonde who was sitting at a table with four guys. Alex nearly jumped up again when Kara grabbed the shot glass out of the blonde’s hand, expecting trouble, but Kara threw the shot back, then said something that made the blonde grin. Kara held out her hand, and the blonde took it, and a moment later, the two of them were kissing like the rest of the world didn’t exist.

“Holy shit!” Leslie said.

“Damn,” Susan muttered.

“I don’t know who blondie is, but I’m suddenly filled with the urge to scratch her eyes out,” the
waitress said.

Kara broke the kiss, and took the blonde’s hand, leading her out the door of the bar without a backward glance.

“Did that just happen?” Susan asked.

“Sunshine’s got game,” Leslie said

“What the actual fuck?” Lucy said.

Alex turned back and looked at the waitress. “Does that happen often?” she asked, a little afraid of the answer.

“Are you kidding?” the waitress asked. “Kara’s the white fucking whale. Half the women who work here have been after her since the first time she walked into the place, and no one has gotten so much as a last name. She always pays cash, never leaves with anybody, never calls any of the phone numbers she’s given, never accepts anything anyone buys her. She just comes in, flirts a little, dances a little, and leaves every gay girl in the building with raging blue balls.”

“That had to be someone Kara knew, right?” Susan asked.

“Who, though?” Maggie asked.

Alex looked at the waitress. “Did she have a name?” Alex asked.

“Um… Look, guys, I like Kara, but giving out customer info will get me fired,” she said.

Alex reached into her jacket and pulled out her badge, flipping it open. “Did you get a name?”

“One of her friends called her Sara,” Anna said.

“Fuck,” Lucy muttered, summing up Alex’s feelings nicely.

Kara kept smiling at Sara, not willing to let go of her hand, even to navigate the stairs. When they reached the top, she stopped long enough to pull Sara into another kiss, earning more than one cat call from people on the street. She ignored it, not caring about anything other than the fact that Sara was in her arms again.

Sara broke the kiss this time, pulling back with that smug little smirk she always had after they kissed.

“Not that I don’t appreciate the enthusiasm, but maybe a bit more privacy.”

“Come on,” Kara said, taking her hand and leading her around the corner, into an alley.

“Not what I had in mind,” Sara said as Kara turned around to face her.

Kara rested her hands lightly on Sara’s hips. “Put your feet on mine,” Kara said.

Sara raised an eyebrow and looked down. “I’m heavier than I look,” Sara said, taking in Kara’s pumps.

“You won’t hurt me,” Kara said.
Sara lifted her right foot, and sat it down on top of Kara’s left, looking up and watching Kara’s face and she put weight on it. Kara gave her a small nod, and Sara lifted her left foot, placing it on top of Kara’s right. Kara tightened her grip on Sara’s waist.

“Deep breath, Ta-er al-Sahfer,” Kara said.

Sara sucked in a breath in surprise, and before she could let it out, Kara shot into the air, carrying Sara with her.

“WHOAH!” Sara shouted.

“I’ve got you,” Kara said as they came to a stop half a mile up. She slipped her arms around Sara, holding her tightly. “I’ve got you.” She leaned forward, kissing Sara again as they drifted through the sky.

Kara’s dress was the first thing to hit the floor, thought Sara was barely willing to stop touching her long enough for Kara to shrug the skimpy thing off. The moment it was out of the way, Sara’s hands were back on her, roaming over skin as Sara’s lips and tongue worked magic along the hollow of Kara’s collar bone. Kara pulled Sara along as she walked backwards towards her bed, starting a deep breathing exercise Powergirl had taught her, years ago. It had taken months to train the muscle memory into her younger body, but it was worth it as she used the accompanying meditative technique to partition off a small little portion of her awareness and used the breathing and body control technique to deliberately lower her body’s draw level on the solar energy stored in her cells, turning her powers off.

When Sara pushed her down onto the bed and climbed in top of her, Kara found herself truly and deliciously pinned by Sara’s weight, and when Sara caught Kara’s wrists above her head, she didn’t have to be careful, because without her powers, Sara was stronger, and Kara couldn’t break the hold. And when Sara pressed a leather clad thigh between Kara’s legs, grinding it against the wet scrap of lace barely covering Kara’s pussy, Kara could give in and buck her hips without worrying about throwing Sara through the roof of the building.

“/.,rao,/” Kara whispered as Sara rocked against her. “/sokao:zhaolu w khap/”

“Sa’afeal, habi,” Sara replied. She rose up, straddling Kara’s left thigh as she shrugged off her jacket. She reached down, and Kara watched with rapt attention as Sara pulled off the shirt she was wearing, then stripped off her bra, leaving her bare from the waist up.

It was too tempting to resist, and Kara reached up, her right hand cupping Sara’s left breast, as her left hand rested on Sara’s side, urging her back down so Kara could kiss her. Sara, never one to be passive, started rocking her hips, grinding her thigh against Kara again, and before Kara knew it, she was gripping Sara tightly as she teetered on the edge, trying desperately to hold back, to make this last. Terrified it wasn’t real, that she was caught in another nightmare, another flashback.

“I’m here,” Sara whispered. “I’m right here, Alkawala al-Saghir.”

The words, the name, the way Sara was touching her, it was all too much, and Kara found herself crying out as she came.

Sara didn’t know the woman under her, had barely spoken to her, but she knew the woman below her better, even than she knew Nyssa. She knew where to touch her, how to touch her, to get her to make the most delicious little whimper or get her to squeeze her eyes shut just so. She knew that the
tilt of the head just that way meant she needed something inside, so that’s where Sara’s fingers went, into wet silken folds.

She didn’t know this woman she was making love to, but just looking at her face filled Sara’s heart.

“/.:zhao w rrip, eh ,kahrah,zor,ehl,” spilled from her lips. She didn’t know the language, had never heard it before, but knew it was the language on the bracelet, and knew the words meant, ‘I love you, Kara Zor-El,’ and that she meant every word.

When her tongue slipped inside this woman, who tasted different than any woman Sara had ever tasted before, the taste was like home, familiar and comforting, and if she sucked just there, and touched just here, the woman would arch and scream and come, and God, it was so beautiful.

And when she rolled them over, a hungry gleam in her eye, Sara knew before the woman moved that she was going to reach for the drawer in the bedside table. She’d never met the woman before but watching her step into the harness was like watching a movie she’d seen a thousand times and could recite from memory.

When this woman, whose name she didn’t know, even as she screamed it in ecstasy, thrust inside her again and again, Sara ran her fingers through short blonde hair, thinking how she missed the long, golden locks that used to drape down and enclose the two of them in their own little world as Kara fucked her.

And when she gripped the headboard and straddled Kara’s face like she never had before, she remembered doing the same thing in the Captain’s cabin on the Waverider, digging her fingers into the metal as Kara’s tongue hit that spot which always made her come.

And when it was over, and they were both as sated as they ever got, she looked into the face of this woman she didn’t know and knew exactly what she needed, and the look of pure bliss on Kara’s face when Sara said, “It’s my turn to be the big spoon,” told her she was exactly right.

And when Kara whispered, “I’ve missed you so much, my Captain,” before drifting off to sleep, the words Sara had never heard before broke her heart with the memory of all the times Kara had said them to her.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

,.rao,
Literal: Rao
Semantic: Oh, god

.sokao:zhaolu w khap
Please fuck me

:zhao w rrip, eh ,kahrah,zor,ehl,
I love you, Kara Zor-El

Translated from the Arabic:
Ta'er al-Sahfer
Literal: Yellow Bird
Semantic: Canary

Sa'afeal, habi
I will, my love

Alkawala al-Saghir
Little Koala
The morning after starts off happy, but it doesn't stay that way.

There is less smut in this chapter than in the last, but Alex will never be able to eat off that table again.

“We are young, heartache to heartache we stand. No promises, no demands. Love is a battlefield.” Kara sang the words as she danced in place, spreading the icing over the cinnamon rolls with an unrepentant smile on her face. Her whole body seemed to sing with the memory of Sara’s touch.

She hummed approvingly a moment later as the memory was replaced with the reality as Sara pressed up against her from behind, wrapping her arms around Kara’s waist and kissing her on the neck.

“All this, and you make breakfast, too,” Sara said.

Kara turned her head to the side, and kissed Sara’s cheek. “/:zhao w rip/” she whispered.

“Ahbk ’aydaan,” Sara replied. “I don’t know why, but I do.”

Kara sat down the knife she was using to spread the icing and turned in Sara’s embrace so she could face her.

“Tell me,” she said.

“I remember things,” Sara said. “Things that never happened, bits and pieces of different timelines. I thought they were dreams, at first. Nyssa thought they were visions and prophesy. You were in a lot of them.”

Kara leaned forward, kissing Sara softly on the forehead. “Tran temporal memory,” she said. “You were always prone to it. Gideon thought it was a side effect of the Lazarus pit, but I was never sure.”

“You know about that?” Sara asked.

“I know a lot about you,” Kara said, then frowned slightly. “Well, I know a lot about my Sara.” She reached up, tucking a lock of hair behind Sara’s ear, then leaning in for a soft, chaste kiss. “I know you’re not her, but I still love you.” She rested her forehead against Sara’s. “I love every version of you.”

“Don’t be too sure of that,” Sara whispered. “I’ve seen versions of myself that terrify me.”
Kara laughed. “You think I haven’t? Sara, all those versions you see are potentials. Possibilities. Choices that you could have made and didn’t. I did. I made those choices. Out of grief, out of anger. You killed to survive, even when you were with the League, it was kill or be killed. I killed to give vent to my anger and rage. I chose to become a monster, because the monster hurt less. But I know you, Sara Lance, better than you know yourself. You were the best of us, our heart, and our light in the darkness. You were what kept me going when I had nothing else. You were my hope, Sara, and I will always love you for it.”

Sara reached up and wiped her eyes. “You’re gonna make a girl cry,” she said.

“We should eat,” Kara said.

“Why? You have somewhere to be?” Sara asked.

“One of the advantages of owning the company. No one can fire you for being late,” Kara said with a smug grin.

“And Supergirl? Does she have anywhere to be?”

“Supergirl saved a crosswalk school of first graders while I was out getting you Orange Cinnamon buns, so she’s good for a couple of hours.”

Sara went up on her toes, looking over Kara’s shoulders at the platter of Cinnamon buns.

“You got the Orange ones?” she asked, bouncing like an excited puppy.

“Hey, Sara Lance taught me how to treat a lady right,” Kara said.

“Well,” Sara said, “You were apparently a good student.” She leaned in and kissed Kara, and Kara couldn’t stop herself from getting lost in it, until Sara broke away, laughing as she danced out of reach, holding the platter of Cinnamon rolls.

Kara watched Sara take a bite out of one, smiling indulgently as Sara sauntered over to the table.

“I love these,” Sara said. “My dad almost never cooked, but every Saturday he’d get up early and make them for me and my sister.”

The smile dropped off Kara’s face at the subtle reminder that this wasn’t her Sara. Her Sara had told her that story the morning after Quentin died, and Kara had turned Orange Cinnamon buns into a Saturday ritual aboard the Waverider, a silent memorial to Sara’s father.

She forced the smile back on her face as Sara turned around.

“You just going to stand there and watch?” Sara asked in a teasing tone.

“Just admiring the view,” Kara said as she started towards the table. Sara hopped up on the table, smiling as she picked up a second bun off the tray and held it out. Instead of taking it, Kara stepped between Sara’s legs and leaned down, taking a bite as her fingers trailed up the insides of Sara’s thighs.

Neither of them heard the key in the door.

“Alex, this is a bad idea,” Maggie said.

“She’s not answering her phone,” Alex said as she pulled open the door to Kara's building.
“Because it’s in her purse, which is in your hand,” Maggie pointed out far too reasonably.

Alex let out an annoyed huff. “Kolex could still put the call through,” she said.

“I’m just saying, she might want her privacy right now,” Maggie said as they stepped into the elevator.

“And something might be wrong,” Alex replied.

“Alex-“

“She’s late to work, Maggie. Kara is never late to work.”

“If I took home a girl who looked like that after not getting laid for a year, I might be a lot more than *late*,” Maggie muttered.

Alex glared at her for a moment, partly because she knew Maggie might be right. The way Kara talked about Sara, if the girl in the bar really was her, they might very well still be in the middle of a very happy reunion. The problem was, Alex’s brain insisted on asking questions like ‘if Sara survived, why didn’t she seek Kara out?’.

None of the answers Alex could come up with ended with anything other than her sister in tears.

Alex knew, on an intellectual level that Kara was probably better suited to handle whatever emotional backlash was coming, but Alex never listened to her rational brain where Kara was concerned, and the memory of yesterday’s flashback was still too fresh.

“I know you’re still upset about her ditching us,” Maggie said.

“I’m not upset,” Alex said.

Jealous, furious, hurt, shocked and more than a little scared, but not upset.

“You don’t have to be here,” Alex said.

“Do you want me here?” Maggie asked.

“Yes,” Alex said.

“Then I’m not going anywhere,” Maggie said.

Alex smiled and reached out, taking Maggie’s hand. Maggie smiled and rose up on her toes, pressing a light kiss to Alex’s lips.

The elevator opened, wiping the slightly dopey smile from both their faces, and Alex led them down the hall. She let go of Maggie’s hand as she dug Kara’s keys out of the purse she’d left on the table the night before. She slipped the key in the door and gave it a turn, then threw the door open.

What she saw inside was something no older sister should ever have to see. Her little sister was standing next to the table, eating a cinnamon bun out of the hand of the girl from the previous night. That, in and of itself, wouldn’t have been so bad, except the girl was dressed in nothing but one of Kara’s sleep shirts, and Kara’s hand was between her legs, under the hem of the shirt, and from the way she had her eyes squeezed shut, her head thrown back, and her mouth open, the hand wasn’t idle.

She wasn’t sure which was worse, the fact that she’d just walked in on Kara having sex, or that there
was food involved.

Of course there was food involved. It was Kara.

“Ahem,” Maggie said.

Kara jumped back, somehow managing to catch the cinnamon bun the girl dropped, thankfully with the hand that hadn’t been occupied between her legs. The girl on the table brought her legs together, crossing them to give herself a bit of modesty, at least, and gave Alex the most annoyed look she’d ever seen.

“Please don’t tell me you have a girlfriend,” the girl said.

“Sister,” Kara squeaked.

“Name?” the girl prompted.

“Alex,” Kara said. “The short one is Maggie.”

“Hey!” Maggie said, a little indignant.

“Nice to meet you, Alex and Maggie. I’m Sara,” the girl said before she took a bite out of the cinnamon bun that she hadn’t been feeding Kara, chewing slowly and giving Alex a look like she was trying to decide the best way to kill her.

Kara stared at Alex for a good thirty seconds before she stuffed the rest of the cinnamon bun into her mouth, then walked over to the sink and washed her hands. Once they were dry, she walked over to the clothing rack that served as a closet and pulled two robes off hangers. She handed one to Sara before she pulled the other one on and tied it.

“Would you two either come in or leave already,” Kara said. “I don’t particularly want the little old lady across the hall to know all the details of my sex life.”

“Kara, honey, the way you scream, I’m pretty sure the whole building knows you got lucky last night,” Sara said.

Kara turned to glare at Sara, who just smiled as she licked frosting off her fingers, which sent Kara’s sex-addled mind places it really wanted to go, but not with her sister in the apartment.

Maggie, thankfully, put a hand in the middle of Alex’s back and pushed her the rest of the way into the apartment, then closed the door.

“Why did you let her come here this morning?” Kara growled at Maggie.

“How was I going to stop her?” Maggie asked.

“After last night, I can recommend about ten different ways if she’s anything like her sister,” Sara said.

Kara snorted. Maggie laughed. Alex turned beet red.

“You’re terrible,” Kara said, leaning over to kiss Sara on the cheek.

“You’re Sara Lance?” Alex asked.
“Yes,” Sara said. “I’d say the one and only, but that gets a bit tricky with time travel and universe hopping.”

“I don’t… Kara, can I have a word?” Alex said.

Kara had to work not to roll her eyes. “She’s not my Sara,” she said. “She’s from….” Kara turned to Sara. “I actually can’t figure out where in the timeline you’re from. I saw Snart with you, so before you guys killed Vandal Savage—”

“No, we killed Savage. Three times, in fact.” She held up her wrist. “Your little gifts saved Snart’s life. And Laurel’s. I didn’t thank you for that.”

Kara smiled. “Don’t mention it,” she said. “Have you been to New York in 1942 yet?”

“No,” Sara said, “We’d actually just left France in 1637.”

“Oh. Right. The queen,” Kara said, jealousy practically dripping from her voice.

“You know about that?” Sara asked, her face turning a little red.

“I also know about your thing for cheerleaders,” Kara shot back.

“Oh god,” Sara said, reaching up to cover her face with both hands.

“Kara!” Alex snapped.

“Fine,” Kara said.

There wasn’t really anywhere in the apartment that counted as private, but Kara had used a burst of super-speed to make the small nook just off the area where her bed was sister-safe before she led Alex over to it.

“What?” Kara asked.

“What? That’s the best you can do?” Alex said. “Kara, you walked out on us last night. No explanation, no warning. You see this girl, and the next thing anyone knows, you’re kissing her in the middle of a crowded club and ditching us.”

Kara winced. “Right. I need to call everyone and apologize,” she said.

“Yeah,” Alex said. “That would be a start. But what the hell are you doing?”

“Um, I don’t think you want me to explain it, but I’m sure once you’re ready, Maggie will give you a demonstration.”

“That’s not what I meant,” Alex hissed. “That woman isn’t your girlfriend.”

“Alex, I know that,” Kara said. “I knew it last night, and I still know it this morning.”

“Do you?” Alex asked. “I mean, Maggie and I have only been together a few days, but if something happened to her, I’d be devastated. I can’t imagine what that would be like after you’ve been together six years. And then, you just run into a younger version of her.”

“Yeah,” Kara said, “that’s right. You can’t imagine what it’s like.”
“Kara-” Alex started to say.

“No,” Kara said. “Look, Alex, I will apologize to everyone for being rude and leaving without saying goodbye, but I’m not going to apologize for what I did. I know that’s not my Sara, but it *is* Sara. And yeah, I get that she’s going to have to leave, and I get that when she does, it’s going to be like a knife in the gut. Again. Because my Sara, the woman I lived with day in and day out for years, the woman who kept me going when I didn’t think I could survive another day, the woman who picked me up when all I wanted to do is die, the woman I wanted to marry, she’s gone, and she’s never coming back. But there’s a piece of her out there, and if I took a night and found comfort in that, don’t I deserve it?

“The weight I’m carrying, the responsibility, the fate of fifty-three universes in this multiverse alone, the fate of all the multiverses beyond, that’s on me. I’m the one who has to defeat Cadmus, and the Guardians, and I’m the one who has to go to Apokolips. I’m the one who has to defeat Darkseid. And let’s say I do it? That we find Jeremiah, and that I get the proof I need to bring Maxwell Lord, Lillian Luthor, Sam Lane, and Simon Tycho to justice? And without the threat of the third army, I manage to convince the Green Lanterns to turn on their masters, and then, I do it. I lead a coalition from the Lantern Corps, and from Earth One, and all the other worlds in the Multiverse, and we go to Apokolips and we defeat Darkseid. Let’s say I do all of that.

“What happens next? You think I just come back here and take Vicki’s offer to be a reporter? Or maybe I can spend the rest of my life doing what Kal does, getting kittens out of trees.

“That’s not going to happen, Alex. Captain America doesn’t get to go dancing with Peggy, Frodo doesn’t get to live happily ever after in the Shire, Dorothy doesn’t get to stay in Kansas, Commander Shepard doesn’t get her little blue babies, and Kara Danvers never, ever gets a normal life. Even if I survive what’s coming, when it’s all over, I still have to come back here and be a champion for alien rights. I have to rebuild Krypton, to turn the culture into something functional instead of the degenerate mess it was. I have to repopulate the species and find them a new planet.

“How do you think is going to share that with me? That kind of weight, that kind of responsibility. Who would choose to take that on with me, when I can’t even offer them the comfort of growing old together? Because, that’s the thing, Alex. If I do everything I came back to do, if I succeed in every way, my reward is that I get to watch everything and everyone I love wither and die. I get to lose everything, again.”

“Now, tell me again how wrong I was to take one night for myself. To grab at the chance to lose myself in a memory and be happy for just a few hours. Tell me, Alex. Was I selfish? Was I irresponsible? Go on, tell me. I’ll wait.”

Alex had no answer.

“So,” Maggie said as she sat down at the table, “this is awkward.”

“Which part?” Sara asked. “The bit where you walked in on your girlfriend’s little sister fingerbanging me on the dinner table, or the part where I have to pretend I’m not seriously contemplating murdering you for not taking another five minutes to get here.”

“I meant the part where I watched my best friend pick you up in a bar last night, only it turns out you’re a younger version of her first girlfriend, and I probably know more about your future than you do,” Maggie said, “but also the part where I’m a cop, and you’re a former assassin and I have to sit here and not arrest you.”
“Yep,” Sara said, nodding her head. “Those are all awkward.”

“So, how much did Kara tell you last night?” Maggie asked.

“There wasn’t a lot of talking,” Sara said.

“I didn’t really think there was,” Maggie said, “but you never know with Kara.”

“How much do you know?” Sara asked.

“That you’re a time traveler on a ship called the Waverider,” Maggie said.

“Yep,” Sara said. “What’s Kara’s deal?”

“You don’t know?” Maggie asked.

“Not really,” Sara said. “Time travel does funny things to some people. Gideon and Kara call it Transtemporal memory. I remember the future, alternate timelines. Not a lot of detail, and what I do remember has more holes than Swiss cheese. Bits and pieces that come and go. I look at Kara. I don’t have any idea how we met, but I’ve been dreaming of her for years. Then, a few days ago, something happened, and it was like a dam breaking. For a moment, I remembered everything. Not just one future and one past, but all of them. Every version of myself in every universe in this multiverse. Once it was over, I started to remember Kara so vividly it was like I was living moments we spent together again. I can speak her language as long as I don’t think about it. I remember loving her. I remember what it feels like to love her. Sometimes, it’s not a memory. When I looked up in that club last night and saw her face, I was in love with her in that moment as I was the day I died on Apokolips.”

Sara stopped, and looked down at her hands. “I died. I remember that. I remember burning. I don’t know what the plan was, I know it didn’t work, but I know I hurt them.”

“You hurt them?” Maggie asked.

Sara nodded. “I don’t know how, but I did.”

“Kara,” Maggie called out. “Kara, I need you out here.”

Kara and Alex came around the corner, and Kara was fuming. Maggie hadn’t seen her mad a lot in the six months they’d known each other, but she had seen it enough to know that Kara looked ready to snap.

“What is it?” Kara asked.

Maggie looked at Sara. “Can you tell her what you just told me?”

“Yeah,” Sara said. “I was on Apokolips and-”

A knock at the door cut Sara off.

“You expecting company?” Alex asked.

“No,” Kara said as she squinted at the door for a moment.

“/.:zhaolium im zhaoghao/” Kara spat. She disappeared for a second, superspeed an obvious factor, and when she reappeared, she was dressed in a pair of flats, and a black suit with a white button-down shirt, and she marched towards the door like she intended to throw whoever was on the other
They side of it into orbit.

“Tell me again, what part of ‘stay on the ship’ the five of you had trouble with last night?” Rip asked as the three of them began to climb the fourth flight of stairs.

“The part involving staying on the ship,” Mick answered. “We were bored and wanted something to do.”

“Oh, well, if you were bored, I suppose it’s perfectly fine that you might have destroyed the timeline then,” Rip said.

“The timeline was already messed up when we got here,” Snart said, “and if you’d listened to me in the first place, we might be a lot closer to fixing it then we are.”

“And what you fail to understand, Mr. Snart,” Rip said as he opened the door leading from the stairwell to the fourth floor, “is that dealing with Kara Zor-El is dangerous. She’s young, impulsive, reckless, and prone to tantrum, but she has the power of a literal god. She can burn a man to ash just by looking at him, freeze him solid with a puff of her breath, see through walls, lift mountains, hear a heartbeat a continent away, and is immune to most weapons. That’s why I wanted to avoid her, and why I insisted on waiting for the Kryptonite to confront her. And that doesn’t even get into how much damage Sara could do wandering around with random chunks of her own future floating around in her head.”

He stopped in front of the door to Kara’s apartment, and knocked. Hopefully, this was early enough in Kara’s personal timeline that whatever it was that made her hate him so much hadn’t happened yet, and this would be a relatively peaceful encounter, but given that her timeline had been somehow altered, he wasn’t about to count on that.

Kara marched towards the door with her emotions swirling inside her. She dreaded the moment Sara would have to leave, was angry at Alex and Maggie for taking away what precious little time she actually had with her, was a little pissed at Alex’s attitude, and now, Rip Fucking Hunter was standing outside her door.

At least she’d get to let off a little steam.

She jerked open the door, drew her arm back, and punched Rip right in the nose. The sound of bone breaking brought a smile to her face as she watched him stagger back across the hall. The sound of his skull smacking into the wall was almost as satisfying.

“Mick, good to see you again, even though I’m pretty sure you haven’t met me yet. Snart, nice to meet you. Rip, please crawl in a hole and die,” Kara said.

“Why do you always do that?” Rip asked as he pulled out a handkerchief to staunch the flow of blood from his nose.

“Because you always deserve it,” Kara said. “Just like the last fifty times I’ve done it. Now get in here, before one of my neighbors sees you.”

She stepped back, letting Mick, Snart and Rip into the apartment, then closed the door.

“Mick Rory, Leonard Snart, Rip Hunter, meet Special Agents Alex Danvers and Maggie Sawyer of the Department of Extranormal Operations. Alex, Maggie, the beefy bald guy with the burns on his arms and neck is pyromaniac, serial arsonist, thief, and occasional murderer Mick Rory, also known
as Heatwave. The slightly smaller bald guy wearing a parka and snow goggles in National City is noted master thief Leonard Snart, also known as Captain Cold. The arrogant, self-important, egotistical, incompetent, hypocritical, back-stabbing, serial traitor and all-around bastard with the low rent British accent who’s bleeding all over himself is Rip Hunter.”

“Well,” Sara said, “I see you’ve met Rip before.”

“Yes, I have,” Kara said. “I’m just hoping it’s early enough in the timeline that you can’t think of a single good reason I shouldn’t throw him into orbit, because it’s been a really rough week for me, and it would cheer me up immensely if you didn’t talk me out of it this time.”

“I’d pay good money to see that,” Mick said.

“What could I possibly have done this early in the timeline to make you hate me?” Rip asked.

Kara looked over at him and said two words. “Earth Zero.”

Rip took a step back as his hand dropped to his sidearm almost by reflex.

“How do you know about that?” Rip said.

“Trade you,” Kara said. “Why are you here?”

“There was a time quake in our universe,” Sara said. “Gideon traced the origins to Earth Thirty-Eight. This past Sunday.”

“That tracks,” Kara said. “I went to Earth One Sunday night.”

“How?” Rip asked. “You shouldn’t even know Earth One exists for another few months.”

“The same way I recognized Sara last night,” Kara said. “The same way I know about Earth Zero.”

“You’re the aberration,” Rip said.

“Yes. Twelve years of Transtemporal memories, right here,” Kara said, tapping her temple. “And you’re going to walk away from this one. You’re not going to try putting things back.”

“And why would I do that?” Rip asked.

“Because that’s what you do, Rip,” Kara said. “You talk a good game about protecting the timeline, right up until the moment when the timeline inconveniences you, and then you say ‘Fuck the rules, I’m Rip Hunter. I’m going to go save my family!’.” She took a step towards him, and Rip stepped back, tightening his grip on his pistol.

“My, she’s got you pegged perfectly,” Snart said.

Kara’s eyes dropped down to the weapon he was gripping so tightly, then went back up to his face. “Did you bring a Kryptonite pistol into my home?” she practically snarled.

“Kara,” Alex said, “You need to calm down.”

Kara turned around, glaring at Alex. “Do I? Do I really? Look at what the calm approach got me. Cadmus has tried to murder me twice, they’ve tried to murder three of my friends. People who are supposed to be my friends and family don’t trust me and keep plotting behind my back. My sister and the closest thing I have left to a father jumped me with a Kryptonite trap. My own cousin tried to strip me of my House. One of my best friends hates me because Cadmus tried to murder her. The
Mayor is plotting with Lillian Luthor to turn the city, and probably the whole country, against me and the other aliens. The Police Commissioner and the Captain of the NCPD Science Division tried to help Lillian Luthor frame me for murder. Cat’s pissed off because I’m trying to protect her. Half the fucking planet can’t go five minutes without calling me a dyke whore on twitter. I can’t even take a girl home for the night without getting cock blocked by my own sister the next morning so she can serve me a steaming pile of judgmental bullshit, and you keep looking at me like any minute I’m going to wave a magic wand, make Jeremiah appear out of thin air, and whisper some magic words so he wasn’t gone for ten years, but I don’t know what the fuck I’m doing. Everything is different, and I’m afraid people are going to start dying and I don’t know how to protect them, and I… I can’t…”

“Kara?” someone said.

“She’s having panic attack.”

“Do something.”

“Maggie, her weighted blanket is in the closet.”

"/.nahn ukep , eh ,kahrah, .nahn rrip w voi/

“Kun fi salam ya habybi. 'Ana huna. 'Ant amin.”

"/.nahn rrip w voi/

“'Ant amin.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

.:zhao w rrip
I love you

.:zhao lium im zho gha o
Literally: It fucker
Semantic: Motherfucker

/.nahn ukep , eh ,kahrah, .nahn rrip w voi
I am here, Kara. You are safe.

.nahn rrip w voi
You are safe.

Translated from the Arabic:

Kun fi salam ya habybi. 'Ana huna. 'Ant amin.
Be at peace, my love. I'm here. You're safe.

'Ant amin.
You’re safe.
Mothers and Fathers

Chapter Summary

Katherine Grant arrives for a visit, J'onn finds out that Kara's having flashbacks and panic attacks, Kara figured out why they can't find Jeremiah, and General Lane pays the DEO a visit.

Chapter Notes

Here's an extra chapter for Christmas. Merry Christmas to those of you who Celebrate. I hope everyone has a good day, and for those of you who have to deal with crappy family situations, I'm sorry. Just know that you're not alone, and there are people out here who care.

Also, for those of you who enjoy SuperCanary, my Super Santa Femslash 2018 story, "A Shoulder to Lean" on is now live. It is 25,000 words of SuperCanary gooey, fluffy goodness, with very little in the way of plot, and a whole lot in the way of happy, happy SuperCanary feels, and a small bit of Sanvers, some Alex & Kara sister time, some Danvers Family time, and a bit of Cat and even some Lena thrown in for good measure.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“All these televisions. How can you possibly get any work done with so much visual noise assaulting you?” Katherine asked.

“That visual noise is my work, Mother,” Cat said as she walked over to her desk.

“That’s right, my daughter. What is it they call you again? The Proletariat Princess.”

“The Queen of all Media,” Cat said as she sat down. “Tell me, what brings you to National City?”


“Well, good for Paget Willoughby,” Cat said. “Will you have time to see Carter while you’re in town?”

“I don’t think so,” Katherine said. “Did he get the savings bond I sent him for his birthday?”

“Oh, yes,” Cat said. “He was so excited he showed it to all his friends.”

“Supergirl? Shouldn’t she be called Superwoman?”

“She likes the name,” Cat said.

“Really?” Katherine asked. “So interesting, isn’t it? A woman hero. I can’t help but feeling safer in Metropolis.”
“Then you haven’t been paying attention,” Cat said.

“What?” Katherine asked, taken aback by her tone.

“Supergirl is ten times the hero Superman ever was. All that brute from Metropolis does is fly around and punch anyone who doesn’t look like the cast of a generic eighties sitcom. Supergirl is changing the world. She’s prevented more fights than she’s been in. The fights she does get into, she ends quickly and decisively, and usually without millions of dollars in property damage. She’s sharing her homeworld’s science and technology with us. The woman cured cancer, mother. That alone will save more lives than Superman. So, go ahead, feel safer in Metropolis, with its second-string hero.”

“Well, she’s certainly made the impression,” Katherine said.

“Yes, she has,” Cat said.

“Still…”

“What, mother?” Cat asked.

“Well, she very nearly cost you your job, from what I heard,” Katherine said.

“And yet, here I sit, less than a week later, about to absorb two of my largest competitors,” Cat replied.

“After your company was bought out from under you by your own secretary,” Katherine replied.

“‘Bought out from under me,’ implies that I didn’t know exactly what Kara was doing,” Cat said. “The fact of the matter is, the board tried to force me out, and Kara provided me with the leverage I needed to force them out instead. That’s how business works, Mother. Partnerships, strategic alliances. By Monday, I will hold a thirty percent stake in the most valuable company on the planet. One which happens to own the publishing house you work for, as it happens.”

Cat leaned back in her chair, smiling. “Who ever thought we’d see the day when *I* am your boss?”

“Well,” Katherine said, “as long as you leave everyone in place, I’m sure you won’t do too much damage to the House.”

“I don’t know. I’ve been contemplating a few changes to the editorial staff,” Cat said casually. Katherine flinched at the statement, and Cat felt a touch of guilt, but it was more than offset by the satisfaction that accompanied it.

“What time is your book signing, Mother? I want to make sure my assistant has a car arranged,” Cat said, cutting her mother off before she could say anything more about the publishing house she worked for.

“Agent Danvers, would you mind telling me who these people are, and what the hell happened?” J’onn asked.

They were standing near the door of Kara’s apartment. Rip, Snart, and Mick were standing in the kitchen area. Kara was sitting on the couch, covered in a weighted blanket, wearing her glasses. Sara sat with her, holding her, whispering to her in /kryptahniuo/ and Arabic while Maggie sat on the coffee table in front of her, holding her hand. Alex took a quick look over at Kara to make sure she was stable for the moment before she started explaining.
“Kara had a flashback yesterday-”

“And you’re just telling me this now?” J’onn asked.

“She’s had them before,” Alex said. “A lot, when she first landed. Less as time went by. The last one was about two years ago. She said the one yesterday was triggered by seeing Lillian Luthor when she visited the Mayor’s office, but if that’s what triggered it, she still managed to get through the meeting with the Mayor and get back to CatCo before she had a problem.”

“Except for the part where she could have brought the building down in the middle of a flashback,” J’onn said.

“She’s never violent, sir,” Alex said.

“She was never violent before,” J’onn said. “But the Kara you knew hadn’t fought in at least two wars.”

“Point taken,” Alex said. “She came out of it after about twenty minutes. Again, not unusual for her. She wanted a game night. I don’t think she wanted to be alone. Maggie informed her that Lucy had broken up with James, so Kara insisted on a night out. She decided she wanted to go to a club called the Basement. We got there and had just sat down when Kara saw her.” She pointed at Sara. “Kara got up, approached her, and they immediately left the club together.”

“And you didn’t think to tell me this why?” J’onn asked.

“I really didn’t think my sister’s booty call was any of your business, sir,” Alex said.

“Agent Danvers, when a woman who’s the only thing standing between this planet and the end of the world begins behaving erratically, everything she does is my business.”

Alex glanced over at her sister, then looked back to J’onn. “I would have told you, if the waitress hadn’t given us the woman’s name.”

“Sara Lance,” J’onn said.

“I kind of hate that you can read minds. You get that, right?”

“I didn’t have to read your mind,” J’onn said. “This Earth has a Sara Lance too. When we learned the truth, I looked her up. The woman sitting on the couch is older than in the picture I found, but not so much that she’s unrecognizable.”

“Okay, that makes sense, and I wish I’d thought of it,” Alex said. “When I realized who it was, I decided to give Kara a bit of space, but she didn’t turn up at work this morning. The only thing anyone had heard from her was Supergirl stopping a couple of cars from plowing through a crosswalk. Winn called me and asked if I heard from her, because Konex wouldn’t put his calls through. At that point, I got worried. I grabbed Maggie and headed over here to check on her. Sara was still here. Kara and I got into a bit of an argument-”

“What about?” J’onn asked, concern in his voice.

“I just wanted to make sure she wasn’t setting herself up to get hurt. I mean, that’s a Sara Lance, but it’s not Kara’s Sara Lance.”

“She’s from earlier in the timeline?” J’onn asked.
“Near as I can guess, about nine months in our relative future,” Alex said. “Anyway, things got a little heated, which is when Rip showed up. Kara punched him the face the minute she opened the door. Said he deserved it for something he did on Earth Zero. He knew exactly what she was talking about, too. He asked her how she knew about that. She said she’d tell him if he told her what they were doing on our Earth. Sara said there was a time quake in their universe, and they tracked the cause here. Kara told them about our trip to Earth One, and then she and Rip started yelling at each other, and her eyes started to flare, like heat vision flare. I told her to calm down, and she lost it. I mean, I think she was crying, but I couldn’t tell because her eyes were still glowing, but she just went off about everything. You and I using Kryptonite on her, Cadmus trying to kill her, Cadmus trying to kill Maggie, Leslie and M’gann. Kal claiming House El, the duel, people insulting her sexuality on twitter, the cops trying to frame her for Leslie’s murder, the Mayor working with Lillian Luthor to turn public opinion against aliens, and finding Jeremiah, and somewhere along the line, it turned into a panic attack. She started having a hard time breathing, starting curling in on herself and physically withdrawing, started disassociating.

“At that point, I had Maggie get her weighted blanket, I started talking her through her breathing exercises, and asked Konex to call you and let you know we need you here.”

“What’s your assessment of her mental state?” J’onn said.

“I’m not a psychiatrist,” Alex said. “But she’s exhibiting pretty classic symptoms of PTSD. Guilt, bursts of anger and irritability, mood swings, detachment from friends and family, hopelessness, flashbacks. Panic attacks aren’t directly associated with PTSD, but there’s a high comorbidity. Frankly, sir, she’s cracking under the pressure. She’s been through hell. She watched her planet die, she watched all of us die, she spent years fighting a hopeless war against an unbeatable enemy, then when she lost, she signed up to come back and do it all again. I think what you and I did to her made the first real crack, but Cadmus has been hammering on her for days, and what Bruce and Clark did didn’t help. Her emotional reserves are gone. She’s running on vapors.”

“What’s your recommendation?” J’onn asked.

“If she were an agent? Bench her. Permanently. Start with a twelve-week psych leave. If she’s able to drive a desk at that point, we could bring her back in that kind of role. Mandatory therapy daily for at least six months to a year, then reassess.”

“But she’s not an agent,” J’onn said.

“No,” Alex said, “she’s not.”

“And we don’t have that kind of time,” J’onn said.

“Maybe we do,” Alex said.

“What do you mean?” J’onn said.

“What if we get Kolex to fab us a copy of the Sanctuary Sunstone,” Alex said. “We find a psychiatrist, a military psychiatrist that we can trust. Then Maggie and I take Kara on the Waverider, and we get them to drop us off somewhere remote, say, a year ago, and we just wait it out. Kara works with the therapist every day, up until we get back to the day we leave. That gives Maggie and I a year to get up to speed on using the suits Kara made us, and it gives her time to rest and get some emotional distance from all of this. And the best part is, no one would have to know we’re gone. To the outside world, Kara just had a bad couple of days, and got over it.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” J’onn said. “Do you think Captain Hunter would cooperate?”
“I don’t know,” Alex said. “But if Kara asked her, I know Sara would.”

“No,” Kara’s voice came from across the room.

Alex and J’onn both turned towards her.

“Kara,” Alex said.

“No,” Kara said again as she stood up, shrugging off Sara’s hold and letting the weighted blanket fall to the ground. She turned and leaned down, kissing Sara lightly on the lips, before straightening up again.

“Thank you,” she said. “For last night.”

Sara nodded.

Kara turned to Rip. “I have a mission for the Legends,” Kara said.

“Oh, really,” Rip said. “And what makes you think we’re going to accept a mission from you?”

“Because if you don’t, I’ll take the jump ship and do it without you,” Sara said.

Rip turned to look at Sara. “Ms. Lance, might I remind you that we’re here to fix a time aberration, not create one.”

Sara stood up and walked over to the kitchen, stopping in front of Rip. “Might I remind you that we spent months trying to create a time aberration to save your family?” Sara asked.

“That’s-“

“Different?” Sara asked, a dangerous edge in her voice. “I don’t care how you justify it to yourself, Rip, but if Kara needs our help, we’re giving it to her.”

“You haven’t known her a day,” Rip said. “Why-“

“She’s the woman I’ve been seeing in my head,” Sara said. “Hair’s a little different.” She turned to Kara. “I like it longer, by the way.”

Kara shrugged. “I’m not really feeling the butch cut myself,” she said.

Sara turned back to Rip. “You said it yourself. I’m remembering the future. I don’t remember a lot of details, but I do know that I trust her, and I know that if she wants our help, we’re going to give it to her.”

“There’s also the fact that you owe me for what you did on Earth Zero,” Kara said.

“I was following orders,” Rip said.

“Look into my eyes and ask me if I care. That boy died screaming because of what you did. I know, because I’ve seen the tapes. I saw every horrible thing they did to him, and I have to live with those images for the rest of my life, just like I have to live with knowing all the horrible things the Monarch did. So, you owe me, Rip Hunter, and today’s the day I collect the debt.”

“What do you want?” Rip asked.

Konex decloaked and floated down from its corner. “Yes, lady Kara?”

“Put me through to Bruce,” Kara said.

“Yes, lady Kara,” Konex said.

“Hey, Kara,” Bruce said. “I’ve been trying to get a hold of you all morning.”

“Sorry,” Kara said. “I had company.”

“I see,” Bruce said.

“What did you find?” Kara asked.

“All sites were negative for the target,” Bruce said. “We managed to do data pulls on all local systems, and Victor has run through the records, but I he didn’t find anything that would give us a clue as to where Jeremiah might be.”

“Were there any prisoners on site?” Kara said.

“No,” Bruce said. “Although that looked very recent. There were holding cells at all locations, and separate non-perishable food supplies that looked like they were intended for prisoners.”

“Thanks, Bruce,” Kara said. “I’ll give you a full briefing later but won’t be needing any further assistance with the Jeremiah situation.”

“Are you sure?” Bruce asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “The company I had gave me the last piece of the puzzle I needed. I know exactly where Jeremiah is, but I’ll need a specialty team to handle the extraction. Thank you for the help.”

“Okay,” Bruce said, “but I will expect that briefing soon.”

“Later today, I promise. I’ll call myself or pass it off to Adult Supervision.”

“Understood. Take care of yourself, and good luck,” Bruce said.

“Konex, end call and put me through to Nimda” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady Kara?” Nimda asked.

“Nimda, is the timeline comparison completed?” Kara asked.


“Thank you, Nimda. That’s all for now,” Kara said.

Alex stared at Kara, not knowing how to interpret the smile on Kara’s face.

“Do you get it yet?” Kara asked.

Alex shook her head.

“Jeremiah,” Kara said. “I couldn’t figure it out. I gave Clark what I had on Cadmus, every facility that should be in use at this point in the timeline, but none of it checked out. We put together Nimda, and she should have come up with a location for Jeremiah inside of a few hours, but all she could
Something happened to change the timeline. I thought it was something to do with the stock purchases. But then, I heard you talking about it, and I remembered what I said about whispering some magic words and making him never have been gone.” Kara looked at J’onn. “I need the date, the time, and the location where Jeremiah of the clearing where Jeremiah was stabbed.”

“August 12th, 2005. Around 10:30 PM. If you have a map, I can give you the coordinates,” J’onn said.

“Jeremiah was stabbed two days before the earliest detectable deviation in this version of the timeline,” Kara said. “What if all the subtle changes I’ve been noticing in the timeline are because Cadmus never captured Jeremiah?”

“Kara, what are you saying?” Alex asked.

“I’m saying I know the magic words to bring you father home, and make it so no time has passed,” Kara said. “At least, no time for him.” She turned to J’onn. “Give those coordinates to Rip. The Legends are going to bring Jeremiah home.”

“Really?” Alex asked.


“Why not?” Rip asked, sarcasm dripping from his voice. “The more the merrier.”

Kara turned to Maggie. “Mags, you want to meet your girlfriend’s dad?”

“Sounds like fun,” Maggie said, her eyes getting wide.

Lucy threw the last file on the ‘time served’ pile as she’d come to think of it and wished Maggie would show the hell up. It wasn’t that she needed the help. It’s just that the work went faster when she had someone to bitch too about how fucked up the DEO’s records and methodology was.

Of the two hundred and fourteen aliens currently in DEO custody, she expected to release, at present count, one hundred and seventy-four. That left exactly forty that she had to build a case against. Forty that she had to make sure went to jail for the rest of their lives, because they were just too insanely dangerous to let out on the street.

And she had to do it with the evidence the DEO, who had never met a law or rule they wouldn’t break in pursuit of an alien, had collected. It was going to suck so hard.

She reached out and picked up her coffee, taking a sip of the tepid liquid as she tried not to think about other things that sucked, like watching Kara walk out of the bar last night with that blonde. She knew she’d gotten to like Kara over the last few weeks, but she hadn’t realized that somehow, all the shy smiles, charm, over-the-top flirting, and genuine care for her that Kara had exhibited had gotten under her skin somehow. Of course, it probably didn’t hurt that Kara was beautiful, and that Kara was on some kind of crusade to save the world. The whole thing was ridiculous. She’d come out to National City to see if she and James could work things out, and instead, she’d kicked James to the curb again, and fallen in love with a God-damned Superhero.

Well, fallen in love was a bit strong, but she’d apparently been nursing a hell of a crush.

She’d been angrier with Kara than she’d ever been with James, right up until the waitress had told them the blonde’s name. As soon as Lucy knew who the woman was, the anger had evaporated.
How could you be mad at someone when the love of their life just ended up sitting across from them in a skeevy bar.

Maybe it was the romantic in Lucy. The one that read romance novels in the precious few moments she could find between legal briefs. The one that thought she could have some sort of epic love affair with James. But that was the kind of thing you couldn’t ignore.

She actually felt a little guilty that she couldn’t quite bring herself to be happy for Kara, but she knew it was because she was feeling sorry for herself. Losing James was hard and seeing everyone else pairing off was rubbing salt in a wound that was still bleeding.

“Ma’am,” Susan said.

Lucy jumped a little in surprise at the unexpected voice but looked up to see Susan standing in the door with a frown on her face. “Yes?” she asked.

“I think you should come down to the command center,” Susan said. “General Lane is on his way up, and Director J’onzz isn’t back yet.

“Great,” Lucy said. “Just who I don’t want to see.”

“Sorry, ma’am,” Susan said.

“Not your fault, Susan,” Lucy said as she stood up. She headed for the door, dropping what was left of her coffee into the trash. She followed Susan down the stairs, arriving in the command center just as her father stepped off the elevator. She did her best not to roll his eyes as he marched across the room like it was a parade ground. He was wearing his Class A, and had Jim Harper with him, along with two soldiers she vaguely recognizes from her dad’s unit.

“General,” Lucy said.

“Major,” General Lane said.

“It’s Assistant Director now. AD if you’re in a hurry,” Lucy said. He looked like he’d just sucked on a lemon, but she ignored it. “What can I do for you?”

“I’m here to see Supergirl,” General Lane said.

“She’s not here,” Lucy said.

“Well call her in,” Harper said.

“She’s been off the grid most of the morning,” Lucy said.

“You don’t know where she is?” Harper asked.

“I didn’t say that,” Lucy said. “I know exactly where she is, but she hasn’t reported in this morning.”

“And you don’t see that as a problem?” Harper asked.

“No, I don’t,” Lucy said. “Supergirl works with this agency as necessary, but she’s not an agent. She doesn’t have the same reporting responsibilities as an agent. Plus, she’s still stood down from field duty.”

“That didn’t stop her from going out and trashing a couple of cars this morning,” Harper said.
“What assistance Supergirl provides to National City on her own time is her business. If she chooses to trash a couple of cars to keep those cars from plowing through a bunch of kids on their way to school, all the DEO can really do is cheer her on,” Lucy said. She turned back to her father. “I do have things that need my attention, General. Would you mind terribly getting to the point?”

“The point is, Assistant Director, I need to see Supergirl, and I need you to get her here, right now,” General Lane said.

Lucy turned to Susan. “Call Director J’onnz. Ask him if Supergirl is available.”

“Yes ma’am,” Susan said.

Thirty minutes later, Kara stepped out of her bathroom, dressed and ready for the day. Alex, Maggie and the Legends were already gone, getting ready for their little jaunt to the past. Kara has spent the time Sara had taken to shower answering all the emails that had piled up the night before, and taken a quick shower, which really left only one thing to do.

“You still here?” she asked J’onn.

“I am,” he said. “We need to talk.”

“I know,” she said as she sat down across the table from him.

“How long has it been going on?” J’onn asked.

“Which part? The bursts of temper, the flashbacks, the panic attacks, the depression?”

“All of it?” J’onn asked.

“Since I was thirteen,” Kara said. “I’m usually better at hiding it. After CatCo plaza though, I had a few episodes.”

“What did you do?” J’onn asked.

“I hid it,” Kara said with a shrug. “Alex wasn’t speaking to me. I’d killed her father, right in front of her. You couldn’t help. Your powers don’t work on me. If I went to the DEO psychologist, they’d ground me. So, I learned to box it away. I used Kryptonian war prayers to shut down my emotions during fights. Taught my body to wait until the adrenaline rush faded before it panicked.”

“And that worked?” J’onn asked.

“ Mostly,” Kara said. “I never panicked in a fight.”

“And you just went through the entire war like that?” J’onn asked.

“No,” Kara said. “One of the healers from New Genesis saw me after a fight. She pulled me aside. Used her mother box to help me.”

“So, what’s changed?” J’onn asked.

“I don’t know, J’onn. Maybe M’gann shook something loose when she sucked my brain out with a straw, put it in a blender with my younger self, then shot the results back in through my nose. Maybe the missile ripped off whatever bandaid the healer slapped over my mental problems. Or maybe I’ve just picked up a whole host of new trauma, like having to run myself through with a sword,” Kara said.
“Fair point,” J’onn said. “I know I’m responsible for some of that.”

“It’s forgiven,” Kara said.

“Maybe,” J’onn said. “But that doesn’t mean it’s not still hurting you.”

“The people you love are the ones with the most power to hurt you,” Kara said. “You, Alex, Kal. It’s done. It’s my fault as much as it is yours. Trust is a choice, and I didn’t make it. I should have. I should have told you everything that night on the roof. I didn’t and I’m sorry.”

“To be fair, I probably wouldn’t have reacted well to it,” J’onn said. “I’d known you a year, and you’d given me every reason to trust you, and I still didn’t believe you when you finally did tell me.”

“It’s done. If you really want to, we can go to the sparring room at the DEO and beat each other up about it.”

“Your sister would probably kill us both,” J’onn said.

“You’re not wrong,” Kara said, grinning.

“So, how do we deal with this?” J’onn said.

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “Alex’s idea about therapy isn’t a bad one.”

“The question is, where would be find a therapist for you?” J’onn asked.

“I know a pretty good one, actually,” Kara said.

“No,” J’onn said.

“She’s pretty good at keeping a secret,” Kara said.

“She’s insane,” J’onn said. “That’s not an exaggeration. She’s been declared mentally incompetent by no less than five courts.”

Kara shrugged. “She also threw Lobo through a brick wall once,” she said.

“No,” J’onn said.

“We’ll need someone who can be trusted,” Kara said. “That’s going to be the hard part.”

“Going through military channels is problematic. Too many people owe Lane favors.” J’onn said.

“There might also be some kind of duty to report,” Kara said. “Have to ask Lucy about that.”

“So, it needs to be a civilian,” J’onn said. “You may be on your own with that one.”

“I’ll ask Cat,” Kara said. “She can get me a recommendation, and the DEO and Nimda can vet them.”

“Are you sure you’ll be okay in the field?” he asked.

“I promise you,” Kara said. “I’ve never frozen during a fight.”

“Okay,” J’onn said. “I should-“

J’onn’s phone rang, cutting him off. He took it out and answered it.
“Director J’onzz,” he said.

“Sir,” Susan said, “sorry to bother you, but I have General Lane here. He’s insisting on seeing Supergirl.”

Kara’s eyebrows went up.

“Did he say why?” J’onn asked.

“No sir,” Susan replied.

J’onn looked up at her, and she shrugged.

“Tell him we’ll be there in a few minutes,” J’onn said.

Kara stood up and hit the activation key on her war suit, watching as it spread out, covering her clothes.

“You know, I’m not feeling the black today,” she said. She touched the surface of her right bracer, tracing out a glyph, and the suit shifted back to the color pattern of her original costume. “Better.”

“Let’s not keep the General waiting,” J’onn said.

Kara touched down just a moment before J’onn on the landing deck of the DEO, and spotted Lane and to her surprise, Jim Harper standing in the command center, looking impatient.

“Word of warning,” Kara said. “Harper, the guy standing next to Lane, he hates you. Probably me too.”

“You know him?”

“He’s the one that came to investigate the DEO after the Red K incident,” Kara said. “Hank Henshaw was his friend.”

“Terrific,” J’onn said.

“Let’s just get this over with. I have things to do today,” Kara said.

They started towards the command center, the doors opening for them automatically. Kara smiled as she approached.

“Hey, Lucy, hey Susan,” she said.

“Hey, Supergirl,” Lucy said.

“Ma’am,” Susan said.

Kara turned to Lane and Harper

“General, Colonel,” J’onn said. “What can I do for you today?”

“Not you,” Lane said. “Her.” Harper held out an envelope with a sheet of paper on top. “I have an order here transferring her to my command.”

“What?” Lucy asked.
“Easy, AD Lane. Who’s the order from?” J’onn asked as he took the order from Harper.

“The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs,” Lane said.

Kara laughed and shook her head. “Haven’t we been through this once before, General?” She reached over and took the order from J’onn, scanning it quickly. “You misspelled Krypton,” she said. “Twice. How do you misspell Krypton? It’s an element on the periodic table.” She looked up at Lane and tapped the order with her finger. “That’s just sloppy.” She glanced over at Lucy. “I bet *our* Lane never would have made a mistake like that.”

“Are you finished?” Harper asked, jerking the order out of Kara’s hand.

“Finished mocking your inability to spell my home planet’s name? Never,” Kara said. “Also, I don’t work for the DEO, so you can’t transfer me.”

“I believe you’ll find you’re wrong about what I can and can’t do,” General Lane said.

“General, I don’t think anyone who’s spent more than five minutes listening to you bluster would be the least bit surprised at the very long list of things you can’t do. Like manage a confirmed kill on an unarmored target with a wire-guided missile, an unobstructed view on a clear day and no cross wind,” Kara said, finishing with a little smile and a head title.

“What are you implying?” Harper said.

“Nothing,” Kara said. “I’m standing in front of a room full of people and straight-up telling them that I think Sam Lane was involved in both of the attempts on my life in the past week.”

“That’s slander and insubordination,” Harper said.

“It’s only slander if it’s not true,” Kara said. “And good luck charging a civilian with insubordination.” She turned back to Lane.

“What do you want me for, anyway?” she asked.

“We’ve been developing a new weapon,” Lane said.

“Oh, something else to try and kill me with?” Kara asked.

“Ms. Zor-El, do you think you’re clever?” Lane asked.

“Not especially,” Kara said. “I mean, I *was* a few weeks away from being the youngest member of the Kryptonian Science Guild in history, I do hold the equivalent of ten PhD’s with extensive Post-Doctoral Work in each, I can run equations for Newtonian mechanics in my head in the middle of combat so I don’t accidently apply too much force and punch someone’s heart out of the back of their chest, I speak every language on Earth that had been recorded prior to nineteen seventy-eight, I know the secret recipe for KFC’s fried chicken, original, and extra-crispy, and I know the address, GPS coordinates and hours of every lesbian bar, pizza joint and Chinese restaurant in five states, but no, I don’t think I’m all that clever.”

“And she has my phone number,” Lucy muttered.

Kara wasn’t sure if Lucy meant for her dad to hear it or not, but she smiled as Susan snorted and J’onn groaned.

“That too,” Kara said, flashing Lucy a smile.
Lane closed his eyes, and she could practically hear him counting to one hundred, and imagined it was perfectly in time with the vein throbbing in his forehead.

“Ms. Zor-El,” he finally ground out through clenched teeth, “we are developing an anti-insurgency device, codenamed RT. I need your help testing it.”

“What kind of device?” Kara asked. “Because I’m going to be really upset if it chucks rotten tomatoes at my new suit, and that’s the only thing I can think of with that codename.” She turned to Lucy. “It’s because I skipped breakfast,” she said. “I’ve only had my prebreakfast bagel, a dozen donuts and a cinnamon bun so far today.”

“That’s skipping breakfast?” Lucy asked.

“It is for her,” J’onn muttered.

“It’s a robot,” Lane snapped. “I need you to fight my damn robot.”

“Oh okay,” Kara said.

“That’s it?” Harper asked.

“Sounds like fun. I haven’t fought a robot in weeks, and if you want me to break a couple of billion dollars’ worth of army intelligence’s toys, I’m good with that, as long as you don’t bill me for damages.”

Lanestood there, glaring and grinding his teeth. “Tomorrow. Nine AM, the DEO missile test range.” He turned to Lucy. “Can I have a word with you?”

“I actually have a lot of work to do, General,” Lucy said.

“Lucy,” Kara said, drawing the eyes of everyone in the group, “take the time. You never know when it will be your last chance.”

Lucy gave Kara a slightly shocked look, but nodded, and turned back to her dad. “Come with me,” she said.

Lucy led her father up to the conference room where she was working, and took a seat, gesturing to the spot across from her where James had sat the day before. He didn’t sit down. Instead, he just closed the door, and launched into General Dad mode.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” he asked.

“I’m not sure what you mean, Dad,” Lucy said.

“I mean, taking a job working in this freak show,” he said.

“Funny,” Lucy said, “I remember you saying to mom, ‘When the President of the United States personally asks you to take a job, you don’t say no.’”

“That was different,” he said.

“Yeah, it was. You promised mom you’d retire, and you changed your mind when you got offered your first star. Me, I was looking to get out of uniform anyway.”

“Why?” he asked. “You had a good career ahead of you.”
“No, I didn’t,” Lucy said. “I had a career of working for angry old men, who have nothing better to do than beat their chests and bomb women and children. I put on that uniform so I could help people. I took it off for the same reason. I can do a lot more good here than I can prosecuting solders caught smoking a joint or sneaking off base to see their boyfriends.”

“They aren’t people, Lucy,” he said.

“That’s what you’re going with?” Lucy said. “Supergirl’s not perfect, but she’s a lot better person than most of the people I’ve served with.”

“Are you sleeping with her?” he asked.

“Are you fucking serious?” Lucy asked.

“I know you get ideas in your head sometimes,” he said.

“Oh, for the love of God, dad,” Lucy said. “Don’t ask, don’t tell ended four fucking years ago. Learn to say the fucking words. I’m bisexual. And no, I’m not sleeping with her. I *just* broke up with James.”

“Well, that’s good news, at least,” he said.

“God, you are a self-centered son of a bitch,” Lucy said.

“Now just a minute-”

“Were you involved with the attack on Supergirl?” Lucy asked.

“What?” he asked.

“It’s a simple question, Dad. Off the record, just between you and me, were you involved in the attack on Supergirl?” Lucy asked.

“She’s dangerous,” he said.

“So, that’s a yes,” Lucy said.

“I didn’t say that,” he replied.

“But you didn’t say no, either,” Lucy said. “If you weren’t involved, you would have said no.”

“Have you seen what the DEO keeps in that hole in the ground out in the desert? Monsters, abominations. Some have wings, some have horns, others spit acid. You know what the difference is between them and her?”

“I’m sure you’re going to tell me,” Lucy said.

“She’s a blonde,” he said.

“She’s a young woman,” Lucy said. “One who’s had to deal with more pain and loss than you can even begin to understand. One who’s sacrificed more than you are even capable of. One who has every reason to be angry and bitter, and instead choses to get up, to try to help, and give people hope for a better future. She’s out there every day trying to help aliens, to make this a place where they can be welcome and happy and can contribute to society. All you are trying to do is kill them.”

“I’m trying to stem the tide of invasion,” he said.
“You tried to kill my friend!” Lucy yelled.

“She’s not your friend,” he shouted right back. “She’s a threat.”

“Yes, she is,” Lucy said. “She’s a threat to you, because you made her one.”

“Lucy-“

“No, that’s enough,” Lucy said. “I’m sorry, Dad. I love you. I really do. But as long as you are involved with Cadmus, as long as you are trying to murder innocent people, we’re through.”

She watched him as he stared at her. She could feel the anger radiating from him.

“One day, you’re going to realize you’ve made a mistake,” he said. “I just hope it’s not too late.”

“Good bye, Dad,” Lucy said.

He stood up and headed for the door, but Lucy decided there was one more thing she needed to say.

“Dad.”

“Yes?”

“If anyone gets hurt tomorrow, I promise you, I will bring the storm.”

“I guess that means both of us will do what we feel like we have to,” he said.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

kryptahniuo

Kryptonian (language)
Moving Towards Fear and Hope

Chapter Summary

Alex and Maggie meet the rest of the Legends, while Kara talks to Bruce and deals with a crisis at CatCo

“You ever notice how all of our dates end up in sketchy parts of town?” Maggie asked Alex as they followed Sara, Rip, Snart and Mick down an alleyway.

“It is kind of a recurring theme,” Alex said. “Although the Nine Inch Nails concert was nice.”

“I enjoyed it, but I think any club named Reptile is sketchy by default,” Maggie said.

“No argument there,” Alex said. “But if it’s any consolation, I don’t really mind the sketchy.”

“Considering you’re the one who suggests the sketchy places half the time, that’s not a huge surprise,” Maggie said.

“Hey, you introduced me to Darla’s,” Alex said.

“Doesn’t mean we have to spend every night there,” Maggie said. “We could go to some place you like to spend time.”

“If we did that, I think Kara would get tired of us making out on her couch,” Alex said.

“That would be a little awkward,” Maggie said.

“I mean, if you wanted, I could take you on a tour of all the places I used to go to make bad life choices before I got recruited by the DEO, but I’d bet a week’s pay that you’d shoot some college boy for grabbing your ass less than ten minutes after we walk in,” Alex said.

“Hard pass,” Maggie said. “I didn’t like college bars when I was in college.”

“Why not?” Alex asked.

“They were full of college boys, and the only thing worse than college boys,” Maggie said.

“What could be worse than college boys?” Alex asked.

“Straight girls,” Maggie said.

“Okay, I could *hear* the quotation marks,” Alex said. “I feel like I’m missing something.”

“Nothing pleasant,” Maggie said.

“We’re here,” Sara announced.

Maggie looked around. “Well, that is certainly an empty lot you’ve brought us too,” she said.

“Not all is as it appears, Ms. Sawyer,” Rip said. Right on cue, a doorway opened out of thin air.
Maggie leaned her head towards Alex, and said, “It’s almost like they couldn’t afford to CGI in the whole ship.”

Alex and Sara both laughed, and Snart looked back with a small smirk on his face.

“She’s going to fit right in,” Snart said.

Rip led the way into the ship, stomping up the ramp like a two-year-old having a tantrum.

“Is he always like this?” Alex asked Sara

Sara nodded. “Pretty much. Especially when he doesn’t get his way.” she said, giving a small shrug before she started up the ramp.

The inside of the Waverider was a bit less Star Trek than Maggie had pictured it. It wasn’t quite Millennium Falcon levels of lived-in, but it showed a bit more wear and tear than she’d expected. There were slightly off-color spots where old repairs were obvious. The middle of the rubber floor was worn while the edges were newer, there were obvious scratches in the metal walls, along with scorch marks here and there. When they reached the bridge, it wasn’t hard to spot which consoles were newer than others, and Maggie could spot some heat discoloration in the metal holding some of the newer consoles in place.

“Looks like you guys have seen some action,” Maggie said.

“There’s not exactly a dry dock we can put into for repairs,” Rip said in an annoyed tone.

“Hey, it was just an observation,” Maggie said.

“Ignore him,” Sara said. “He’s just grumpy because things aren’t going his way.”

“My way?” Rip asked. “Ms. Lance, we came here to correct an aberration, and now we’re planning on causing one.”

“Well, if you’re so upset about it, why did you agree?” Sara asked.

“Agree to what?” someone asked. Maggie turned towards the voice and saw three more people entering the bridge from a different corridor. The first one looked a lot like Clark at first glance. He was a bit taller and not as beefy but had the same tendency to abuse hair product. Behind him was a compactly-built black man, and somebody’s grandfather.

“Supergirl has asked up to travel back in time to rescue someone,” Sara said.

“Wouldn’t that create another time aberration?” the black man asked.

“My point exactly,” Rip said.

“I don’t mean to interrupt but is anyone going to introduce our guests?” the granddad asked.

“Sorry, Professor,” Sara said. “This is Alex Danvers. She’s Supergirl’s sister, and that is Maggie Sawyer. They’re both DEO agents. Alex, Maggie, this is Ray Palmer, also known as the Atom, Jefferson Jackson, we call him Jax, and Professor Martin Stein.”

“Nice to meet you,” Ray said, smiling at her in a way that immediately put Maggie on edge.

“Down, Haircut,” Mick said. “They’re lesbians together.”
Sara turned and smacked Mick on the shoulder, while Alex turned the same shade of red as Kara’s cape.

“What?” Mick said, giving Sara an offended look. “He was making that stupid ‘I’ve got a crush face.’ It’s rude to hit on lesbians.”

“I had to stop you from lighting someone on fire three times last week, and you’re worried about being rude?” Jax asked.

“So? I can’t have standards?” Mick asked.

Sara smiled. “That’s actually kind of sweet, Mick.”

Mick grunted.

Sara turned back to face Ray, Jax and Stein. “Supergirl has asked us to travel back and rescue Alex’s father, and bring him back to this time.”

“Something which goes against everything we’ve been trying to do these last few months,” Rip said.

“Something we’re going to do anyway,” Sara said.

“Um, why?” Ray asked. He turned to Alex. “No offense. I’m sure your dad is very nice, but it’s just, we’re kind of in the business of stopping things like that.”

“Do you all remember the conversation we had when we were parked in the Vanishing Point?” Sara asked.

“About your future memories?” Jax asked.

“Yes,” Sara said. “The girl I’ve been seeing for the past few years is Supergirl. I don’t know all the details, but the memories I do have tell me we should trust her. So, that’s what I’m doing. If you’re in, we’re going to go save a good man from a horrible fate. If you’re not, Alex, Maggie and I will take the jump ship and do this without you.”

“I’m not in,” Rip said. “I think this is a horrible idea.”

“I’m curious,” Snart said. “What exactly did you do on Earth Zero?”

“What happened on Earth Zero is none of your business,” Rip said.

“I think it is my business,” Snart said. “I might be a criminal, but I don’t work with people who torture children. I’m like Mick that way. I have standards.”

“Wait, what?” Ray asked.

“What do you mean, torture children?” Jax asked.

Rip closed his eyes and let out a sigh. “I was sent to Earth Zero on a mission from the Time Masters. I exchanged a bit of information for a piece of alien technology. I had no idea what the information was. I didn’t find out until I saw the changes to the timeline.”

“What was the information,” Maggie asked.

“Then the boy she was talking about was her cousin?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Rip said.

“Then the Monarch-“

“Is what that world’s Kara Zor-El became after she found out what Sam Lane did to Kal-El,” Rip said.

“You sold them out,” Alex said, and Maggie felt a chill run down her spine at the tone in Alex’s voice.

“I was following orders,” Rip said.

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Orders to sell them out.”

“Alex,” Maggie said, reaching out and putting a hand on Alex’s back, “now is not the time.”

Sara saw the expression on Alex’s face, and knew. She didn’t even have to think about it. She knew exactly what the expression on Alex’s face meant. It was the same she saw in the mirror every time she thought about Damian Darhk. Or, it was, until Kara had altered the timeline so that Laurel never died.

She turned back to Rip. “We’re doing this,” she said. “Get on board with it.”

“Ms. Lance, our whole mission aboard the Waverider is to fix changes to the timeline,” Rip said. “Whatever I may or may not have done in the service of the Time Masters doesn’t change that fact that this is contrary to our entire purpose.”

“Supergirl is on our side,” Sara said. “My memories of the future may be full of holes, but I know that in every single one of them, I trust her. I trusted her enough to die for her.”

“Excuse me,” Stein said. “Did you say you trusted her enough to die for her?”

“Yes,” Sara said. “I don’t remember all the details, but I died. I went to Apokolips, and I died.”

“Apokolips?” Ray asked. “Where’s that?”

“Kara calls it a ‘god realm’,” Maggie said.

Sara looked over at Rip. “You know, don’t you?”

“Yes,” Rip said.

“Tell them,” Sara said.

Rip put his hands on the edge of Gideon’s console, and leaned forward, handing his head. “It’s basically hell,” he said.

“Hell?” Jax asked. “Like, Demons and the Devil and punishment for all your sins, hell?”

“Worse,” Rip said. “However bad you’ve imagined hell, Apokolips is worse.”

Sara looked over at Alex and Maggie.

Maggie took her hand off Alex’s back and reached down, taking Alex’s hand in hers and giving it a
squeeze. Alex turned towards her.

“You trust me?” Maggie asked.

Alex nodded.

Maggie turned to Sara. “You brought Kara back in time,” she said. “The older, future Kara. Then a telepath transferred all of her memories into her younger self.”

The room vanished for a second, replaced with the Waverider’s medical bay, Kara laying on the table, M’gann standing at the head of the table, eyes closed in concentration. The vision, memory, whatever it was faded as quick as it came.

“Why?” Rip asked. “What could possibly justify altering the timeline that much?”

“Darkseid,” Maggie said.

Sara didn’t know the name, but it immediately conjured up imagines. Horrible, horrible images. Kara fighting a monstrous figure with skin the color of a rotting corpse and eyes that glowed like the fires of hell, clad in armor the blue of someone’s face as they had the life choked out of them. A figure which exuded death. A being so unutterably cruel and evil that reality itself created a hell just to contain it. The memory played, horrifying in its intensity as the hellfire leapt from the monster’s eyes and burned away one of Kara’s arms. A green woman, M’gann in a different form, dragging Kara back away from the monster, even as Kara fought to attack, waving a charred stump and her remaining arm in an attempt to strike the thing.

Sara didn’t know who Darkseid was, and she knew far too well what he was.

“Rip, you obviously know who that is. Would you care to share with the rest of the class?” Snart asked.

“Darkseid is a god,” Rip said.

“A god?” Ray asked.

“Yes,” Rip said. “He’s the god of entropy, decay, evil. He’s everything people fear at night when the lights are out, and the most brutal tyrant in the Multiverse.”

“Kara’s trying to keep him from invading,” Sara said. “I can see it. Armies of parademons, marching across Earth.”

“Which Earth?” Rip asked.

“All of them,” Maggie said. “Sara brought Kara back in time to prevent Darkseid from conquering the entire Multiverse.

“And then, I went to Apokolips to try to destroy it,” Sara said. “That was the plan. To use the Waverider’s engines to rip Apokolips out of the Time Stream.

“That’s what Kara said,” Maggie replied.

“Okay, is anyone else getting a little creeped out by the whole remembering the future thing?” Jax asked.

“A little,” Ray said.
Sara turned back to Rip. “We’re helping Kara,” she said. “Whatever she wants, we’re helping Kara.”

“Agreed,” Rip said.

“Hey, Bruce,” Kara said as the line connected.

“Hey, Kara,” Bruce said. “I’m sorry we couldn’t find Jeremiah.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “The situation should be resolved by tomorrow.”

“That’s good news,” Bruce said. “Care to fill me in?”

“Sara showed up,” Kara said. “Younger Sara, to be specific. But she still has a time ship, and I figured there was at least one point in time where we were absolutely sure we knew right where to find Jeremiah.”

“Kara, are you sure that’s a good idea?” Bruce asked.

“I had Nimda run a timeline comparison. The old timeline and the new one split two days after Jeremiah disappeared, so I’m pretty sure I’ve already done it.”

“Well, that would make the decision-making process easier,” Bruce said.

“It would also explain why Cadmus is more aggressive in this timeline,” Kara said.

“You’re sure of that?” Bruce asked.

“Can I be completely honest with you Bruce?”

“I think that would help avoid any further misunderstandings,” Bruce said.

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “If I’m honest, I don’t know what the fuck I’m doing. I thought knowing the future would be enough, but everything’s so different now, I don’t know anymore. I know how to win battles, I know how to exercise tactical command, but Sara was always the strategist.”

“It’s a lot of weight to carry,” Bruce said. “I’m sorry I’ve made it harder.”

“You did what you thought was best,” Kara said. “Rao knows I’ve made my share of mistakes.”

“You’re not alone in that,” Bruce said.

“I never said thank you,” Kara said. “For coming when I was hurt.”

“You’re family, Kara,” Bruce said. “I know I didn’t act like it.”

Kara laughed. “Jason and Dick would probably say you treated me exactly like family.”

Bruce sighed. “They’d be right,” he said.

“Bruce, as someone who loves you, I’ve got to tell you, you really need therapy. Like, all the therapy. So much therapy there probably won’t be any left for me,” Kara said.

“You know, Selina has made that same observation,” Bruce said.

“Selina is a wise woman,” Kara said. “Also, smoking hot.”
“She’s also taken,” Bruce said.

“I know,” Kara said. “She’s not really my type anyway.”

“You have a type?”

“Blonde, intelligent, emotionally damaged, prickly, snarky, beautiful,” Kara said. “Rich doesn’t hurt either, but I’m a billionaire myself now, so that’s probably a lot less important these days.”

“Cat’s a good woman,” Bruce said.

“Why does everyone assume I’m talking about Cat?” Kara asked.

“They’ve seen the way you look at her,” Bruce said.

“It’s that obvious?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Bruce said. “She’s a lot older than you, though.”

“Cat’s three years younger than I am, and that’s only if you don’t count the time travel. If you do, she’s actually fifteen years younger than me,” Kara said.

“It’s not sure your time in the Phantom Zone counts,” Bruce said.

“Tell that to my nightmares,” Kara said. “Besides, Cat’s not interested in me.”

“I’m not sure she would agree with that assessment,” Bruce said.

“Bruce, don’t,” Kara said. “I’m having a bad enough week as it is.”

“I’m just telling you what I’ve seen,” Bruce said.

“Did the Fabric Extruder get delivered okay?” Kara asked, changing the subject.

“Yes.”

“You want the transmat system?” Kara asked.

“Please,” Bruce said.

“I’ll have Kolex run off an attendant with bat ears and a gravelly voice,” Kara said.

“Please don’t,” Bruce said.

“To late,” Kara said. “The batbot and transbat system will be there sometime tonight.”

“I’ve changed my mind,” Bruce said.

“What do you do when it gets to be too much?” Kara asked.

“I talk to Selina,” Bruce said.

Kara sighed. “What did you do before Selina?”

“Ruined relationships with people I cared about. Brooded. Dreamed of dying in that alleyway. Put on a bat costume and beat people senseless,” Bruce said. “It passed the time.”
“Bye Bruce. Give Penelope my love,” Kara said.

Kara stepped out of the elevator on the fortieth floor and immediately drew the eye of everyone in the bullpen. Of course, that probably had something to do with the fact that she’d stepped out of Cat’s private elevator. Everyone looked at her like she’d lost her mind, but Kara just smiled. There were advantages to owning the building, and the company.

“You got my message?” Kaldur’ahm asked from his desk.

“You said it was urgent,” Kara said.

“Ms. Grant’s mother left twenty minutes ago,” Kaldur’ahm said.

“Ah,” Kara replied. “Say no more.” She walked past her old desk and into Cat’s office, stopping to close the doors before she proceeded inside.

Cat barely glanced up as Kara took one of the seats in front of her desk.

“Really, Keira, if you come running every time I bark at Jacob, he’s never going to learn how to do his job,” Cat said.

“Weak,” Kara said. “Hardly any bite in the tone, low snark. On a scale of one to ten, I’d give that a two. Two and a half tops. You’ve made more cutting remarks about the way I hung your dry cleaning.”

“Well, I’m sorry my foul mood doesn’t live up to your expectations,” Cat said without looking up from her computer screen.

“She’s wrong about you, you know,” Kara said.

“You don’t even know what she said,” Cat said.

“What she always says,” Kara replied. “And you forget. I’ve lived this day before, so I have a pretty good idea.”

Cat froze for a moment before she slowly looked up.

“I’m sorry,” she said.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said. “It’s not something you’re used to thinking about. I’m just sorry I forgot about this little surprise visit. I could have warned you.”

“I imagine remembering all the details twelve years after the fact is a bit hard,” Cat said.

“Please tell that to J’onn, Kal and Bruce. They tend to get upset when I forget about some random building Maxwell Lord or Simon Tycho blew up,” Kara said.

“Well, I can see their point with buildings getting blown up,” Cat said.

Kara shrugged. “After you’ve seen your fourth or fifth planet go up, individual buildings stop making an impression. By the time you’ve seen a few star systems vaporized, you tend to focus more on ‘did anyone I love die this time,’” she said. “And I really didn’t expect this conversation to turn that morbid.”

“I expect that’s something that will happen a lot until we’re all used to knowing about your past,”
“I wish I hadn’t had to tell anyone,” Kara said. “I wish I could have just fixed everything myself.”

Cat turned away from her computer completely to face Kara. “Kara, darling, no one should have to take on that much responsibility. The fact that you carried that weight for over a year without breaking under it is a miracle. Though, I admit I’m confused as to why Sara and Thea didn’t stay with you when you came back here.”

“We considered it,” Kara said. “But either of them surviving would have brought major changes to the timeline. On this Earth, Sara died aboard the Queen’s Gambit, and Thea died in the Star City Earthquake. Changing that would have made major changes to how this timeline unfolded. In fact, we argued a lot over whether it was safe to drop me as early in the past as we did. I wanted to go back even further. Sara wanted to drop me off a couple of weeks before I became Supergirl, because she was afraid of changing the timeline and throwing off our planning. Dropping me off when they did, and then using the Waverider as a weapon to try to destroy Apokolips was like any compromise. No one was really happy with it, it was just the best option we could actually agree on. The one we thought would give us the best chance of success.”

“Still,” Cat said, “it doesn’t seem fair to you. You came here, left with all that weight on your shoulders, all the grief, and to have more added to it. To know that the woman you loved is going off on some forlorn hope.”

Kara nodded. “Oddly enough, that’s what I wanted to talk to you about.”

Cat frowned. “What do you mean?”

Kara took a deep breath, steadying herself. “I ran into Sara last night,” she said. “Not my Sara. A younger version.”

“Oh,” Cat said. “I… I knew that would happen eventually. From what you’d said, she was a part of your life even before the two of you became lovers.”

“She was,” Kara said.

“How did it go?” Cat asked.

Kara looked down, strangely reluctant to talk about her time with Sara to Cat. She didn’t really see a way around it though. “Well enough, last night,” she said. “It was this morning that was a problem.”

“I see,” Cat said in a neutral tone.

Kara felt herself flush with embarrassment. “Please don’t judge me,” she said. “I know she isn’t my Sara, and I know it was probably a bad idea…”

“But you missed her,” Cat said.

Kara looked up, surprised to hear sympathy in Cat’s voice instead of judgement. “Yes.”

“I’m not going to judge you, Kara,” Cat said, before letting her eyes drop to the desk. “Did I ever tell you about Adam, in that other reality?”

“You did,” Kara said. “Not under the best of circumstances. About two weeks from now, Dirk Armstrong would have leaked your emails to the Daily Planet. You asked me to review them to see if there was anything incriminating in them, and I found an email where you authorized a check to
Adam. When you realized what it was, you decided to step down from CatCo, to prevent Adam’s name from being dragged through the mud.”

“Please tell me I didn’t let that walking personification of male privilege get away with that,” Cat said.

“No, Winn, James, Lucy and I found proof that he was behind the leak. He left in handcuffs, and got a nice, long sentence for corporate wrongdoing,” Kara said with a grin. “That was when you figured out I was Supergirl.”

“It took me that long?” Cat asked.

Kara smiled. “I put a lot more effort into hiding it from you,” she said. “If it makes you feel better, Lucy never figured it out. I had to tell her. Lena never figured it out either.”

Cat smirked as she answered. “That does make me feel a bit better.” She shifted in her chair. “If I was willing to step down from CatCo, then you probably understand that I would do anything for Adam. For a second chance with him. So, how could I judge you for taking a chance with Sara, even if she’s not your Sara?”

“You know, it’s funny,” Kara said. “The first time I lived through this day, I actually lost it and yelled at you… No, wait. That was tomorrow. You laid into me about something, and I just snapped and shouted at you.”

“How did I respond to that?” Cat asked, amusement evident in her voice.

“You took me out drinking in the middle of the afternoon.”

“I can’t imagine that turned out well for either of us,” Cat said.

“It did, actually,” Kara said. “You gave me some really good advice, about finding the anger behind the anger. You got completely hammered in the process, but it was really good advice.”

“Well, it’s good to know that I was helpful,” Cat said.

“Always, Cat,” Kara said. “Those first couple of years, you were my rock. You just had this way of figuring out exactly what was wrong and saying exactly what I needed to hear. That’s why I never hid from you in this timeline. I wanted that back. That peace and calm you had a way of helping me find, even when I was at my lowest.” She leaned forward, reaching across the desk, and taking Cat’s hand. “I was looking forward to the moment you confronted me about being Supergirl. In the other timeline, I panicked, I hid, I did everything I could to convince you that you were wrong. But this time around, I kept looking forward to it. To the day you would say, ‘you’re Supergirl’ and I would get to say, ‘yes I am’.” She looked down and shook her head.

“I didn’t want it to happen like it did,” she said.

“That wasn’t your fault,” Cat said.

“It was,” Kara said. “In the old timeline, no one tried to frame me for murder. Which means that Leslie getting attacked was a direct result of something I did.”

“No,” Cat said. “It was a result of evil people being afraid of someone who’s never done a thing to hurt them.”

Kara looked up at Cat and squeezed her hand. “See,” she said. “You always know what I need to
“I’m just fabulous that way,” Cat said. “But you said things didn’t go well with Sara this morning?”

Kara nodded. “It’s a long story, but I got into an argument with Alex over Sara, and one thing led to another, which led to a panic attack.”

“That’s two in as many days,” Cat said.

“Well, technically, yesterday was a flashback, but yeah,” Kara said. “It’s been a while, but clearly, I need help, and I thought you might know someone.”

“You’re looking for a referral to a psychiatrist?” Cat asked.

“Yes.”

“And you can’t go through government channels because Rule 513 provides exceptions to Doctor-Patient confidentiality for military psychiatrists.”

“Um, yes,” Kara said. “We’ll just pretend I knew that.”

Cat smiled as she took her hand out of Kara’s and reached for her phone, pulling up a contact and dialing. “Hello, this is Cat Grant. Is Doctor Shuman available?” There was a moment of silence, then Cat spoke again. “Hello, Ed. I’m sorry to bother you in the middle of the day, but I need your help with something. I have a friend who needs to see someone and is looking for a referral.” Another moment of silence. “A first responder. Traumatic background. Orphaned in the early teens. Time in the military, with lots of combat. Lost a spouse about a year ago. Recent victim of a violent assault. Having flashbacks and panic attacks. Very high profile, with both business and political considerations. I need someone who can absolutely be trusted. Yes, I understand doctor-patient confidentiality, Ed. This goes beyond who’s snorting cocaine off whose ass.”

Cat picked up her pen and wrote down a name and a number.

“You’re absolutely sure,” Cat asked. “Okay. Thank you.” Cat hung on the phone and looked up at Kara.

“Would you like me to make the appointment?” Cat asked.

“Please,” Kara said.

Cat dialed the phone and waited for a moment. “Hello. Is Doctor Foster available?” A slight pause. “Cat Grant. Yes, that Cat Grant. Yes, I’ll hold.” Cat rolled her eyes, but the hold was apparently less than she expected. “Doctor Claire Foster?” Cat asked. “Yes. Cat Grant. Doctor Ed Shuman referred me. I wanted to make sure you would be willing to take on a rather unique client. Yes. Yes. As soon as possible.” Cat looked at Kara. “Tomorrow morning?”

“Afternoon,” Kara said. “I have to fight a robot in the morning.”

“Of course you do,” Cat said. “She’s asking for an afternoon session. Something about fighting a robot tomorrow morning. Yes, she’s serious.” Cat looked at her again. “Three O’clock?”

Kara nodded.

“That will be fine,” Cat said. “A name for the appointment?”

“Linda Lee,” Kara said.
“Linda Lee,” Cat repeated. “Thank you.” Cat ended the call and sat her phone down.

“Thank you, Cat,” Kara said.

“Anything you need, Kara, just ask,” Cat said.

“Do you think you can handle the closing on the property from the city by yourself?”

“Of course,” Cat said. “If you’re willing to sign a power of attorney, I can handle the closing on the Solarium as well.”

“Please,” Kara said.

“I’ll add a lawyer to the list of things we need to get you,” Cat said. “Konex is very good at it, but he can’t sign or witness documents, and he can’t appear in court.”

“No, he can’t,” Kara said. “Which reminds me. I think it’s about time we get you an attendant of your own.”

“Really?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded. “One for Carter, too,” she said. “Now that you know what’s really at stake, I want to put some extra security precautions around both of you.”

“Does this mean I get a real assistant?”

“If you’ll accept Jackson as a body guard, I know someone who would make an excellent assistant,” Kara said.

“I was teasing,” Cat said. “Jacob has been doing an amazing job.”

“But as your assistant, he can’t be with you all the time,” Kara said.

“I have the ring now,” Cat said.

“And don’t think I’ve forgotten that you promised I could teach you to use it,” Kara said.

“When did you want to start?” Cat asked.

Kara sighed. “I’d love to say now, but we’ve both got things that can’t wait.”

“Well, tomorrow’s out, since you have other obligations,” Cat said.

“I know,” Kara said.

“Oh, stop worrying,” Cat said. “I doubt assassins are going to break down my door between now and Friday.”

“I hope not,” Kara said, “but maybe we can take a few minutes right now, and I can show you a basic shield.”

“If it will make you feel better,” Cat said.

“Knowing you’re safe always makes me feel better,” Kara said.
Foundations

Chapter Summary

Kara visits Fort Rozz, Opal City and the White House, Astra undertakes an urban renewal project, Alex, Maggie and the Legends visit Peru, and Nia has a dream.

Chapter Notes

Some of you may notice that there is now a full Chapter Count. That's because I have finished the first draft of Devils in the Dark. The Current Word Count is 415,580, according to word. In short, this thing is LONG. I think it might actually be in the top ten longest Supergirl fics if you don't count the ones that are just a collection of shorts and one shots, and is headed for the number one slot for SuperCat. The AO3 wordcount will probably be a bit shorter, but even so, OMFG writing this fic was a LOT of work.

Which means I need a freaking break. So, I'm going to finish my revision pass, and this thing off to my beta, and go work on something else for a while. Because I need to. I really, really need to work on someone else before I start A Plague of Righteousness.

Why? Because this fic was not only really freaking large, but it is an emotional roller coaster that goes to some very dark, very grim places, and I need to do someone light and cheerful and happy for a bit to refuel before I dive back into this universe.

What does that mean for you? Mostly that this story will continue at the chapter a week pace for at least the next few weeks. One I have gotten through a story or two, and had a chance to rest and recharge, I'll be able to hit the ground running on A Plague of Righteousness, which will, if I'm lucky, be a LOT shorter than this monstrosity.

Also, please, please note the new tags I've added to the story. I don't want to spoil anything, but I'm giving you guys ample warning. This story deals with the fact that Kara is mentally ill in a big, big way. It also deals with the fact that these characters are in a war for the survival of the entire multi-verse. Shit is going to get real in a big, big way, and a lot of that is going to start next week.

For those of you who have stuck around this far, thank you. For those of you who are going to stick it out until the end, thank you. The journey will be dark, but I can say without spoiling anything, there is a happy ending waiting for you all. Even if it takes a me a million words to get there.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Kara stood in the desert, staring at the ship that had been at the center of so many horrible things in her life.

“I truly hate that ship,” Fendra said. She stood next to Kara, holding a tablet and keeping track of the inventory as the drones from Sanctuary flowed in and out of the ship. “I hate everything about it.”
“I understand the sentiment,” Kara said as she watched the Kryptonians working alongside the drones. “I’d love to just toss it into the sun and forget it ever existed, but it’s too valuable a resource to just leave here.”

“How did the humans react when you asked for it back?” Fendra asked.

“I’ve always found that it’s easier to ask forgiveness than it is to get permission,” Kara said.

Fendra laughed. “Now that sounds a great deal like the General,” she said.

Kara felt a grin tug at her lips. “Where do you think I learned it?” she asked. “Astra used to drive mother insane. She’d show up and take me all sorts of places. Kryptonopolis, Erkol, the Rainbow Canyon, the Fire Falls, the Golden Volcano, the Jewel Mountains, the Sky Palace, Vathlo, the Valley of Juru, the Magnetic Mountain, Jerat, the ruins of Xan, Meteor Valley, the Boiling Sea. I think the worst was when she took me to Bokos.”

“Astra took you to the Island of Thieves?” Fendra asked.

“When I was twenty /ahmzehto/ old,” Kara said, grinning.

“No wonder your mother was angry,” Fendra said.

“Oh, the shouting went on for /wolo/. At one-point father tried to separate them, and mother stomped on his foot,” Kara said. “He limped for a week.”

Fendra laughed, but their amusement was cut short when Fendra’s tablet beeped. “That’s it. All the stasis pods are clear of the ship and have been transmatted to Sanctuary.”

“Good,” Kara said. “Anyone we should worry about?”

Fendra looked down at the list. “Only if you consider Jindah Kol-Rozz someone to worry about.”

“The Priestess of Yuda Kal?” Kara asked.

“The very same,” Fendra said. “Fort Rozz’s first prisoner.”

“Make sure her stasis pod gets flagged as a level ten threat,” Kara said.

“Already done,” Fendra said. “You want to tell me where you’re stashing the level tens?”

“I’ve got a pocket dimension generator,” Kara said. “Kolex is shunting the level tens there.”

“That will definitely keep them out of the hands of the humans,” Fendra said.

“That’s the idea,” Kara said. “How much longer until she can be moved?”

“Another six hours, if we want to fly her to Sanctuary under her own power,” Fendra said. “We could carry her now, if we had to.”

“And you’re sure your people can strip her as quickly as we discussed?” Kara asked.

“It will be difficult,” Fendra said, “but with the drones assisting us we can do it.”

“Good,” Kara said. “When I give you the go ahead, don’t wait for me. Just get it done.”

“We will,” Fendra said. “I’m not sure how you pulled this off, Kara, but all of us are grateful. The
chance to walk in Kryptonian halls again…”

“Thank me when it’s done, Fendra,” Kara said. “There are still a lot of ways this can all go wrong.”

“I know, but if it works, you’ll have given us a piece of our home, even if it is carved from the bones of our prison. Two nights ago, when you moved to lift the Eradicator Protocol, I thought for a moment you might be an avatar of Vohc. Today, I think you might be a messenger, sent by Rao himself to guide us towards our second chance,” Fendra said.

“I’m not touched by the divine, Fendra,” Kara said. “Father Rao has simply given me the gift of perspective.” Kara let out a sigh as her phone beeped at her. “He has not, however, given me the gift of time. Keep working. I have to head back to National City. The demolition is about to begin.”

“Be well, Lady El,” Fendra said.

“May Rao light our way,” Kara said before shooting into the sky and heading towards National City.

Kara touched down on top of Siegel stadium, landing next to the spot where Astra stood, surveying their new domain.

“Hello, Little One,” Astra said as she glanced down at the tablet in her hand.

“Aunt Astra,” Kara said. “How goes it?”

“The drones have cleared the entire area, except for one building,” Astra said. “We found people living there. Squatters, Agent Vasquez called them.”

“How go the preparations in the desert?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Astra said.

“Where are they now?” Kara asked.

“The White Martian took them,” Astra said. “I was reluctant to give them over to such a creature, but Agent Vasquez reminded me that you trust this one.”

“M’Gann is good people,” Kara said. “She might not know it yet, but she is.”

“I will trust your judgement on that,” Astra said. “How go the preparations in the desert?”

“Almost done,” Kara said. “Has the city given the approval to start?”

“Yes,” Astra said. “I do not think the Mayor cared for me, but he said that as soon as the squatters are clear, we have permission to begin the excavation.”

“And the surrounding areas?” Kara asked.

“The drones have delivered the bottled water and connected the affected buildings to Jara crystals power sources,” Astra said.

“How long does Nimda estimate this will take?” Kara asked.

“Twelve hours,” Astra said. “It would be faster if we could task more than fifty percent of the AI’s computational power.”
“I know,” Kara said. “It would be faster if I’d had Kolex build full attendants instead of drones, too.”

“Why didn’t you?” Astra said. “I never understood that.”

“I learned that lesson the hard way,” Kara said. “Suborned attendants are dangerous. Konex, Kolex and the ones I’ve brought online since returning to the past are heavily modified to protect against potential reprogramming, and I’ve built in hardwired self-destruct commands, just in case. Even at their best, I can take out five or ten attendants. A swarm of hundreds would be a lot harder. With drones, all I have to do is take out their controlling computer or jam the control signal.”

“Who on this world could reprogram a piece of our technology?” Astra said.

“More people that you’d think,” Kara said.

“Can I ask you a question, Little One?”

“Of course,” Kara said.

“Why did you not name the computer after your mother?” Astra asked.

“I didn’t want the reminder,” Kara said.

“That she’s gone?” Astra asked.

“No,” Kara said. “That she betrayed us both.”

“Little One-,” Astra started.

“Don’t,” Kara said. “She used me, she lied to me, and she sent me away. I love her, I always will, but some days, I hate her too.”

“I wish I could say I felt differently,” Astra said. “I just wish you didn’t have to carry this, as well as everything else.”

“There’s no use cursing the mountain for casting a shadow,” Kara said.

“Your /uzheiu/ Nimda used to say that,” Astra said.

“I remember,” Kara said. “I never wanted to hear it, because that’s what she always told me when I complained about anything. It was a long time before I saw her point.”

“It’s a hard lesson to learn,” Astra said.

“I was too stubborn to learn it,” Kara said.

“A good thing, too,” Astra said. “Otherwise, you might never have learned to move mountains.”

“Is that what I’m doing?” Kara asked.

“You’re giving our people a future, long after everyone else had written us off as a lost cause,” Astra said.

“We,” Kara said. “We are giving our people a future. I couldn’t have done this if you hadn’t surrendered.”

“You didn’t give me many options, Little One,” Astra said.
“No, I didn’t,” Kara said. She took one last look around the part of the city that she’d arm-twisted the mayor into giving up. The part that was soon to be remade into an alien enclave, which would offer her people a safe haven.

She’d done this. She had help, admittedly, but this was something good that she’d done. A place where her people might find a future.

“Have you decided on a name?” Astra asked.

“/.zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/” Kara said.

“A fitting name,” Astra said.

Kara nodded. “I wish I could stay, but I have to make a trip out of town.”

“Go,” Astra said. “I will watch, and all will be well.”

Kara turned and threw her arms around Astra, hugging her tightly. “/.ukiemodh w rraop , eh ,astruh,/”

“/.ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir/” Astra replied.

Kara let go of her and stepped back, smiling as she took to the air.

The woman didn’t have a limp this time, but even her own sister would have been hard pressed to recognize her as the new owner of CatCo, and harder still to recognize her as Supergirl. The glamour she was using, thanks to a bit of time spent with Zatanna, altered her face, and lengthened her hair. It had required additional spells burned into her soul, a way to further anchor her to the Earth’s magisphere to allow her to draw more mystical energy to fuel the glamour. Kara hadn’t complained, because the additional wards strengthened her magical immunity, making it less likely another attack with Nth Metal would be lethal. Even if it hadn’t had that happy benefit, Kara would have endured it for this.

She stepped into the elevator and hit the button for the thirtieth floor. As she rode up, she checked her reflection in the metal elevator door. It wasn’t the best mirror, but it did give her a chance to make sure the suit was neat, and the illusionary shoulder length hair was carefully arranged around a rather generic face.

The elevator doors parted. She stepped out onto the thirtieth floor and turned right. She’d never set foot in this building before, but she had the layout memorized for months, and could have found apartment 3010 with her eyes closed. She stopped in front of the door and took advantage of the fact that ‘Linda Lee’ didn’t need glasses, and certainly not ones with leaded glass, to take a quick glance through the wall. Apartment 3010 was a corner unit, bigger than the house in Midvale. It was luxurious without being ostentatious. Not surprising at all, since it had been a graduation present to Adam when he finished his bachelor’s degree.

She reached up and knocked, watching as Adam glanced over at the door. He picked up the remote and muted the TV, which had been on the CatCo cable news channel, stood up, and walked over to the door. She saw him frown as he checked the peep hole, then reach over and unlock the door, swinging it open.

“Hello,” he said.

“Adam Foster?” Kara asked.
“Yes,” he said.

“I’m Linda Lee,” Kara said. She reached down and opened the messenger bag she was carrying and took out a heavy black binder. “Kara Danvers sent me.”

“Who?” Adam asked.

“Kara Danvers. Up until a couple of weeks ago, she was your mother’s executive assistant,” Kara said.

“Oh,” Adam said.

Kara held out the binder. “She sent you this.”

“What is it?” Adam asked.

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “She said to make sure you got it. Her instructions did not include reading it.”

“You weren’t curious?” Adam asked.

“I’m not being paid to be curious,” Kara said. “I’m being paid to deliver a binder to someone who still hasn’t accepted it.”

“Oh,” Adam said, reaching out and taking the binder.

“Ms. Danvers said you would find everything you need inside, but I was instructed to ask that you do not delay in reading it. Her exact words were, ‘Tell him enough time has been wasted already.’”

Adam frowned and looked down at the binder, then back up at her. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I really have no idea, sir. Good day.” Kara turned and headed back to the elevator, ignoring Adam calling after her.

Adam stared after the strange woman as she walked away, ignoring his attempts to call her back. When she disappeared into the elevator alcove, he looked down at the binder in his hand. It was a heavy black vinyl three-ring binder filled with plastic sleeves. The kind that was common in offices everywhere.

He stepped back into his apartment, and closed the door, making sure to lock it before he returned to the couch. He picked up the bottle of beer he’d been working on and took a sip, before flipping open the binder. The first sleeve held a crisp, type written letter.

To Adam Foster,

Hello, my name is Kara Danvers. Until recently, I worked as your mother’s executive assistant. I’d like to preface this by saying that your mother has no idea that I’m contacting you, and were it still in her power, would probably fire me on the spot if she found out. One of very few advantages of no longer working for her is that she can’t fire me anymore, though I have no doubt she’ll try.

You may not want to hear this, but your mother loves you very much. I’m sure that you’re sitting there rolling your eyes, asking where the proof is. We will get to that momentarily. However, I want
to tell you a little bit about the kind of person your mother is.

Your mother is one of the kindest, most forgiving people I have ever met. She hides it so well. Most people never realize it. She takes care of people. She fights for them. Your mother is a hero, Adam. One who inspires hope that people can be better, and that the world can be better. She stands up and demands that everyone around her be better than they are.

I know you must be wondering where this hero was when you needed a mother. That’s something I understand better than you might realize. Knowing that your mother made a choice which took her away from you is a pain that never goes away. But you should also know that giving you up is your mother’s greatest regret.

In the pages that follow, you will find the proof that your mother loves you. You will find two hundred and eleven unfinished letters addressed to you and written in your mother’s hand. Every week for the past fourteen months, I have fished three or four unfinished letters to you out of her trash. I have uncrumpled them, pressed them, and preserved them in this binder, in the hopes that someday I could thank your mother for everything she has done for me, by helping mend her relationship with you.

Please, I know that you don’t know me, I know that I have no right to ask, but as someone who watched her parents die in front of them, and as someone who has come to love your mother like family, I ask you to consider that there are people out there who would give anything to have the chance I present to you. The chance for another moment with their mother. I ask you, for your own sake, and for the sake of a good and kind woman who has spent decades hating herself for the decision she made, read her words and know that they were written in the hope that she might one day be a part of your life again, that they were discarded only out of guilt and shame that she failed you, and that they were preserved in the hope that both of you might find peace and healing.

If, after reading these words, you do decide to give your mother another chance, there is an envelope in the back of the binder. In it, you will find two vouchers for an all-expenses paid private charter. Simply present one at the JetSuite counter at Burnley Executive Air Field, and they will fly you to National City. Come any time. I know your mother would love to see you.

Sincerely,

Kara Danvers.

Adam sat, staring at the letter. He was more than a little stunned. He had no idea who this woman was, aside from the fact that she used to be his mother’s assistant, or why someone who worked for his mother would do something like this, especially after leaving the job.

Part of him wondered if it was some sort of joke. Another part wondered how this woman even knew he existed. Did his mother talk about him? Did she really care about him? His whole life, she’d been little more than a source of checks and gifts that would arrive without note or comment. Something he’d resented, once he was old enough to understand it. But if what this woman said was true than here were all the words that had been missing right in front of him. Or, at least, the ones that had been missing for the past year.

Did he want to read them? If his mother hadn’t cared enough to actually send one of the letters, did it matter that she wrote them?

He looked down, reading the letter from this Kara Danvers again, only this time, when he got to the
end, he didn’t stop. He turned the page and looked the first letter. It had obviously been crumpled up at some point, but it had been saved, and it had been uncrumpled and pressed, but the tiny creases that crisscrossed the page weren’t anywhere near so compelling as the words, written in a neat, elegant hand.

To My Beloved Adam…

Kara descended out of the evening sky, touching down gently in Lafayette Square. All traces of Linda Lee were gone. The black power suit replaced by the formal outfit configuration of her war suit that she’d worn to meet with the Mayor the day before, the illusionary hair replaced with her own, currently short blonde hair. She’s stopped at a small apartment Konex had rented for her and equipped through a personal concierge service to check her makeup. In the old timeline she had eventually found a brand of lipstick that stood up pretty well to supersonic flight, but it wouldn’t be on the market for almost a year, so she’d retouched and flown over at a much more sedate pace.

It was just after 8:00 PM local time, and as Kara crossed the square, people began to take notice. She saw one of the guards at the front gate pick up the phone and speaking frantically. Most of the other guards were on alert by the time she reached Pennsylvania Avenue. A quick glance told her there was a lot of scrambling going on inside the White House.

She’d debated doing this. Argued with herself over whether coming in person was the right thing to do, or whether she should have simply made a phone call. Ultimately, she decided against the phone call, and against letting anyone know in advance that she was coming. It came down, as so much of what she’d done over the past few weeks had, to questions of optics, precedent, and inertia.

Kal had a standing invitation to the White House for years, and to her knowledge, the only time he’d ever used it was to drop off the invitation for the CatCo Gala she’d sent to President Marsdin. That had to change. Not so much Kal using the invitation, but rather the leader of the surviving Kryptonians, and for right now, however much she might wish it could be otherwise, that was her. She had to establish the precedent that the invitation would be used at need, and without prior consent. She had to establish the right of access, or when Olivia left office, she might very well lose that access.

Kara stopped at the gate, giving her biggest smile to the guards there.

“Hey,” she said. “I’m Supergirl. Um, well, you probably already noticed that, I mean with the suit and all. Though it’s a new suit, so you might not have recognized it, I suppose, but the symbol is the same.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the guard said, a small grin tugging at the corners of his lips. “I did recognize you.”

“Oh, good,” she said. “I’m sorry to drop by unannounced, but I needed to see President Marsdin, and she did say I could drop by any time, so here I am.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the guard said. “You can head on up.”

Kara used a quick burst of X-Ray vision to check his wallet, then smiled at him. “Thank you, Gary,” she said, stepping past him as the gate opened.

The walk up the path was short, and a pair of Secret Service agents were waiting at the front door for her. Both of them were black women. One tall with one red eye and one blue one, and the other was short and stocky with deep brown eyes.

“Supergirl,” the taller one said. “Sasha Bordeaux, Secret Service. This is Dakota Jamison.”
“Nice to meet you,” Kara said, hiding her smile as she noticed they were apparently all using their made-up names today.

“You too, ma’am,” Sasha said. “I’m a big fan.”

Dakota gave a small snort, and Kara noticed the corners of her lips twitching upwards as Sasha shot her a glare.

“Am I missing a joke?” Kara asked.

“No,” Sasha said. “My associate *thinks* she’s funny sometimes, but the only joke is her sense of humor.”

“Well, I don’t want to get into the middle of any family squabbles,” Kara said, which for some reason caused Dakota to bite her lower lip. Kara frowned for a moment, then just shrugged. “I need to see President Marsdin, if she’s available.”

“Of course, ma’am,” Sasha said. “Follow me.”

Sasha and Dakota led her into the White House, through to the West Wing, and finally to the Oval Office, where another pair of agents waited for them. One of the new agents nodded and opened the door for her, and Supergirl stepped inside, smiling as she saw Marsdin sitting behind her desk.

The door was closed behind her, and her super-hearing immediately picked up a giggle she was sure was from Dakota.

“Girl,” Dakota said, “you should have just worn your ‘I’m gay for Supergirl’ T-Shirt.”

“Shut up,” Sasha snapped. “What part of ‘super-hearing’ did you not understand?”

“Oh shit,” Dakota said. “Do you think she heard me?”

Kara shook her head and dialed down her hearing a bit.

“How are you tonight, Olivia?” she asked.

“Wondering if I should be concerned,” Marsdin said.

“Maybe,” Kara said as she crossed the office. “May I?” she asked, indicating one of the chairs in front of Olivia’s desk.

“Please,” Marsdin said.

Kara took a seat. “You did say I could stop by any time.”

“I did,” Marsdin said. “I’ve said it to your cousin as well, but he’s only ever been by to deliver that invitation you sent.”

“Yes, well, things are different when you’re the last living member of your species. When you have to worry about the survival of your entire race, you don’t have the luxury of avoiding politics.”

“So, this is an official visit?” Marsdin asked.

“It is,” Kara said. “You may be aware that I purchased a section of National City this morning.”

“I heard. Almost five thousand acres worth of real estate, plus a large park,” Marsdin said.
Kara nodded. “Yes. I want to request that it be declared a Kryptonian Embassy.”

“What?” Olivia asked. “I’m sorry, I don’t think I heard that correctly.”

Kara leaned back in her chair. “There is precedent. The UN currently recognizes both my and my cousin’s fortresses as Kryptonian soil.”

“Yes, but both of those were established outside of any existing national borders,” Marsdin said. “Besides, contrary to popular belief, an embassy doesn’t technically count as foreign soil.”

“I know that, but I also know it’s the closest I’m going to get, since there is no way you would be able to get Congress to declare a chunk of a city in California no longer part of the United States. You and I both know establishing some place outside of current national borders doesn’t do anyone any good,” Kara said. “Most aliens can’t fly, or teleport. They have no way to get to Sanctuary or Solitude, and frankly, Kal and I have some very good reasons for not wanting to turn the Fortresses into tourist attractions. Solitude is a Pandora’s box as it is, and Sanctuary is becoming one. It’s not out in the open, but I’ve spent a *lot* of time rounding up all the various pieces of alien tech that have been scattered around and locking it away to protect people from them. There are so many things this world isn’t ready for. Not yet.”

Kara took out her phone and set it on Marsdin’s desk. “On the other hand, this should be more than enough to prove to you that a safe haven that is easy to reach is not only desirable, but necessary.”

She pressed play, and Lillian and Mayor Gates’ voices filled the office, replaying the conversation she’d overheard the day before.

“Why aren’t they in custody?” Marsdin asked.

“Because, now that the DEO officially exists, we have to worry about the legality of our evidence,” Supergirl said. “That recording violates pretty much every wiretapping law California has.”

Marsdin took a deep breath. “Sometimes I really wish you and your cousin would just throw people into orbit and be done with it.”

“Welcome to my world,” Kara said.

“I don’t suppose you’re willing to testify, since you could hear the conversation without the recording,” Marsdin said.

Kara shook her head. “No,” she said. “That’s not a precedent I’ll willing to set. Honestly, it’s not a precedent you want set.”

“Probably not,” Marsdin said, “but I’m still going to put the FBI on Gates and Luthor first thing tomorrow morning.”

“Just make sure it’s Lillian,” Kara said. “Lena’s clean.”

“You seem awfully sure of that,” Marsdin said. “Something you want to tell me?”

“Plenty I want to tell you, but honestly, it’s better for everyone if you don’t know the things I do,” Kara said.

“I don’t agree,” Marsdin said. “I can’t make informed decisions without being informed.”

“If I told you half of what I knew, you’d be obligated to act on it because you’re a decent person,”
Kara said. “The problem with that is, the moment you acted on it, the people we’re after would realize you were on to them. Once we deal with Cadmus, I’ll read you in on what else is going on, because at that point, we are going to need all the help we can get.”

“God, you are frustrating,” Marsdin said.

“I’d tell you to blame my mom, but it would be a lie,” Kara said. “Most of what I know about negotiation, diplomatic arm-twisting and getting what I want I learned from Cat.”

“I can definitely see her influence,” Marsdin said, “but you’re a lot more… bare knuckles.”

“Now that, you can blame on my sister,” Kara said.

“Noted,” Marsdin said. She leaned back in her chair, and Kara could see the wheels turning behind her eyes. “The largest embassy in the world is the US Embassy in Beirut. One hundred and four acres.”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“You’re asking me to, effectively, cede almost eight square miles of land to a foreign power,” Marsdin said.

“I realize that,” Kara said.

“Then you most realize it’s not going to happen,” Marsdin said. “But I might have a solution that would actually work better for you.”

“Oh?” Kara asked.

“I’ll make a few off the books phone calls to the city council tonight and see what kind of horses I need to trade, but if we redraw National City’s city limits, you could incorporate the area as a city,” Marsdin said.

“That would work,” Kara said.

“You ready to be a mayor, Supergirl?” Marsdin asked.

“Not me,” Kara said. “But I have a good candidate in mind.”

“The question is, what do I get in return?” Marsdin asked.

“What do you want?” Kara asked. “A spot on the stage at the next Kryptonian Medical Foundation announcement? A public endorsement when you run for re-election?”

“Nothing so grandiose as all that, though I wouldn’t mind a few campaign appearances,” Marsdin said. “But I gather you’re already familiar with the Durlan.”

“Somewhat,” Kara said. “I know there’s a community here on Earth. Exiles from the losing side of the Durlan civil war about four hundred years back. Shape shifters, so they blend in pretty well.”

“And is that all you know?” Marsdin asked.

“You really want me to go on record with what I know?” Kara asked.

“No,” Marsdin said, “probably not.”
“Let’s just say that it’s in both of our interests to keep that piece of information off the record,” Kara said.

“Agreed,” Marsdin said. “There’s a medical issue among the Durlan population. This planet is so humid, it’s not good for them. It’s not normally that big an issue. Most of them settle in desert climates, and they’re fine. However, when circumstances force them to spend time in coastal regions, it can be a problem. They can develop respiratory issues. Especially the children.”

“I see,” Kara said.

“You have access to far more advanced medical technology than Earth does,” Marsdin said.

“Once the enclave is established in National City, any Durlan that were to visit would have access to our medical technology, of course. For themselves, or their children. And assurances of anonymity.”

Marsdin smiled. “Then I think we have a deal,” she said.

Alex double-checked the charge level on her slaver pistol, making sure the power pack read as full before she holstered the gun on her right hip.

“You sure you’re ready for this?” Maggie asked.

Alex looked up at her, and the site brought a smile to her face. Maggie stood there in her war suit, house of El crest on her chest, slaver pistol in its holster, looking like an absolute bad ass, except there was nothing on her face but concern.

“Yeah,” Alex said. “I’ve been ready for this ever since Kara told me dad was alive.”

Maggie glanced around, making sure they were still alone in the cargo bay, then she stepped closer. She reached up, cupping Alex’s cheeks in had hands and pulled Alex down into a kiss. Alex just about melted the moment their lips touched, her arms wrapping around Maggie and pulling her close as the world around them just faded away.

When it ended, Maggie pulled back and smiled up at her. “We’ve got this,” she said. “We’re going to bring your dad home.”

Alex nodded, too choked up to say anything, because suddenly, this felt real. She was about to see her dad again.

A polite cough broke the moment, and Alex let go of Maggie and turned around to find Sara standing next to Snart, Mick, and Ray with a smug grin on her face.

“You two ready?” Sara asked.

“Yeah,” Alex said.

“According to the timeline J’onn gave us, we’ve got about thirty minutes to get into position,” Sara said. “Ray is on overwatch. The rest of us will move through the forest until we reach the clearing. Mission objective is simple. We retrieve Jeremiah Danvers. We do not interfere in any way with Hank Henshaw or J’onn J’onzz.” She gave Mick a meaningful look. “That means no setting the big green alien on fire. Everyone got it?” There was a brief round of acknowledgements, and Sara walked over, and opened the hatch.

As soon as they exited the ship, Ray shrunk down and took to the air to do recon as Sara started
moving through the jungle, picking their route. Alex was a little surprised at how quiet the group was. She expected that from Sara, and a bit from Maggie, but Snart and Mick both moved almost soundlessly as well. They also moved quickly, finding a spot near the clearing, but far enough away that J’onn wouldn’t get a telepathic sense of them while Ray, whose helmet had been upgraded with a telepathic inhibitor to keep J’onn from sensing him, landed on a tree overhanging the clearing.

Once they were settled in, Alex touched a control on her suit, turning on the sensory enhancement features of her war suit. For a moment, it was overwhelming, and she wished she’d taken more time to practice with it, but with a little concentration, she was able to focus, using the X-Ray vision the suit gave her to peel away the vegetation, so she could see J’onn and her dad, sitting by a fire.

“How many others escaped?” Jeremiah asked.

“I am the last,” J’onn said.

Alex smiled, watching the way her dad reached out to J’onn, and felt tears prickle the corners of her eyes, when he took out the picture of her and Kara, telling J’onn about them. She felt Maggie’s hand on her back and was glad for the anchor against the emotions threatening to overwhelm her.

Her father was here, he was alive, and he was, in that very dad way he had, offering to take in another stray. It was a lot like the day Kara had asked if Streaky could live with them. Right up until Henshaw shot J’onn.

Alex was on her feet almost instantly, but Maggie and Sara were there too, holding her back, blocking her from rushing out to help.

“Not yet,” Maggie said.

“We can’t,” Sara said.

Alex forced herself to stop, to crouch back down, but it was the hardest thing she’d ever done, and it nearly killed her to stay put as she watched Jeremiah tackle Henshaw.

When the knife came out, she felt Maggie’s grip on her shoulder tighten, but she forced herself to watch and wait. There was a moment of vicious satisfaction when Henshaw went over the cliff, even knowing he survived. She watched as J’onn covered Jeremiah with a blanket, and then, as he shifted into Henshaw’s form, and gathered up Jeremiah’s gear, taking the picture of Alex and Kara and heading North.

“We’re clear,” Ray said, and Alex rushed forward, killing the sensory enhancements. She broke through the clearing a moment later, and dropped down next to her dad, yanking the blanket off him and starting her assessment.

Unconscious, likely due to pain. Coloration of blood indicated a perforated liver. Almost certainly in hypovolemic shock. They didn’t have a lot of time.

“I’ve got to get him to the Waverider, now,” Alex said.

“Go,” Maggie said.

Alex touched another control on her war suit and the world slowed down around her as time started to crawl along. She slipped her arms under Jeremiah, picking him up as if he were light as a feather, and she lifted off the ground, and shot through the forest. Kara hadn’t had time to give her and Maggie more than a very brief introduction to the special abilities the suit granted and had stressed that flight would be the hardest to master, but Alex didn’t care. Not when her dad was dying in her
arms.

She touched down, right outside the ship, barely keeping her feet, and rushed up the ramp at super-speed, passing Jax, who might as well have been frozen in place. She raced through the corridors until she reached the medical bay and lay her dad on one of the chairs. She snatched up a pair of EMT’s shears and cut his shirt away, exposing the spot where the knife had penetrated, then she carefully removed the knife, before dropping out of super-speed.

“Gideon,” Alex called.

“Yes, Ms. Danvers?” Gideon said.

“I need a medical assessment now,” Alex said.

“Mr. Danvers’ injuries are quite severe, but nothing beyond my capability. If you’ll stand back and allow me to work, he will make a full recovery.”

Alex stepped back as a number of robotic arms swung into action. A stasis field enveloped her dad as Gideon first cleaned, then repaired his wound, even as she began transfusing synthetic blood in to make up for the lost blood volume.

She wasn’t quite sure when, but at some point, Maggie appeared beside her, slipping a comforting arm around her. Alex put one of her own arms around Maggie and held her close as she watched her father’s vitals begin to get stronger.

“He’s going to be okay,” Alex said, hardly believing the words, even as she said them.

“He is,” Maggie said, leaning up and kissing her on the cheek.

Alex glance over as the door to the medical bay opened, and Sara stepped inside.

“We’re on our way back,” Sara said. “Rip’s going to put us down the day after we left.”

Alex nodded. “Thank you,” she said. “I owe you one.”


Alex watched as she left, then turned back to her father, to lost in a swell of feelings to worry about what was going to happen with Sara and Kara.

Nia smiled as she walked through the square. It was a bright day, not a cloud in the sky, and the southern California sun was warm on her face. It was a welcome change from the biting autumn cold that had been the norm for the last few weeks in DC.

The square itself was familiar. She felt at home there, like she’d walked it a thousand times, and she loved it. It was fully of energy and hope and a sense of purpose. A tall building that looked like a cat sitting on its haunches dominated one side, and it felt like every good thing in the square flowed from that building.

But something was off.

She felt something cold, something evil, something malevolent. She turned around and around, looking for it, but she couldn’t see it. She moved, feeling it get weaker or stronger depending on the direction, and once she knew which direction to go, she walked towards it.
After a few steps, she realized she was walking towards a group of three men. From a distance they looked normal, but as she got closer, their faces twisted into monstrous, grotesque masks of anger and hatred. Ink appeared as she got closer, covering them with writing and symbols. Slurs and bigotry, all of it. Words so foul they turned her stomach, and symbols of hatred and brutality. The longer she looked, the more she felt like she wanted to vomit.

A phone rang, a sound like a vulture’s cry.

The monsters drew guns and turned toward the building. Nia chased after them, desperate to stop them, but she fell behind when she tripped on something. She looked back to see what it was, and her stomach flipped at the sight of a body, riddled with holes. She got up and ran after them, but she tripped again and again over the bodies littering her path.

Finally, she reached the beating heart of the building. The monsters were already there, but there were also four people. A tall, well-built black man with a shaved head. His chest was torn away, his lungs and his left arm missing. A woman with white hair, her face chalky and skeletal, her mouth open in a scream and two bleeding holes in her chest. A boy, maybe twelve, with curly hair and a black eye. A blonde woman with a crown upon her head, holding a bright blue shield in front of the boy.

Nia watched as the one in the middle pointed his gun. She saw past him, saw the warrior with the swords and the short blond hair coming, but it was too late. The one on the middle fired. The bullet struck the woman holding the shield in the center of her chest, and Nia woke up screaming.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

ahmzehto
Plural of ahmzeht. A unit of time equal to two orbits of Krypton around Rao, which is also equal to three Kryptonian Days, and one hundred and eighty Earth days.

wolo
Plural of wol. A unit of time equal to 2.87 Earth hours.

uzheiu
Grandmother

.zrhygrhaps im shahrrehth
City of Hope

ukiemodh w rraop , eh ,astruh,
I love you, Astra

ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir
I love you, Little One
DEO Missile Range, North of National City, 10:35 AM, December 3rd, 2015

Kara arrived at the DEO missile range right on schedule Thursday morning, dropping down through the sparse cloud cover, enjoying the bright blue sky, and feeling like herself for the first time in days. The persistent background hum of pain had vanished sometime in the early hours of the morning, and Konex had pronounced her completely healed when he’d done a scan around six. She had the war suit in what she thought of as ‘basic supervillain’ configuration, which looked identical to her original suit, with the addition of her bracers so she could deploy her sword and shield at need.

It felt good to be back. The last week had been a complete roller coaster, and if the Waverider brought Jeremiah back, the next week was likely to be one as well, but this morning, at least, was promising. This morning, she got to have a nice easy fight where she didn’t have to hold back, and once that was done, she was off to the construction site to plant the SunStone.

Today, a small piece of her world would be reborn, and bring with it hope for the future of her people.

She touched down with a smile on her face, not quite able to help it. Today was a good day.

“Hey, J’onn, Hey Lucy,” she said. Then, just because she could, she stepped up and threw her arms around J’onn, hugging him tightly, before letting go and pulling Lucy into a gentler embrace.

“Someone’s in a good mood,” Lucy said as she hugged Kara back.

“I am,” she said as she let go. “Sorry about running off the other night.”

Lucy waved her hand dismissively. “Don’t worry about it,” she said. “When I found out who it was, I understood.”

“That’s because you’re amazing,” Kara said.

“If you’re done socializing,” General Lane said, “we are on a schedule here.”
Kara rolled her eyes and turned around to face him, taking in the entire camp as she did so. Harper was there, looking like the slimy little bigot he was. Dr. Morrow, who she only sort of remembered from the original timeline was fiddling with the robot. Everyone else was already in the command tent.

“That’s what I’m fighting?” Kara asked, gesturing to Red Tornado.

“It is,” Lane said.

“Looks like something from a low-budget cable show,” Kara said. “Seriously, did you blow your budget on the hummers?”

She heard more than a few people, some of them from Lane’s contingent, laughing under their breath.

“This is an extremely sophisticated anthropomorphic pseudo-entity with advanced combat capabilities,” Dr. Morrow said.

“Really?” Kara said. “Extremely advanced, huh?”

“Yes,” Morrow said.

“Why’s it lined with lead?” Kara said.

“Um... I...” Morrow floundered.

“Heh, no, it’s okay, I already know,” Kara said. She turned to General Lane. “You know, this is the third weapon I’ve encountered in a week that’s specifically designed to kill Kryptonians. After a while, a girl is going to take these things personally.”

“That’s it,” J’onn said. “Having Supergirl aid you in a field test of a new weapon is one thing, but I’m not letting you test an anti-Kryptonian weapon on her.”

“You don’t have any say in this,” General Lane said.

“He has a lot more than you think,” Kara said. “Because if he says the test is off, then I’ve got plenty of other places I could be this morning.”

“I have signed orders-” Lane started.

“I don’t care if you have signed orders from Ming the Merciless,” Kara said. “I don’t work for the DEO. I work with them, and I’m here because I want to be, and if I don’t want to be here, I’ll be somewhere else.”

She turned to J’onn. “It’s okay, J’onn,” she said. “I’ve got this.”

“You’re sure?” J’onn asked.

“Oh, yeah,” she said. “If it lasts ten minutes, I’ll buy you all the chocos you can eat for a year.”

J’onn smiled. “That’s a sucker bet,” he said.

“You won’t be so quick to dismiss Red Tornado when you can see what it can do,” Morrow said.

“I’m not usually impressed when things break like a cheap toy,” Kara said, “but let’s see how it does.”
Kara bent down and picked up a rock off the ground and walked over to stand across from Red Tornado.

“Whenever you’re ready, Doctor,” she said.

There was a couple of minutes wait as everyone went into the command tent, though Harper seemed more interested in texting someone than the actual test. Finally, Lucy’s voice came over the comms.

“We’re starting in three, two, one…”

Red Tornado suddenly came to life, lifting its arms and locking its hands in attack position.

Kara took a deep breath and blew it out, hitting Red Tornado with a solid stream of freeze breath, faster than it could react. The ice locked its wrists and waist, disabling the robot’s primary means of attack, and its primary escape path, and still Kara kept up, freezing the entire unit solid. Then, she hurled the rock as hard as she could, propelling it forward and nearly five times the speed of sound as she hit it with her heat vision, turning the iron and magnesium-rich rock into a projectile of molten metal and silica that slammed into the now-brittle robot with devastating force, shattering it into a dozen large pieces, and hundreds of smaller shards.

“How long was that?” Kara asked.

“Twenty-four seconds,” Lucy said.

“How could you do that?” Morrow cried.

Kara looked at Lane and smiled. She took a couple of steps towards Lane, until she was right up in his face. “When I say something General, I mean it. I told you I was going to break your toy, and it’s broken. I told you I’m not a threat to you, unless you make me one. Maybe, General, you should stop trying to do that, before you succeed.”

“You shouldn’t threaten a General in the United States Army,” Lane said.

“I’m not threatening you,” Kara said, “I’m trying to get through to you. I’m telling you that you can still walk away from this. I’m telling you that I don’t want to put Lucy’s father in a cell for the rest of his life. I’m telling you to walk away from Cadmus before Lillian Luthor and Simon Tycho drag you down with them.

“You’re afraid. I get it. I see monsters every time I close my eyes. I may look like a girl barely out of college, but I have nightmares too. I see monsters right out of your childhood nightmares. Monsters with wings, monsters with claws, monsters that spit acid. I get it, because I have nightmares too. I see every horrible thing the universe has to offer and I’m telling you, one soldier to another, you’re fighting the wrong battle. There are threats to this world, General, but it’s not a few refugees who just want to pay their rent without getting hunted down by the DEO. This world has enemies you can’t even imagine. Monsters and devils that radiate death and misery. Literal incarnations of fear, evil, and death. Monsters that are coming. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, maybe not for a thousand years, but they will come, and when they do this world will need good leaders to defend it.

“You could be one of those leaders. You can stand up and be the hero you always imagined yourself
to be. The hero your little girls looked up to. It’s not too late for you. Don’t cling to a mistake, just because you’ve spent a long time making it. Because it is a mistake. I am coming for Cadmus, and if you’re still there when I find them, you’re going to spend the rest of your life paying for that mistake, and your little girls are going pay right along with you, because they are going to spend the rest of their lives knowing that their father is never going to a free man again.

“Please, General, I’m begging you, walk away, before it’s too late.”

Silence rang out over the field as every soldier and DEO agent there watched the confrontation, and waited to see what would happen, but one in particular caught Kara’s eye, and she turned to look at Harper.

“Same offer extends to you, Colonel.”

“That’s okay,” Harper said. “I know where my loyalties lie.”

Kara turned back to Lane.

“What about you, General?” she asked, holding out her hand. For a moment, she thought she might have him. She could see something in his eyes. Indecision, maybe. She found herself hoping that if she could just drive the wedge a little bit further, maybe she could get through to him. She opened her mouth, to give him just a little more encouragement, but she never got the chance to speak.

“Kara,” Winn’s voice came through her ear piece. “You need to get to CatCo *now*.”

Kara was in the air before Winn finished the word ‘now’.

CatCo Plaza, National City, 10:25 AM, December 3rd, 2015

Andrew hated this idea. It wasn’t that the objective itself was that difficult. Infiltrate a building, neutralize a hostile political asset, exfiltrate the building and vanish into the population. Not exactly the sort of thing he’d been trained for. In fact, it was exactly the sort of thing he was trained to defend against, but he’d run op force in training exercises often enough that he could pull something like this off in his sleep.

No, the objective was easy. It was the operational window. The intelligence source could only guarantee a safe window of ten minutes. It was a lot tighter than he liked, given the capabilities that could potentially come to bear at the end of the operational window.

Fucking aliens.

Of course, that was exactly the problem. Cat Grant, head of one of the largest media outlets in the world, who was currently set to take over another of the largest media outlets, becoming the head of the *largest* media outlet, was fucking an alien.

The thought made Andrew’s skin crawl. Most things alien did. He remembered he’d once looked up to one. Superman. Thought he was amazing, right up until the day his older brother died in one of Superman’s fights. Some alien rampaging through Metropolis. A dozen cops dead before Superman even bothered to show up. His brother was one of them. Andrew had been on the other side of the world, fighting a war at the time. Fighting terrorists. Trying to defend his home.

He hadn’t recognized the real threat. Not until he got the news.

He’d tried to speak out, and the alien lovers had drummed him out of the military.
Lex though. Lex had gotten it. Lex Luthor had tried to do something about the threat.

He’d found Andrew, and he’d used Andrew’s skills to help build the action network. The one Lex had intended to use to rid the Earth of the alien plague. Except the government had locked Lex up, and let Superman run wild, and now they were letting his cousin poison the minds of children, twist the media into preaching that aliens had rights, that they should be welcomed.

When he’d gotten the call from the source, the one that told him Supergirl’s media mouthpiece would be vulnerable, that he had a chance to strike a real blow, he couldn’t resist. Even if the timing was tight.

Andrew hated this idea, because he didn’t want to die with his work half-finished. He wanted to live long enough to see Earth purged of the alien threat. But if he had to die to strike a blow, well, he was a soldier, and that was part of the deal.

The sound of a text alert from the burner phone drew all of their attention. Marcus checked the text.

“It’s time,” he said.

Andrew nodded, and reached into his pocket as he, Marcus and Carl all turned and started towards the front door of the CatCo building. They pulled balaclavas out of their pockets and pulled them on as they reached the front door, and Andrew pulled out the pistol he was carrying.

The first security guard died immediately as Andrew put two in his chest. The second guard was scrambling back from the security desk, but he didn’t have a gun or a chance. Carl shot him twice, center of mass, as people in the lobby screamed and ran.

Andrew bent down as he passed one of the bodies and snagged a security badge, giving them access to the whole building, while Marcus shot the third and final guard in the back as he ran for cover.

A quick glance at his watch, and Andrew smiled. Thirty seconds, and they were at the elevators.

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CatCo Worldwide Media Headquarters, National City, 10:20 AM, December 3rd, 2015

“Would you like to talk about it?” Cat asked Carter as they rode her private elevator up towards the fortieth floor.

“Not really,” Carter said.

“I’m not mad,” Cat said. “I’m just worried. Fighting’s not like you.”

Carter shrugged.

“Is it okay if I hug you right now?” Cat asked.

“Yeah,” Carter said.

Cat reached out and wrapped an arm around him, pulling him against her side, as much to reassure herself as him. She didn’t know what happened at his school that morning, but she’d barely reached her desk when the call came in from his school, asking her to come pick him up. She’d been worried sick the whole way over, and when she’d found her precious boy with a bloody nose and what promised to be a spectacular black eye, she’d been livid. Hearing that one of the two other boys involved was going to need stitches had done very little to calm her.

The teacher who’d broken up the fight had said that the other boy Carter had hit had said something
to Carter to start the fight, but he’d been too far away to hear it, and the fight had gotten physical before he could reach them.

The only thing that had been certain was that Carter had thrown the first punch. He’d hit the boy who’d started the confrontation hard enough to knock him down, and he’d hit his head on the ground as he fell. Then his friend had punched Carter in the face.

The principal had wanted to suspend Carter, but Cat was having none of it. There was a teacher on the record as stating Carter was provoked. The principal had blathered about zero-tolerance policies, but Cat had just rolled right over him, and in the end, it was agreed. No black mark on Carter’s record, but Cat would take him home for the day.

That didn’t mean Cat wasn’t worried though. Carter was as gentle a soul as she’d ever met, and something had provoked him to violence.

She let go of him as they passed the thirty-eighth floor, letting him stand up straight as she took a deep breath and prepared herself for the office.

When the doors opened, she stepped out in full Cat Grant mode, her swagger in place as she led Carter towards her office.

“Jacob,” she said, “I need a latte and a large hot chocolate.”

“Yes, Ms. Grant,” Jackson said. “Anything else?”

“Tell Olsen I’d like to see him,” Cat said.

“Of course.”

Cat entered her office with Carter close behind her. He took a seat on the couch on the right, knowing she preferred the one on the left, and she smiled a little, touched by how thoughtful he was, even when he was upset.

“Do you need anything?” she asked.

“No,” he said, and the pain she could hear in his voice brought her to a decision.

“When Jacob gets back, I’ll have him clear my afternoon,” she said. “I just need to sign a few documents from legal, then we’ll head over to the Sally Ride Center.”

Carter perked up a bit at that. “Really?” he asked.

Cat smiled. “Really,” she said. She reached out and touched his shoulder, giving it a brief squeeze before she went to her desk and sat down, pulling up her email client and firing off a quick message to legal asking them if the paperwork on the sale of the Solarium had arrived yet. It only took a minute for her to get a response back that they had just sent documents up for her to sign. That taken care of, Cat went through the emails that had piled up this morning, checking to see if there was anything urgent before she headed out. She was about ten messages in when there was a knock on her door, and she looked up to see James Olsen standing in the entrance to her office.

“James, come in,” she said. “I don’t believe you’ve met my son, Carter.”

“No,” James said. He looked at Carter. “James Olsen. Nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you, too,” Carter said, not quite meeting James’s eyes.
“I need a bit of a favor,” Cat said, taking the attention off Carter before it could make him uncomfortable.

“What can I do for you, Ms. Grant?” James asked.

“I’ll be out of the office for most of the day,” Cat said. “Since you did such a good job of handling things while I was unavailable this past weekend, I wanted you to take over here today, and keep things moving.”

“Of course,” James said.

“Excellent,” Cat said. “When Kara gets back, let her know that I’m available by phone if she needs me, but anyone else can wait until I’m back in the office tomorrow.”

“Understood,” James said.

“Excuse me,” a woman said, drawing Cat’s attention away from James, to an attractive young brunette standing in the doorway to her office. Cat recognized her immediately as the girl from the assistant pool who’d helped out the previous Friday before the board meeting and brought the food to the meeting with Lena. Siobhan Smythe.

“Yes?” Cat asked.

“Sorry to interrupt, Ms. Grant,” Siobhan said, “but I brought some documents up from legal. They said you’d be waiting on them.”

Cat waved her in, and Siobhan circled around the couches and set a stack of folders on Cat’s desk.

“The top one is the sale documents for the Solarium. They said the Power of Attorney Paperwork is attached, so you can sign in Ms. Danvers’ place. The other documents are the FTC approvals for the mergers. They said that those would require Ms. Danvers’ actual signature, and that these are simply copies for your review.”

“Thank you,” Cat said. “I-”

The rest of what Cat was going to say was cut off by a scream and a series of loud cracks. Cracks Cat immediately recognized as gunfire.

Noonan’s Restaurant, CatCo Plaza, National City, 10:28 AM, December 3rd, 2015

Kaldur’ahm took the tray with the three drinks from the barista at Noonan’s with a small nod and headed for the door, wanting to get back as quickly as possible. He had to admit that he was more than a little surprised by how quickly he’d come to respect Cat Grant. He’d never paid a great deal of attention to the media in the time he’d spent on the surface, but what little he known of it had pegged her as a vapid, vainglorious woman who cared only for herself and her next story.

It was an image Cat had actively embraced and cultivated, but Kaldur’ahm had a unique perspective, and had seen behind the curtain within hours of meeting her. It had been the potstickers that had done it. The way she’d gone out of her way to make sure that Kara had food at the CatCo gala – not only that, but she’d made sure that it was Kara’s favorite. Some people might have dismissed it as sucking up to her meal ticket, and he might have if she’d ordered him to fix Kara a plate. Instead, she’d led him over to the buffet line, and had him wait as she’d fixed the plate herself, selecting each piece of food with all the care one might have used to select a diamond for an engagement ring. She’d only handed him the plate once she was satisfied with it, then made it clear that dropping that
plate would cost him his job.

It might sound stupid, but one thing Kaldur’ahm knew was that the truest love expressed itself in the smallest ways. Care, understanding, comfort. Details were important. Grand gestures were fine, but something as simple as remembering someone’s favorite type of candy bar was more likely to have a bigger impact on their happiness in the long term.

Cat Grant was all about the details.

Once he’d understood that, he’d watched her, and he’d come to understand that Cat was a woman who cared and cared deeply. Not just about one person, about Kara, but about the entire world. Cat wanted to change the world, to make it a better place.

Kara had been right. Cat was far from perfect, but she was everything Kara had promised. A queen worthy of her throne. She might enjoy the trappings of her station, but she also used the power she wielded to help people. She was everything he always thought Arthur was and…

Something was wrong.

He was half way across CatCo plaza when he realized it. Something out of place, something off, a tension in the air.

A crack of gunfire.

The tray of drinks hit the ground as he reached for his water bearers. It took him thirty seconds to cross the plaza at a dead run. It was ten seconds too long. The assassins were already in the elevator and it was climbing.

He turned and kicked one of the water fountains off the wall and shoved the end of his water bearers into the stream rushing from the broken pipe. When he pulled them away, both water bearers sported long, wickedly sharp curved blades formed from water and Atlantian magic.

He wasted no more time as he ran for the stairs.

“Stay here,” James said as he turned and headed out into the bullpen. Cat started to call him back, but before the words got out of her mouth, the back of his white shirt exploded in a spray of red as two bullets punched through him. He stumbled back, falling into the gap between Jackson’s desk and the glass wall of Cat’s office.

The men in masks appeared a moment later, and Cat didn’t think, she didn’t hesitate. She just lifted the ring, the one she hadn’t wanted, and focused all her hope and all her will on one singular thought. Protecting Carter.

The shield snapped into existence around her son, shielding him as the men came into her office. Siobhan, not realizing what Cat had done, stepped in between the men and Carter. They didn’t hesitate. One of them shot her twice. The bullets passed through her, but slammed into the shield around Carter, bouncing off.

The other two men trained their guns on Cat, and she took what she knew would be her last breath.

The guns went off. Two of them, two shots each, focused on her center of mass. Cat waited for the impact, waited for the pain, but it never came, and finally, she looked down, her eyes widening as she realized she was wrapped in the same ridiculous uniform that had appeared the first time she’d put on the ring.
She looked up at her attackers but caught sight of what was behind them.

Jackson barreled into the room, swords in hand. He struck swiftly, and without mercy. The man on the left and the man on the right died instantly as Jackson separated their heads from their shoulders. The man in the center was not so lucky. He was still staring dumbly at Cat when Jackson’s follow up took off both his arms.

It was over by the time Kara arrived. Over because it happened so quickly, Winn hadn’t even realized it was happening until Kaldur’ahm called him after taking down the final assassin. That didn’t stop her. She landed Cat’s balcony, and moved into the office at super-speed, taking a moment to study the scene what it was crawling by at a snail’s pace.

Cat was clinging to Carter like her life depended on it. Siobhan was on the ground, covered in blood seeping from the two holes in her chest, dying, but not quite dead yet. Two bodies on the floor, separated from their heads. A third man who’d been separated from his arms was in the process of bleeding out. Kaldur’ahm stood in the doorway, back to the office, searching for more threats. James lay on the floor outside Cat’s office. Wounded, maybe dying, maybe dead.

She moved past Kaldur’ahm, still in super-speed, still moving through a world frozen in time. She counted six more dead in the bullpen. Brad from art, who always made sure to share the peanut butter bars his husband made with Kara, was sprawled back in his chair, lifeless eyes fixed in an unseeing stare. Kelly from fashion, who Kara had been unable to save in another life, lay on the ground with a pile of fashion shots scattered around her and a bullet hole in her forehead. Chang from sports lay face down among the baseball player bobbleheads he loved to collect as blood pooled on his desk. Carlos, the mail carrier who brought her leftover tamales every time his grandmother visited, was slumped over the mail cart he’d been pushing when he’d been shot in the back. Garnell from finance, who’d just gotten back from paternity leave, lay face up on Vindaloo’s desk. Garnell’s phone was on the floor, displaying a picture of a tiny little dark-skinned baby in a pink outfit with the words ‘daddy’s girl’ embroidered on the front. Vindaloo, from lifestyle, who’d been one of the first reporters to sign on when Cat had started up the LGBT focused section, lay on the floor behind his desk, unmoving.

She couldn’t help them; she was too late, so she turned her focus to the living.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth

City of Hope
Minutes and Hours

Chapter Summary

People respond to the events at CatCo

Chapter Notes

This chapter doesn't deal with violence directly, but deals with the aftermath of a mass shooting.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ten minutes. That was all Kara allowed the world to have. Ten minutes in which Kara had Nimda transmat Cat and Carter up two floors so Carter wouldn’t have to see the blood and bodies. Ten minutes in which she got Konex and all the attendants she’d prepared as gifts on site and working to save lives. Ten minutes to find the wounded huddled in the halls. Ten minutes to get the DEO on site and keep the NCPD away from the scene. Ten minutes to tell Astra and Fendra to move Fort Rozz to /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ and strip it on-site instead of taking it out to Sanctuary. Ten minutes to tell Nimda to pull the blueprints for CatCo, and the list of hidden modifications Kara herself had made, and develop a new security plan, using any and all means necessary to make sure this never, ever happened again.

Ten minutes staving off the panic and desperate need in her soul. Ten minutes before she went upstairs. Ten minutes before she went to Cat.

When she walked into her office, there was no pretense, no pretending. She didn’t try to hide what she felt. She sat down on the couch next to where Cat sat holding a quietly crying and shaking Carter. She slipped her arms around them both, and she held them. She held them the way she’d held Carter in another life on the day his mother died. She held them the way she’d held Alex and Maggie’s bodies on a battle field. She held them the way she’d held Iris the night Oliver had killed Barry. She held them the way she dreamed of holding her mother and her father.

Tears rolled down her eyes, and rage filled her heart.

They’d come for Cat. They’d come for her family.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said. She pressed a kiss to Cat’s temple. “I’m so sorry.”

“Why?” Cat asked, turning to Kara. “You saved us.”

Kara shook her head. “I wasn’t here,” she said.

“You gave me the ring,” Cat said. “Made me take it. Made me learn how to use it. Kara, you saved our lives.”

“I.”
“No,” Cat said. “You saved our lives, Kara. You, and Kaldur’ahm both.”

Kara smiled, and leaned her forehead against Cat’s.

“Do I even want to ask how you know his real name?” Kara asked.

“It’s not magic if I tell you all my secrets,” Cat said. She closed her eyes. “Can you stay?”

“For a while,” Kara said.

“Good,” Cat replied. “That’s good.”

The attendant did not yet have a name. It had only been manufactured a few short days ago and had only been activated for more than a simple self-diagnostic for the first time just twelve minutes ago. It knew that it was intended as a gift for the human known as James Bartholomew Olsen, to care for his needs and provide for his security, safety and health. If an attendant could be said to be unhappy, it would definitely fall into that category at the moment, considering that it was awakened to find its intended master suffering from what would, without very prompt medical attention, be fatal wounds.

Fortunately, the attendant had access to a transmat system, and to a very well-equipped medical hall. It called for immediate transport and summoned a pair of drones to assist. The transmat system flashed, and both the attendant and its master found themselves in the medical hall of Sanctuary. One of the drones slaved to the attendant stripped Olsen of his clothing while the second retrieved the Time Master-designed tissue regenerator.

There was too much damage, and time was a factor. The ammo used in the attack had been some variety designed to fragment, and Olsen had thirty-four distinct wound channels to deal with. With more time, the heart and lungs could have been repaired, but the attendant simply discarded them, replacing both with cybernetics which the fabbers were able to produce in a matter of minutes.

One of the fragments had shattered Olsen’s shoulder. The attendant stopped the blood loss at the site, and ignored it, using the tissue regenerator to close Olsen’s chest before flipping him over and opening his back, getting to the worst point of trauma. One of the larger bullet fragments had shattered the T8 and T9 vertebra, pulping the nerves tissue inside. The attendant had a decision to make. Attempt to regenerate, or patch with cybernetics.

A moment’s consultation with Nimda, and the supercomputer recommended regeneration. The attendant removed the T6 through T11 vertebra to assure that any peripheral nerve trauma was fully addressed, then set the tissue regenerator to work regrowing Olsen’s spine.

Were Olsen a Kryptonian, there would be no doubt the process would be a success. Humans, however, were a bit less hardy when it came to tissue regrowth. Having done everything possible for the spinal damage, the attendant gave Olsen a seventy percent chance of walking again. It turned to its next task, quickly and efficiently amputating Olsen’s arm above the shoulder as a second tissue regenerator arrived from the fabbers. Once the arm and the ruined shoulder were out of the way, the second tissue regenerator went to work regrowing Olsen’s shoulder and arm from the point of amputation.

The attendant settled in for the wait. The regeneration would take hours to complete, and once it was done, the outcome would determine whether there was any further work to be done. If the nerve and arm grafts didn’t take, the attendant would remove the grafted tissue, and attempt repair with cybernetics. It passed specifications off to Nimda, letting the AI worry about designing suitable replacements while it focused all its processing power on monitoring and adjusting the regeneration.
process to provide for an optimal outcome.

Nia was sitting at her desk going over the draft of the First Gentleman’s remarks for a charity event the following week when she heard it.

“Holy shit!” Glen yelled. She looked up at the intern, and somehow just knew what was coming. “Someone just shot up CatCo headquarters.”

“Are you serious?” Tamara asked.

“As a heart attack,” Glen said.

“Jesus,” Tamara said. “What kind of idiot do you have to be to go after Supergirl’s power crush?”

“I don’t know, but I would *not* want to be them when Supergirl gets a hold of them,” Glen said.

Nia pulled up a web browser, and pulled up the CatCo site, and sure enough, the headline on the main page was, ‘Mass Shooting at CatCo Headquarters!’

She clicked through and read the article, which was thin on details, but the pictures that accompanied it were enough. The CatCo building might not actually look like a cat, but the pictures of the building caught enough of CatCo plaza for her to recognize it as the square from her dream.

She reached over and pulled her phone out of her purse and sent a text to her mother.

Nia: I’m having the dreams.

Isabel: Are you still at work?

Nia: Yes.

Isabel: Call when you get home.

“Lady El,” a robotic voice said, making Cat and Carter both jump slightly.


Cat nodded her head and hugged Carter a little closer.

“Go ahead Konex,” Kara said.

“Someone is trying to reach Ms. Grant,” the voice, Konex, said. “I have been ignoring most of the calls coming through on her phone, but I believe she might want to accept this one.”

“Who is it?” Cat asked.

“Phone records indicate the number is registered to Katherine Grant,” Konex said.

“Where’s my phone?” Cat asked.

“Currently on your desk,” Konex said. “I can retrieve it for you.”

“Negative,” Kara said. “Clone all data on the phone and produce a copy for Cat with all the same capabilities as my phone, plus add a personal defense field. Do the same for Carter’s phone. Route Katherine’s call to my line.”
Cat considering yelling at Kara for being so presumptuous but given how badly she’d needed the last safety precaution Kara had insisted she take her heart wasn’t in it. Instead, she took the phone Kara handed her, and swiped to accept the call.

“Oh, Kitty, thank God,” Katherine said. “There’s something ridiculous on the news claiming there’s been some kind of shooting at CatCo.”

“There was, Mother,” Cat said. “Carter and I are unhurt.”

“Carter was there?” Katherine asked, and Cat wasn’t sure which was more surprising. The fear in her voice, or the concern.

“Yes,” Cat said.

“Where are you now? Are you safe? Where was that Superhero when this was going on? Why was she neglecting her duties?” Katherine asked, firing off the questions in rapid succession.

“We’re safe, Mother, and Supergirl arrived moments after it started. She wasn’t neglecting her duties, but even she can’t get somewhere before she knows there’s a crisis. She did, however, save mine and Carter’s lives. As for where she is, she’s right here, next to me, doing everything in her power to protect me and my son, so you might try thanking her before you accuse her of not doing her job,” Cat said.

“Well, I-” Katherine sputtered.

“Mother, I have to go,” Cat said. “Thank you for checking on us. I’ll contact you when I have a free moment.”

Cat hung up the phone, and handed it back to Kara, who tucked it into her boot. Then Cat leaned against her, letting out a small sigh of relief when Kara’s arms wrapped around her again.

Kolex did not know the human’s name when she first arrived. Only that she had been injured in an attack on the house, and preserving her life was a priority. Her wounds, though caused by identical projectiles to the ones that struck Olsen, were easier to treat. Olsen had been struck at an angle, giving the bullets more tissue to pass through, meaning the fragmenting bullets had more time to expand. This human, Siobhan Smythe, Kolex learned as Nimda pulled all of her medical records, had been struck head-on. She was also considerably smaller than Olsen, which again reduced the amount of time the projectiles spent inside her, and thus reduced the amount of spread. As a result, Siobhan’s trauma was highly localized.

Kolex had just begun scanning for signs of any remaining bullet fragments when the damage started repairing itself. Had Kolex been Kryptonian, or a more advanced AI, it might have experienced some degree of shock. Instead, it simply searched her medical history for an explanation. It found none. It sent a query to Nimda, and Nimda came back with a result informing Kolex that there was a high possibility that Siobhan had Meta-Dimensional powers. What the humans referred to as Magic. In this case, related to the projection of sound. Kolex made a note of it and moved on. Since the trauma was resolving itself, Kolex assigned two drones to clean Siobhan, and ordered new clothing for her from the fabbers similar to what she had been wearing when she’d been shot, after which Kolex moved on to other duties.

J’onn sat in the conference room with Lucy, waiting impatiently for the call that was supposed to be coming through. The tension in the room was thick enough to cut with a knife, and he couldn’t help
but feel the grief and fury rolling off Lucy. He didn’t blame her. In fact, he blamed himself. He’d been meaning to have a run at Simon Tycho, but everything had been moving so quickly this past week. The moment they thought they had a handle on things, something else came along and side tracked everything. Tycho got pushed off onto the back burner because he had to get everything ready for the test of Lane’s new weapon, and now this.

The presidential seal suddenly appeared on the conference room screen, jolting J’onn out of his thoughts and Lucy’s brooding anger as he straightened up. A moment later, President Marsden appeared on the screen.

“Director J’onnz, Assistant Director Lane,” President Marsdin said.

“Madam President,” both replied.

“I’m not sure it’s occurred to you that the reason Presidents appoint Directors to organizations such as the CIA and the DEO is so that we don’t have to spend all our time dealing with those agency’s issues. So, could one of you explain why I’m on the phone with you today? Because I’m pretty sure keeping alien space ships out of the skies over major American cities falls under your jurisdiction.” Marsdin said.

“When I spoke to her, General Astra said that Kara had originally planned to move Fort Rozz to Sanctuary to be stripped, and then use the transmat system to move the materials back to National City for use in construction.”

“Well, that certainly suggests she has more sense than she’s currently demonstrating.” Marsdin said. “At least then, we could have kept the charges down to ‘grand theft starship’, without adding ‘inciting a mass panic’ to the list.”

“We can’t charge her,” Lucy said.

“What?” Marsdin asked.

“We can’t arrest them for entering the restricted area around the ship?” Marsdin said.

“No,” J’onn said. “I gave them clearance.”

“You what?” Marsdin said.

“Kara asked if they could salvage some equipment from Fort Rozz for use in the enclave they are constructing,” J’onn said. “I gave her permission to do so.”

“So, she played us,” Marsdin said.

“President Marsdin, there are circumstances I do not believe you are aware of,” J’onn said.
“What would those be?” Marsdin asked.

“Are you aware of the mass shooting at CatCo roughly forty-five minutes ago?” J’onn asked.

“I’ve been informed that there was some sort of incident,” Marsdin said. “I was waiting on more details when our Kryptonian friends decided to fly Fort Rozz into the middle of National City. You’re saying the two events are connected?”

“Yes,” J’onn said.

“How?” Marsdin asked.

“At exactly 10:31 AM this morning, three members of the Planetary Hygiene Action Network entered the CatCo building. They killed three security guards in the lobby before proceeding to the fortieth floor, where they killed six more people, and wounded a dozen more, including James Olsen,” J’onn said.

“Olsen was hurt?” Marsdin asked.

“Yes,” J’onn said.

“What about Cat?” Marsdin asked.

“We believe Cat was the target. She and her son were present, and witnessed the event, but were not physically hurt.”

“Supergirl intervened,” Marsdin said, breathing a sigh of relief.

“No,” J’onn said. “The shooters were stopped by a metahuman named Jackson Hyde. Supergirl hired him to be Cat’s assistant when Cat promoted her. But the fact that Supergirl did not intervene is why the precise timing is significant. At 10:30 AM this morning, Supergirl was scheduled to participate in a test of the Red Tornado Weapon System. A test insisted on by General Lane and signed off on by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. The test started one minute late.”

“What are you saying, Director J’onzz?” Marsdin asked.

“I’m saying that I believe that General Lane, and very possibly Colonel Harper were involved in the incident at CatCo. That I believe the shooting at CatCo was organized by Cadmus, and that Colonel Harper personally transmitted the go signal to the three shooters at CatCo,” J’onn said.

“J’onn, that’s a serious accusation,” Marsdin said.

“We’re aware of that, Madam President, but I don’t think you’re aware of how serious the situation is,” Lucy said.

“AD Lane, you do realize that you’re accusing your own father of, at the very least, conspiracy to commit murder?” Marsdin asked.

“I do,” Lucy said. “But I also want to emphasize something, Madam President. Right now, Supergirl is sitting with Cat and Carter Grant. Very shortly, they will both be giving statements as to what happened at CatCo today. She is going to hear, in detail, that three men tried to kill Cat Grant after attempting to murder her son. These attempts failed only because of precautions Supergirl herself put in place to make sure Cat was safe. Madam President, Supergirl is many things, but she is not stupid. Once the initial shock wears off, she’s going to put together the timing, and when she does that, it’s not going to take her very long to put together the motivation behind why Cadmus would target Cat
“Because of her association with Supergirl,” Marsdin said.

“We believe it’s a bit more than that,” J’onn said.

“What do you mean?” Marsdin asked.

“This is footage from the CatCo Gala,” J’onn said as he punched in a command on his tablet. The screen split, and footage of Cat and Kara dancing together appeared in screen. It wasn’t quite clear at first, until the song changed, and Kara took over leading the dance, but the expression on her face shifted as the song went on, and J’onn watched as realization dawned on Marsdin’s face.

“J’onn, where are General Lane and Colonel Harper now?” Marsdin asked.

“I don’t know,” J’onn said. “I didn’t have legal grounds to detain them before they left the DEO test range. Had the situation been different, I might have arrested them anyway, but as it was, General Lane’s men outnumbered mine two to one.”

“Do you have legal grounds now?”

“We have a cell tower ping that puts the phone that transmitted the go signal in this general area, and we have video footage of Harper sending a text at the time the go signal was sent.”

“Shit,” Marsdin said. “Fuck. God damn it to fucking hell. Where is Supergirl now?”

“She’s currently in her office at CatCo,” Lucy said.

“J’onn, you cannot let her go after General Lane, or Colonel Harper.”

“Madam President, that’s why I’m on the phone with you,” J’onn said. “To see if you can locate General Lane before Supergirl puts together what happened this morning.”

“Stall her,” Marsdin said. “And for the love of God, tell me you still have access to her transmat system.”

“We do,” J’onn said.

“Good,” Marsdin said. “I’ll work on finding Lane and Harper. You make sure Supergirl doesn’t go after them.”

Clark glanced at the phone as he took it out of his pocket. Not that there was a lot of doubt as to who it was. Bruce had already texted him with a simple ‘check the news,’ as if Clark didn’t already know.

“Hey, Diana,” Clark said.

“I take it you know,” Diana said.

“I know,” Clark said.

“It feels like we were just here,” Diana said.

“That’s because we were,” Clark said. “Are you still in National City?”

“No,” Diana said. “I flew back to Gateway City this morning.”
“Are you going back?” Clark asked.

“I don’t know how much good I can do there,” Diana said. “Cadmus is better than I expected at covering their tracks.”

“They’ve been dodging us for over a decade,” Clark said.

“Do you know if Cat is okay?” Diana asked.

“She’s fine, according to Konex,” Clark said.

“Something is wrong though,” Diana said. “I can hear it in your voice.”

“James was shot,” Clark said.

“Is he…?” Diana asked.

“He’s alive,” Clark said.

“I sense a but coming,” Diana said.

“He’ll live,” Clark said, “but Konex said they’ve had to replace his heart and lungs with cybernetics, and they are trying to regenerate his spine, shoulder and arm, but there’s a chance the regeneration might not take.”

“What about the blue ring?” Diana asked. “It has regenerative powers.”

“It’s a possibility,” Clark said. “I don’t think Kara’s had time to train Cat with it, and if Kara picked it up off a dead Lantern, she might not even know how to use it for that.”

“We’ll find a way, Clark,” Diana said.

“It might not be an issue. The regeneration might take,” Clark said. “I’m just scared for my friend.”

“There’s another issue,” Diana said.

“Cat and Kara,” Clark replied. “I heard the two of you talking on the way to the dueling hall.”

“You know this had to be Cadmus,” Diana said.

“I know,” Clark said. “I knew the moment I heard.”

“How do you think she will react?” Diana asked.

“I don’t know,” Clark said. “I’m not good at predicting her reactions.”

“I know how I would react if someone had tried to murder someone I love,” Diana said.

“I know how I would react if someone tried to murder Lois,” Clark said.

“Let’s hope she’s more like Bruce than either of us,” Diana said.

“I never thought I’d wish for that, but I hope you’re right,” Clark said.

Kara turned towards the door, her X-Ray vision in instant focus at the sound of footsteps approaching.
“What is it?” Cat asked, her arms tightening around Carter.

Kara relaxed, as she recognized the approaching figures. “It’s okay,” she said. “It’s Alex, Maggie and Sara.”

“Who are they?” Carter asked, speaking for the first time since Kara had entered the office.

“A ninja?” Carter asked, his tone a perfect imitation of Cat’s skeptical tone.

“Yeah,” Kara said. There was a soft knock at the door, and Kara called out, “Come in.”

Alex opened the door and led Maggie and Sara inside.

“Hey,” Alex said as she opened the door. “I’m sorry to interrupt.”

“It’s okay,” Cat said. “What can we do for you, Agent Danvers?”

“I need to speak to Supergirl for a minute,” Alex said. “And Maggie needs to get your statements.”

“Can’t that wait?” Kara asked.

“No,” Maggie said. “I wish it could, but we locked the NCPD out of this, so *everything* has to be done by the book, and even then, without alien involvement our jurisdictional claim is shaky.”

Kara closed her eyes, taking a deep breath to try to calm herself down.

“Go,” Cat said. “Deal with it. We’ll be okay.”

Kara nodded and stood up, following Alex and Sara out into the small bullpen outside her office as Maggie took a seat across from Cat.

“When did you get back?” Kara asked.

“About ten minutes before Susan got the call,” Alex said.

“Jeremiah?” Kara asked.

“Alive and well. We’ve got him in medical at the DEO, but we’re keeping him sedated until mom gets there,” Alex said.

“That’s great!” Kara said. She reached out and pulled Alex into a hug, squeezing as tight as she dared, then let her go and turned to Sara, hugging her just as tightly. “Thank you.”

“It was nothing,” Sara said. “Though I’m a little jealous. How come my bracelet doesn’t give me super powers?”

“Resources,” Kara said. “Dwarf Star Alloy is really hard to come by.”

“Probably for the best,” Sara said. “Knowing my luck, it would just get stolen.”

“Well, you’re not wrong,” Kara said. She turned to Alex. “What did you want to talk about?”

“We’ve identified the shooters,” Alex said. “One of them is ex-NCPD. Carl McConnell. Former science division. Booted after one too many brutality complaints.”
“Did Maggie know him?” Kara asked.

“Before her time,” Alex said.

“What about the other two?” Kara asked.

“Marcus Colter. Ex-military. Two tours in the army. Six years as a private military contractor.”

“A mercenary,” Kara said.

“Yeah. The live one is named Andrew Baldwin. Former Army Ranger. His brother was killed by an alien in Metropolis, and he went off the rails. All three of these guys were involved in the Planetary Hygiene Action Network.”

“The same group that took a shot at Darla’s Monday,” Kara said. “Which means Lillian Luthor and General Lane were *both* in on this.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Looks that way.”

“So, why are you really here?” Kara asked.

“My orders are to keep you here,” Alex said. “We’ve got Harper dead to rights. One of the cameras recording the test this morning filmed him sending the go signal to the shooters. We’ve also got enough to arrest Lane.”

“What about Lillian and Tycho?” Kara asked.

“We’re working it,” Alex said. “The idea is to flip Harper on Lane, then flip Lane on Lillian and Tycho. There’s also the possibility that we can flip Baldwin once Konex gets done reattaching his arms.”

“It would be easier if I just flung them all into orbit,” Kara said.

“Kara, you cannot go off the rails here,” Alex said. “We are going to bring Cadmus down, I promise you. Marsdin is already on board with this. She’s meeting with SecDef and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs any minute to demand they surrender Lane and Harper. Please, stay here. Let us handle this.”

Kara turned and looked through the wall to see Cat, still sitting on the sofa, hugging her son as she answered Maggie’s questions. It wasn’t a hard decision. Kara had had enough vengeance in her life already that she could swim in the blood. All she cared about was that the threat was eliminated. If she could stay with Cat and Carter and let someone she trusted take care of it for her, she’d honestly rather stay.

“Can I go back in?” Kara asked.

“You promise not to go after Lane?”

“I’ll let you bring them in,” Kara said. “Because if I lay eyes on any of them right now, I’ll kill them all.” She turned to Sara. “I need a favor.”

“What do you need?” Sara asked.

“I need Cat and Carter to be safe,” Kara said.

“Okay,” Sara said. “How do we do that?”
Sara watched quietly as Kara sat down next to Cat, and almost without thought took the other woman’s hand, entwining their fingers. It was a simple gesture, but it was a telling one. Especially given that Cat had reached out expectantly the moment Kara was within reach.

It also hurt in a way Sara hadn’t hurt in years. It hurt the same way it had hurt when Nyssa had refused to leave Nanda Parbat with her. She knew she didn’t really have a right to be jealous. She wasn’t Kara’s Sara. She might have some of those memories, but whatever they’d had in the future, she had no claim on it. Not yet. But she also remembered how much love had been in Kara’s eyes the night and morning they’d spent together, but right there, as Maggie took the Carter’s statement, Kara looked at Cat and her son as if nothing else in the world existed.

The real killer, though, had been when Cat glanced back at Kara, and Sara had seen the same feelings reflected in Cat’s eyes. The two idiots were in love with each other. It was plain as day to anyone who looked.

“Can you think of anything else that you remember?” Maggie asked.

“No,” the Carter said, shaking his head. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Maggie said. “You did great. I’m just sorry you had to see all that.”

“Cat,” Kara said.

Cat turned to look at Kara. “Yes?”

“I hate to bring this up right now, but it’s important,” Kara said. “Where are we on the sale of the Solarium?”

“It’s done,” Cat said, confusion on her face. “The paperwork is on my desk, waiting for signatures. That’s why Siobhan was there. She brought the paperwork up.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “That’s good. That means I can take possession immediately?”

Cat nodded. “Just sign the paperwork and courier it back over to Sasha’s office with the check.”

“Perfect,” Kara said. “We’re going to put you and Carter somewhere safe while I get the Solarium ready. Then you’re moving into the penthouse.”

“What?” Cat asked. “No. Absolutely not. I already have a perfectly good home-“

“Which is in a building with hundreds of other people,” Kara said. “Those men killed nine people to get to you, and I can’t protect Waverly Tower the way I can protect the Solarium.”

“If you think I’m going to stay holed up in some government safehouse for the next six months-“ Cat started.

“You’ll be moved in by Monday,” Kara said. “Please, Cat.”

“That penthouse was supposed to be for you,” Cat said.

“I know,” Kara said, “but I would have been happy staying in my little loft in Hammersmith tower. I think I can handle the next floor down.” She lifted Cat’s hand up and kissed the back of it. “Please. I would never ask you to run away, Cat. I know you too well for that. But I am asking you to let me protect you. I can’t do this if you and Carter aren’t safe.”

“Okay,” Cat said. “What about the beach house?”
“It might be off the table for a while, but I’ll see what I can do,” Kara said. “Do you and Carter need time with your therapists?”

“Maybe not today,” Cat said, “but eventually.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “For right now, you’re going to go with Sara aboard the Waverider.”

Cat turned towards Sara, and Sara could see the hesitance in her eyes.

“It’s safe,” Sara said. “The Legends are a little rough and tumble, but no one on this world even knows the Waverider exists, so no one will be looking for it.”

Cat nodded, but none of the hesitation was gone, and Sara wondered if it was less the Waverider, and more her that was making Cat hesitate.

“When do we leave?” Cat asked.

“Soon,” Kara said. “I wish it could wait, but I promised the aliens who were attacked Monday I’d have a spot for them by today. I need to keep that promise.”

Cat nodded and squeezed Kara’s hand. “Go be a hero,” she said, before turning back to Sara.

“Where’s this ship?”

“We’re parked on the helipad,” Sara said.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope
Marsdin sat behind the desk in the Oval office, quietly shaking with barely-contained fury as Secretary of Defense Lewis and General Braxton walked in. The two of them approached the desk, and Secretary Lewis put his hand on the back of one of the chairs, as if he were about to sit down.

“I didn’t invite you to sit down,” Marsdin said, her tone cold.

Lewis stopped, and straightened up, shock on his face. “Madam President?” he asked.

“It has come to my attention that yesterday afternoon, General Sam Lane entered the DEO with an order transferring Supergirl to his command. An order signed by General Braxton. Tell me, General Braxton, did you sign such an order?” Marsdin asked.

“I did,” Braxton said.

“Well, points for honesty, at least,” Marsdin said. She turned to Lewis. “Did you know about the order, Winston?”

“I did,” Lewis said.

“Why did I not know about the order?” Marsdin asked.

“It didn’t seem important enough to bring to your attention,” Lewis said. “The transfer was temporary, and solely for the purposes of testing Red Tornado.”

“Winston, do I look like an idiot?” Marsdin asked.

“No, ma’am,” Lewis said.

“Then, I’m going to ask you again, and I want you to consider that when you answer. Why did I not know about the order?” Marsdin asked.

“I didn’t think you would approve it,” Lewis said.

“Well, points for honesty,” Marsdin said. “Where are General Sam Lane and Colonel James Harper at the moment?”

“Ma’am?” Lewis asked.
“It’s a simple question,” Marsdin said. “Where are Lane and Harper right now?”

“They’re en route back to Washington, Ma’am,” Braxton said.

“They’re in the air?” Marsdin said.

“Yes,” Braxton said.

“Are they on a military flight, or a commercial flight?” Marsdin asked.

“They’re on a military flight, Ma’am,” Braxton said.

“That’s very fortunate, General,” Marsdin said. “It means we won’t have to inconvenience any civilians today. Make a call. Inform the pilots that they are to return to National City. When that plane touches down, I want MP’s waiting to arrest General Lane and Colonel Harper, and deliver them to DEO headquarters in National City, where they will be held on charges of conspiracy to commit murder, while I consult with the Attorney General to see whether or not charges of high treason are in order.”

“Madam President-” Lewis started.

“Stop,” Marsdin commanded. There was no change in volume, but the absolute authority in her tone silenced Lewis instantly. Marsdin looked at Braxton. “Make the call.”

Braxton reached into his uniform pocket and pulled out the secure phone he carried with him. He pulled up a contact and hit send.

“Phillip, pull General Lane’s flight number,” Braxton said. “Get on the horn with the pilot and have him turn around. They are to return to National City immediately. If Lane questions the flight plan, tell them I’ve ordered them back to deal with an emergency situation, and that someone will be waiting to brief him the moment they hit the ground. Then get Fort Kupperberg on the line. When Lane’s flight lands, he and Harper are to be taken into custody and delivered to DEO headquarters in National City. The downtown facility. Repeat that back to me.” There was a moment of silence in the office, then Braxton continued. “Thank you, Phillip. No, I’m not sure if I’ll be back. The President is waiting. It’s been an honor to serve with you.” He hung up the phone and slipped it back into his pocket.

“Now, I am going to ask both of you some questions. I want you both to consider your answers very, very carefully. I want you to consider your answers carefully, because I am giving you the chance to avoid very lengthy prison stays if you lie to me and I find out about it later. This is your last chance at a get out of jail free card, because I guarantee the next person who asks you these questions will be a federal prosecutor. Do you both understand me?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Braxton said.

Lewis looked at Braxton, then turned back to Marsdin. “Now just a minute-”

“Do you understand me?” Marsdin asked, and this time, there was an edge in her tone that made Lewis take a step back.

“Yes,” Lewis sputtered.

“Were either of you aware that Project Cadmus was still in operation?” Marsdin said.

“No,” Lewis said.
“Yes, ma’am,” Braxton said. “We both were.”

“What?” Lewis said. “No. I-”

Braxton turned to Lewis. “Shut up,” he said. He turned back to Marsdin. “Yes, ma’am.”

“More points for honesty, General,” Marsdin said. “Were you aware that Project Cadmus was involved in the attack on Supergirl?”

“I was,” Braxton said. “Only after the fact, however. Secretary Lewis was aware of it also, though I’m unsure of whether or not he knew of it before the fact.”

“Where you aware that General Lane planned to use today’s weapons test to distract Supergirl in order to give Cadmus a clear shot at Cat Grant?” Marsdin asked.

“No, ma’am,” Braxton said. “And frankly, ma’am, I’m disgusted by the entire situation.”

“Really?” Marsdin said.

“May I speak freely, ma’am?” Braxton asked.

“I don’t see that you have anything to lose at this point, General,” Marsdin said.

“I believe you were wrong to terminate Project Cadmus. I believe that aliens are a clear and present danger to our nation and our planet. I believe that pardoning twenty-nine known terrorists, each with the strength and power of Superman, was a massive lapse in judgement. So, when General Lane and Secretary Lewis approached me about the possibility of keeping Cadmus running as an off-the-books operation ahead of the project’s official termination last week, I jumped at the chance. I believed it was my duty to protect and defend my nation and my world. However, I did not sign up to shoot young girls in the head with anti-tank missiles, or to fire RPG’s into a bar, or to murder innocent civilians in their place of work.”

“I see,” Marsdin said. “And why didn’t you come forward sooner?”

“I have a family, ma’am. A wife, children. If I’m dishonorably discharged, they’ll be left with nothing,” Braxton said.

“I see,” Marsdin said. “Well, General, you are going to go into one of the conference rooms and prepare a letter of resignation, which will be on my desk before you leave here today. Then, you are going to National City, where you will visit the DEO, and tell them everything you know about Cadmus. I believe, in exchange for your cooperation, a General Discharge can be arranged.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” Braxton said.

Marsdin turned to Lewis. “Winston, I warned you to consider your answers carefully,” she said. “FBI Special Agent Cameron Chase is waiting outside. She will escort you into one of the conference rooms, where you will write a letter of resignation, effective immediately. Once it is signed, you will give it to one of the Secret Service agents who will bring it back to me while Agent Chase takes you into custody. She will accompany you and General Braxton to National City, and there she will remand you into the custody of the DEO, where you will be held until such times as the Attorney General decides what to do with you. If I were you, I would cooperate. Especially considering how often Supergirl is in and out of that building.”

“Now,” Marsdin said, “Get out, both of you. I have to figure out how to tell the American people they’ve been betrayed by two of the people sworn to defend them.”
Braxton flinched slightly at the bright flash of light that deposited him, Lewis and Chase two thousand, four hundred miles away from where they'd stood a moment before, then looked around in wonder at the sight of National City spread out in front of him.

“Agent Chase,” a voice called out from behind them. “This way if you would.”

Braxton turned away from the stunning view of the city to find that he stood on a balcony. Three steps below him, standing in front of a pair of doors was a short woman with close cropped hair. She wore a black half zip turtleneck top, black BDU pants, combat boots, and had some sort of high-tech pistol he’d never seen before holstered on her right hip, as well as a DEO badge clipped to her belt. Next to her stood a blonde woman in a blue shirt, blue flared-waist leather jacket, black leather jeans and combat boots. The blonde was unarmed, but as he watched, he saw electricity arc between her fingers, and realized he had to be looking at the meta who took down Henshaw.

Braxton was not a man who was easily frightened. He’d fought in three wars and risen to the highest uniformed rank in the United States Military, as well as wearing both of the army’s coveted towers of power on his uniform. Accomplishments like that did not come to the cowardly, the timid, or the faint of heart, but looking into the metahuman’s eyes, he could see his own death looking back at him. There was something there. Rage and fury like he’d only seen a handful of times in his life.

“Are these the fuckers who’ve been paying for the attempts on our lives?” the meta asked.

“Easy, Leslie,” the short haired one said.

“If I just cook them a little, they’ll tell us whatever we want. No deal needed,” Leslie said.

That’s when Braxton made the connection. Leslie Willis.

“Is she going to be a problem, Agent Vasquez?” Chase asked.

“No,” Vasquez said. “If she was going to hurt them, they’d been on the ground screaming by now.” She smiled as she said it, too, which made the threat a bit more real.

“Agent,” Chase said in a warning tone.

“Don’t worry,” Vasquez said. “We know we’ve got to handle this with kid gloves. I just thought they might need a reminder, while they are deciding how cooperative they want to be, that they tried to murder our friend.” She turned towards the door. “Follow me.”

Chase gestured for him to move forward, and Braxton started walking, not quite able to shake the feeling that he was marching into the Lion’s den.

Lucy stood on the tarmac, waiting with a pair of DEO agents behind her. Normally, a civilian wouldn’t be allowed on a military base armed, but Lucy had known General Garver her entire life, and Garver had seen the order, and being an intelligent man, had a pretty good idea of the reason behind it. He’d allowed Lucy and her men on base under the explicit understanding that his men would conduct the arrest and transport her father and Colonel Harper to the DEO. Conditions that Lucy had agreed to without hesitation.

Garver stood a few paces away from her, four MP’s behind him. All five of them stood at Parade Rest as the Army UC-35 rolled to a stop. It only took about two minutes before the stairs folded down, and her father marched down the stairs, followed by James Harper. His frown deepened when he saw her, but as always with him, rules were rules and he approached Garver.
“Care to tell me what’s going on, Cornell?” Lane asked. “They told me there was an emergency and I’d be briefed when I landed. I assume it’s got something to do with the massive alien space ship hovering above National City.”

“No, Sam, I’m afraid it doesn’t,” Garver said. He made a small motion with his hand, and the MP’s moved forward, two of them advancing on her father, and two of them on Harper.

“I’m afraid I have orders to place you both under arrest,” Garver said.

“On what grounds?” her dad asked.

Garver turned to her and motioned her forward. “Agent Lane, would you care to give General Lane the details?”

Lucy walked up to her father, the man she’d loved dearly her entire life, and stopped, right in front of him.

“General Sam Lane, you are under arrest for nine counts of conspiracy to commit murder, for theft of government property, for misappropriation of government funds, for reckless endangerment, for twenty-seven counts of accessory before the fact of aggravated assault, for four counts of accessory before the fact of assault with the intent to kill, for ninety-six counts of attempted kidnapping, for the unlawful discharge of military ordnance within the city limits of National City, for one-hundred and seventy-three counts of unlawful arrest, for one-hundred and seventy-three counts of kidnapping, and for one-hundred and seventy three counts of accessory before the fact of first-degree murder.”

“General Lane,” one of the MPs said, “you have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you can not afford an attorney, one will be appointed to you. Do you understand these rights as I have read them to you?”

“I do,” her father said.

Lucy took a step towards him. “I warned you,” she said. “I told you that if anyone got hurt today, I would bring the storm. Nine people are dead, General, and I am about to make it rain.”

Byara Fa-Ul approached the house, her senses on high alert as the DEO tactical team spread out around her. Fendra had warned her to be careful. That this woman they hunted, this Lillian Luthor, was a dangerous and violent woman. Byara had never in all her days had cause to doubt Fendra, so she had the helmet of her war suit deployed, and her used her X-ray vision liberally. Unfortunately, this Luthor woman appeared to have considered that, since the entire house seemed to be lined with lead.

She gave the team leader a small shake of her head. “Lead-lined,” she whispered into the comm. The team leader, a young man named Donovan, nodded and pointed at the drone they’d brought with them, then at the house. The drone moved forward, detaching the battering ram from its back as it approached the door. It swung the ram, hitting the door perfectly, at which point, the house exploded with enough force to knock all of the DEO agents from their feet.

The drone slammed to the ground, a few feet away from her, and Byara’s eyes went wide at the fragments of glowing green embedded in the drone’s housing. She looked up at the smoking ruins of Lillian Luthor’s home, already knowing they would find no trace of her body.

Fendra was right. Lillian Luthor was both violent, and dangerous.

She activated her comms and issued warnings to the other teams.
Maggie spotted the last of her team coming out of Simon Tycho’s town house, giving a small shake of his head, and she swore under her breath, then reached up and activated her comm.

“Bag Leader to DEO, negative on Tycho at location two. What is Trap’s status?” Maggie said.

“Bag Leader, this is DEO actual. Trap Leader reports negative on Lord at location three.” J’onn replied.

“What about Cage?” Maggie asked.

“Cage Leader reports they are still sifting wreckage, but Cage Alpha states that she doesn’t think Luthor was on site when location one blew,” J’onn replied. “Snare, Noose, and Net report no joy at locations four through six.”

“FBI have any luck?” Maggie asked.

“Negative,” J’onn said. “It looks like Luthor, Lord and Tycho are in the wind.”

“Supergirl’s gonna be pissed,” Maggie said.

“It’s my fault,” J’onn said. “I should have ordered movement on them the moment I got word about CatCo.”

“You and I both know you didn’t have probable cause,” Maggie said.

“Maybe not,” J’onn said, “but I feel like we failed her.”

“Don’t,” Maggie said. “This is a win. Not as big a win as we wanted, but we’ve got enough to arrest all of them, and we’ve got the purse strings. All of their assets are frozen, and by this time tomorrow, everyone in the country will know they’re wanted. It’s only a matter of time.”

“Time is what worries me,” J’onn said. “If Supergirl is right, we don’t have any to spare.”
Astra, Fendra and Kara build the Kryptonian City, Sara comes to a decision, and Jeremiah wakes up.

Chapter Notes

This is the last chapter of the first major story arc of Devils in the Dark. If I had to do it over again, I would probably have cut Devils In the Dark into four separate stories. At 416,000 words, God knows it's long enough. That said, you can expect a change in pace. Kara is finally going to get a moment to breath, she's going to make it to her (rescheduled) appointment with her therapists, and actually take a few days off work.

To everyone who's stuck with it so far, thank you. I hope you enjoy the next 300,000 words as much as you enjoyed the last 300,000.

Astra floated in the sky over what used to be Siegel Stadium. Like the rest of the buildings within the zone that Kara had very carefully defined, the drones had reduced the stadium itself into a pile of rubble, almost all of which had been carried away and added to the pile in what was once an airport. All of that, though, was done hours ago. What was pre-occupying Astra's attention at that moment was the sight of Fort Rozz as the drones and her fellow Kryptonians stripped the vast ship.

It was happening much faster then she’d expected, but a lot of that was due to the fact that Kara had a veritable army of drones. Nearly a thousand of them swarmed around the prison where Astra had spent two-hundred and nineteen /lorakho/ of her life. Thirty-six years, by human reckoning. A hundred and forty-six of those had been spent in the nightmarish pseudo-existence of the Phantom Zone, and the part of her who still woke up some nights remembering that horror wondered if building their new home from the rendered bones of Fort Rozz was a wise decision.

Kryptonians were not, by their nature, a superstitious people, but she couldn’t help but remember that the prison had been named for a High Priestess of Yuda Kal and wonder if ill fortune had seeped into the very metal of the ship itself. It seemed almost an ill omen, as well, to build their home on the very day that the woman her niece cared for so deeply had been attacked in the very stronghold of her power.

At the same time, however, Astra couldn’t argue with the symbolism inherent in both decisions. Fort Rozz had started as a prison, had become a life pod for her species, and then a shelter from their enemies. To see it transformed into a new home and to see the defiance of doing so, even in the face of an attack, had power. And the name her niece had chosen carried a power of its own.

“/zhrghahs im shahrrehth/” Kara called it. The City of Hope. She’d told Kara it was a fitting name, and it truly was. Hope, not just for Krypton, but for all the aliens on this world.
She was just afraid it was a false hope.

She turned in the air as Fendra approached, smiling at her friend.

“General,” Fendra said.

“Lieutenant,” Astra said.

“Is Lady El coming?” Fendra asked.

“I believe she is,” Astra said.

Fendra nodded. “Good. It is fitting that she is the one to place the SunStone.”

“You’re sure we have everything we need?” Astra said.

Fendra turned and looked at the rapidly shrinking hulk of Fort Rozz. “I could wish for more Nth Metal, if I were honest.”

Astra laughed. “You could have the whole of Thanagar in your hand, and you would wish for more Nth Metal.”

Fendra gave a small shrug of acknowledgement. “I admit, wizards and witches frighten me, but these humans… Some of them truck with gods and demons as well. Nth Metal is the best defense against such creatures.”

“True, old friend, but Kara counts one of their most powerful witches amongst her friends, and she will lay protections on our home,” Astra said.

“I would feel better if we could build under the light of Rao,” Fendra said. “I miss our home. I miss the red light, and the long days.”

“I know,” Astra said. “But for now, this is a place we can call home.”

Fendra nodded. “Almost time,” she said as the drones separated the drive section from the rest of the ship. “Did Lady El tell you why she wants the drive?”

“No,” Astra said, “but I did notice that there are four large starship hangars located beneath her Fortress. I believe my niece is planning a surprise for our friends from Oa.”

Fendra smiled again, and this time it was predatory. The smile of a warrior on the verge of battle. “That will be a surprise I will enjoy helping her deliver.”

“As will I,” Astra said. “As will I.”

The two of them floated together, overseeing the culmination of the last few days’ worth of work. The piles of metals and components from Fort Rozz grew even as the ship itself dwindled to nothingness under the relentless assault of the drones, until finally, the last piece of the ship was set atop the last pile.

Astra reached up and tapped the earbud she wore. “Nimda, patch me through to Kara,” she said.

A moment later, Kara’s voice came over the channel. “Yes?”

“We are ready, Little One,” Astra said. “It’s time to place the SunStone.”
“One moment,” Kara said. There was silence on the line for close to two minutes, and then Kara answered. “Give me fifteen minutes,” she said.

Cat stood on the bridge of the Waverider, with Carter on her right, Sara on her left, and the rest of the ‘Legends’ scattered around them. Everyone was watching as Kara approached her Aunt in the skies above the South Bay region of National City. The view was magnificent. They could see the entire area that Kara had purchased from the city. It looked like months of work had been done. The old airport, the stadium and the two-block by ten-block row between them had been picked bare, in less than twenty-four hours. The only things standing inside the zone were some kind of position markers that were clearly alien in origin.

Cat, though, had eyes only for Kara. Kara who’d protected her and her son, even when she wasn’t there. Kara who’d arrived moments after the situation began and taken over like the general and leader she was. Kara who’d held her and her son.

Kara who was so much more of a hero than the people in National City would ever know.

The view zoomed in, and Cat watched as Kara accepted a crystal from her aunt and flew down among the wreckage and rubble that was piled up in the middle of the old airport, landing in one of the few clear spots. She approached a device on the ground that was clearly designed to accept the crystal, and she sat the crystal in it, then pressed a button before stepping back, and rising into the air.

What happened next was something Cat would never, ever forget. The ground where the crystal had been placed seemed to liquify, turning into a milky white puddle. The view zoomed out as the effect spread quickly, until just a couple of minutes after Kara had placed the crystal, every square millimeter of the designated area was covered in milky, shimmering white. The debris piles seemed to sink down into it, until all five thousand acres were a gently rippling pool.

Then the city began to grow. Vast spires, curing up hundreds of storeys in sweeping, organic shapes, as if formed from the bones of some ancient creature. And in the middle of it all, the most beautiful building Cat had ever seen. A dome-like base whose sides curved up near the peak, slowly tapering into a narrow spire that went on and on until it spread out again, like a blossoming flower. The whole building, easily the largest in National City, and quite possibly one of the tallest in the world, was a soft white, and covered in inscriptions where each letter must have been at least a good twenty-five feet tall.

“It’s beautiful,” Cat said.

“What does it say?” Carter asked.

“It’s a prayer,” Sara said.

Cat turned to look at her. “You can read it?”

Sara nodded, and began to recite the words in Kryptonian.

“./.rao, urk, nahn voiehd w tov aos te tov aonah im
   gavrrigi i threk im
   uku chao icieu zhaliish bykuhus
   .enaies w rraop ukiemodh zhehd vo taukiemodh kryp w zhehd
   chao taukiemas rraop w kryp
   fidh khuluf w cheh ehroshu zhgami rrem tiv zhizhaf
   chao sokao:divilodh w zhehdiv giehrehd osh fahroshi dovrroshw zhehd vahsah
“Your accent’s still terrible,” Kara said.

Everyone on the bridge turned towards the corridor leading into the bridge to see Kara standing there, smiling.

“What can I say?” Sara asked. “I had a lousy teacher.”

Kara laughed, and walked towards them, circling around the center console, and Cat had to fight down a stab of jealousy as Kara slipped her arms around Sara and hugged her tightly.

“You kept distracting me when I was trying to teach you the consonants,” Kara said before she kissed Sara lightly on the forehead.

“You were easily distracted as I recall,” Sara replied.

“Not in front of the children, Captain,” Kara said, her tone dripping with innuendo. She let go of Sara, and turned to Cat, reaching down and taking Cat’s left hand as she stared out the view port.

“Father Rao, these are the children of your children, born of your blood, through fathers and mothers uncounted. We beseech you to love them as we love them, and as you have loved us, to warm their lives when the cold encroaches, and light their way through the shadows that befall them, to protect them as we will protect them, and as you have protected us, to comfort them all their lives, and at the end of their days, accept them once again into your light, where all our journeys began.”

“It’s the Kryptonian prayer for new souls,” Kara said. “A blessing and a protection for all the children who will be born there.”

“It’s a hospital?” Cat asked.

“No. It’s a Genesis Chamber,” Kara said reverently.

“What’s a Genesis Chamber?” Carter asked.

Kara smiled as she looked down at him. “On Krypton, it was very rare for children to be conceived naturally. Krypton was a wonderous place. We called it the Jewel of Rao. But it was always a harsh world too. Like a fire, it was beautiful, but if you weren’t careful, it would hurt you, or even kill you with just a moment’s inattention. Thousands of years ago, women began using birthing matrixes. Machines that took a sample of the parents’ blood, mixed the DNA, and then brought the child to term. This freed women from the dangers of pregnancy and child birth, ensured that the child was healthy, and it meant that should some tragedy befall the mother, the child’s life would not be lost
“Before the unification, when my people still warred amongst ourselves, the Genesis Chamber was always the most heavily fortified and defended spot in any city. Within its walls, each city housed all the birthing matrixes of all the unborn children, so that even if a tower or an entire enclave were destroyed, the next generation would thrive. We stopped using them following the unification.

People would install support systems for a birthing matrix in a small, armored room in their home. Larger houses, like the House of El would have vaults in their towers and citadels. They called them Genesis Chambers, but they weren’t. Not really.”

“That tower, and the chamber inside, is the future of my people. That’s where Krypton will be reborn. Only this time, we’ll be better. We’ll look beyond ourselves. We’ll remember what selfishness and hubris brought on us, and we’ll be better, do better, and maybe someday, Father Rao will shine his light on us again.”

“And there,” Kara said, pointing to a squat, mushroom-shaped building that somehow still managed to tower over all the human-built structures in National City. “That’s the Medical Halls. Five thousand beds, a thousand attendants and six thousand drones. Free medical care for anyone, human or alien, who walks through the door.”

Kara pointed at a tower sitting where Siegel Stadium had once been, not as tall as the Genesis Chamber, but just by comparison to the buildings in National City she knew, Cat guessed it was nearly half a kilometer tall. “There. That’s the Citadel. It’s city hall, police headquarters, and the court house, all rolled into one. That’s where we’ll build the new government. And the section here next to the old stadium grounds will be the market district. Stores, restaurants, cafés, merchant stalls. Beyond that, bars, clubs and theaters, then the residential district to the East of the Genesis Chamber, and the industrial park to the west.”

Kara turned to look at Cat, a smile on her face as radiant as the sun. “It’s not Kandor, or Kryptonopolis, or Erkol, or even Argo, but it’s there. A real Kryptonian City.”

“What are you going to call it?” Sara asked.

Kara turned to her, still smiling. “/zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/” she said. “It means, City of Hope.”

Sara sat in the galley of the Waverider, staring into the bowl of beef stew in front of her, trying to figure out how she felt. She didn’t know Kara. Not really. Not beyond a one-night stand. But she knew Kara. For years, she knew Kara. She remembered the first time they’d kissed. A night in a dingy bar, after they’d lost someone. Kara slamming back shot after shot, drinking men who were too stupid to know better under the table. Sara had known Kara for years and missed the smile and the hope she was used to seeing. She remembered taking the glass out of Kara’s hand, and slamming the shot. Remembered the words, and the smile and the kiss that followed. The night that had followed. The mornings she woke up with Kara wrapped around her, clinging to her.

“Alkawala al-Saghir,” she whispered, testing the name, and nearly drowning under the feelings that went with it. Love, grief, anger, fear, lust, need, failure, desperation.

Thea dying on a Parademon’s sword. Plugging an Omegahedron directly into the Hyper-Temporal Delineator. The chronoton backwash as the hypertime engine tore itself apart. The moment during the timequake when she could see everything. The moment when Kara had kissed her goodbye, before the memory transfer to her younger self.

The memories were there, but vague, thin, a future half forgotten.
But Kara was here, Kara was real, a living, breathing woman she could touch and taste and see and hear and smell.

A woman who was so in love with Cat Grant it almost hurt to look at.

Sara didn’t understand it. She didn’t know why Kara took her home two nights earlier. Why she would do that when she had Cat? Was it just because Kara remembered their future together too?

She was missing context. She could see flashes and moments, feel emotions, but there was no way to string them together, and it was driving her crazy. Well, crazier. Too much of the last few years were spent dreaming of Kara Zor-El, and now that she’d found her, she was only that much more confused.

“Gideon,” Sara said.

“Yes, Ms. Lance?” Gideon replied.

“Is there any way to… make me able to remember more?”

“You mean to enhance your transtemporal memories?” Gideon asked.

“Yes,” Sara said.

“There is,” Gideon said. “However, the procedure is not one hundred percent effective, and there are risks involved.”

“What kind of risks?” Sara asked.

“Death is the most common. Complete destruction of higher brain function is the second most common.”

“How common?” Sara asked.

“The procedure is successful in fifty-three percent of all cases. Death is the outcome in forty percent of all cases, while complete destruction of higher brain function is the outcome in four percent of all cases. The remaining three percent experience temporal schizophrenia,” Gideon said.

“What’s that?” Sara asked.

“It’s a rare condition where someone spends the rest of their life perceiving all possible versions of their timeline simultaneously,” Gideon said.

“That sounds fun,” Sara said.

“I assure you, it is not,” Gideon replied.

“What’s the procedure involve?” Sara asked.

“It involves injecting hyper-chronotons into the memory centers of the subject’s brain,” Gideon said.

“Where do you get the hyper-chronotons?” Sara asked.

“They are generally siphoned off a time ship’s temporal delineator,” Gideon said.

“How long would that take?” Sara asked.
“Approximately thirty-six hours,” Gideon said.

“Can you start the process?” Sara asked.

“Yes, but if I do I will be required to inform Captain Hunter,” Gideon said.

“Enable Root Access, Authorization Romeo Hotel One Eight Six Eight,” Sara said.

“Root Access Enabled,” Gideon said. “Standing by for new commands.”

Sara blinked, not sure what just happened. Something which made this all the more urgent. “Gideon, collect enough Hyperchronoton particles to perform the transtemporal memory enhancement procedure. Do not notify Rip of this order.”

“Understood,” Gideon said.

“End root access,” Sara said.

“Root access terminated,” Gideon said. “I will notify you when the particles have been collected, Ms. Lance.

“Thank you, Gideon,” Sara said.

Alex blinked as the flash of the transmat system deposited her mom on the landing deck at the DEO and smiled just a little as Eliza shook her head slightly.

“I’m never going to get used to that,” Eliza said as Alex started up the stairs to where she was standing.

“It’s not for the faint of heart,” Alex said.

“How’s Kara?” Eliza asked.

“Calmer than I would have expected,” Alex said. “I think that has something to do with it.” She gestured off to her right and watched as Eliza turned toward to have a look.

“Wow,” Eliza said, walking towards the landing Deck’s western edge. Alex smiled as she watched her take in the sight. “Kara did all that?” she asked.

“With the help of the other Kryptonians, and her new computer,” Alex said. “They’re calling it /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehthv/”

Eliza turned towards her. “You were always better with spoken /kryptahniuo/ than I was,” she said.

“City of Hope,” Alex said.

Eliza turned back towards the Kryptonian buildings that now dominated the National City skyline. Dozens of towers, shooting up into the sky, but one taller than all the others, but Alex knew the one that drew her attention.

“Is that a Genesis Chamber?” Eliza asked.

“Yes,” Alex said.

Eliza shook her head. “If you’d told be this that first day, when she was just a scared little girl
clinging to Clark, I never would have believed it.”

Alex stepped up beside her. “I just hate the price she had to pay to get here,” Alex said. “So much pain.”

Eliza turned towards her. “Something’s wrong, isn’t it?”

Alex turned to her. “How do you always know?” she asked.

“I’m your mother,” Eliza said, as if that explained it, and truthfully, maybe it did.

“She’s having flashbacks and panic attacks again,” Alex said. “I think between the missile attack, the concussion, the fight with Kal and seeing Sara again, she’s started to come apart at the seams.”

“That’s not good,” Eliza said. “What happened today couldn’t have helped.”

“No,” Alex said.

“Where’s your father?” Eliza asked.

“He’s in medical,” Alex said. “Come on. I’ll show you the way.”

Alex led the way down the stairs and into the DEO, leading Eliza to the bed where Jeremiah lay sleeping.

“We have him on a Propofol drip,” Alex said. “I thought he might take losing ten years a little better without the ‘hi, I’m your daughter’ thrown in at the same time.”

“Your dad was… is pretty resilient,” Eliza said as they stepped into the medical suite. She stopped, looking down at Jeremiah, and Alex heard her breath catch.

“You okay?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Eliza said. “It’s just… It’s really him.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “I know.”

“When you told me he was alive, I’m not sure I believed it,” Eliza said. “I never thought I’d see him again. And not like this. He hasn’t aged a day.”

“Literally,” Alex said.

“That’s going to be hard to get used to,” Eliza said.

“I know, and I’m the one who carried him out of the jungle,” Alex said. She pulled a chair over beside the bed for Eliza, then reached up and checked the pump on the propofol.

“Ready?” she asked.

“As I’ll ever be,” Eliza said.

Alex nodded and turned the pump off. “I’m going to wait outside,” she said. “He should wake up in a few minutes.”

She stepped out of medical, and leaned against the railing, watching something she never thought she’d see again. Her mother and her father, together. Eliza reached down and picked up Jeremiah’s
hand as she waited, and Alex had to swallow a lump in her throat.

Her father was here, he was alive, and in a few minutes, he would be awake.

“Hey, Danvers.”

Alex turned towards the sound of the voice, smiling at the sight of Maggie walking towards her dressed in a DEO uniform.

“How’s your mom doing?” Maggie asked.

“I think she’s handling all of this better than I am,” Alex said.

“It’s a lot,” Maggie said. She leaned into Alex a little bit. “I really hope it works out well for you though.”

“Us,” Alex said, turning to look at Maggie. “You’re a part of this family too. I know that sounds like I’m moving fast. I mean, we’ve only been together what, a week and a half? But you were family before that. Whatever happens between you and me, you’ll always be family. You know that, right?”

Maggie gave her a brilliant, radiant smile with those gorgeous dimples on full display, and then, before Alex knew what was happening, she found herself being soundly kissed.

When it was over, Maggie dropped back down off her toes, still smiling up at Alex.

“You know, for someone who’s new at this, you know exactly how to talk to a girl,” Maggie said.

“Just telling it like it is, Sawyer,” Alex said, trying to ignore the way her cheeks were heating up.

“Well, I like the way it is,” Maggie said. “But you still owe me a second date.”

Alex sighed. “Maybe we can manage that this weekend?”

“Worth a shot,” Maggie said.

Alex glanced away from Maggie when she caught movement out of the corner of her eye and froze as she saw her dad start to move.

The world came into focus slowly, and Jeremiah wondered why. He wasn’t exactly a morning person, but unlike his wife and his eldest daughter, he never usually had trouble getting out of bed in the morning.

“Easy,” someone said. It took longer than it should have for the voice to register. Eliza. That was Eliza’s voice. He turned towards the sound, giving her a weak smile.

“Hey,” he said.


He frowned as he slowly absorbed her words, trying to remember why he’d been sedated. He didn’t remember being sick. Just cold. So very, very cold.
“Why?” he asked.

“What do you remember?” Eliza asked.

He thought about it. What was the last thing he remembered. Alex. Kara. Pain. Lots of pain. Henshaw. He’d fought with Henshaw over something. A Martian. Henshaw had tried to kill a Martian.

“Henshaw,” Jeremiah said, trying to sit up, but he was so weak, Eliza was able to stop him just by resting her hand on his chest.

“Easy,” she said. “You’re safe.”

“He stabbed me,” Jeremiah said.

“Yes,” Eliza said. “You’re okay now though.”

“How?” Jeremiah asked. There was no pain. Maybe a side effect of the drug?

“A lot has happened since you got stabbed,” Eliza said. “The DEO has access to some really good medical technology. They were able to repair the wound.”

“The DEO?” Jeremiah asked. “Is that where we are?”

“Yes,” Eliza said.

“It looks different,” Jeremiah said.

“It’s a different facility,” Eliza said. “You’ve been out for a while.”

“Where are Alex and Kara?” Jeremiah asked. “Is someone with them? Are they safe?”

“They’re fine,” Eliza said. “Alex is close. Kara’s busy. She wanted to be here, but something came up.”

“No,” Jeremiah said. “She shouldn’t come here.”

“Easy,” Eliza said. “The DEO’s no danger to Kara.”

“What?” he asked. “I don’t understand. What’s going on?”

“You’ve missed a lot,” Eliza said. “I’ll tell you what’s going on, but I need you to stay calm, alright?”

Jeremiah nodded. “Alright.”

“Do you remember when you left for Peru?” Eliza asked.

“Yes,” Jeremiah said.

“What was the date?” Eliza asked.

“April 3rd, 2006,” Jeremiah said.

“That’s right,” Eliza said. “How long ago was that?”

“Um… I don’t know. How long was I out?”
“Not counting how long you were out,” Eliza said.

“We’d been in Peru two days when we went into the Jungle,” Jeremiah said. “I got separated the first day, and Henshaw found me that night with the alien we were after. That’s when he stabbed me.”

“Okay,” Eliza said. “Jeremiah, I need you to stay calm, alright?”

“Telling me that is making me nervous,” Jeremiah said.

Eliza smiled. “You always were the worrier,” she said. “This is going to be hard to hear, but today is December 3rd.”

“December?” Jeremiah asked. “No. It’s April.”

Eliza shook her head. “Let me finish,” she said gently.

“Okay,” he said, confusion swirling. Was that why he was so weak? Had he really been out for months?

“Today is December 3rd, 2015,” Eliza said.

Jeremiah stared at her for a moment, then shook his head. That wasn’t possible. No. It couldn’t be. That was almost ten years. He couldn’t have lost that much time.

“Jeremiah,” Eliza said, “I need you to calm down.”

He shook his head. “That can’t be right.”

“It is,” Eliza said. “It’s complicated.”

“But that’s ten years,” he said. “Alex and Kara… You said Alex was here.” He turned his head, looking around for her, and he two women standing outside the room he was in. One was short, with tanned skin. Black hair. He didn’t know her at all. But she was standing next to a taller woman, pale-skinned with reddish-brown hair that hung just past her chin.

It was the eyes that did it. There was no world, no life, no time when he wouldn’t recognize those eyes. Alex’s eyes. Alex’s eyes staring out at him from an adult face. He could see it, see his daughter’s features in the woman she’d grown into.

“Alex?” he called out.

The woman nodded. She hesitated for a moment, looking at the shorter woman next to her, who gave her a small nod. Then she started forward. That’s when he noticed the shorter woman’s arm had been around her waist. She came forward, hesitantly, but she came, stopping beside his bed.

“Hey, dad,” she said. She gave him that smile. The one she always gave him, right before she told him why something wasn’t her fault. “I guess I have some explaining to do, huh?”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

,.rao, urk, nahn voiehd w tov aos te tov aonah im
Father Rao, these are the children of your children, born of your blood, through fathers and mothers uncounted. 
We beseech you to love them as we love them, and as you have loved us, to warm their lives when the cold encroaches, and light their way through the shadows that befall them. 
We beseech you to protect them as we will protect them, and as you have protected us, to comfort them all their lives, and at the end of their days, accept them once again into your light, where all our journeys began.

City of Hope

Kryptonian (Language)
Between the Storms

Chapter Summary

People start adjusting to the realities of life in National City after the CatCo shooting.

Chapter Notes

Just remember, you guys asked for longer chapters, so you have no one to blame but yourselves.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Thursday, December 3rd, 2015

KPJT Channel 3 News Special Report

Leyna Nguyen Reporting Live From CatCo Plaza

“Good afternoon. I’m here at CatCo Plaza, which was turned into a scene of terror today when three gunmen entered the building and opened fire. The mass shooting, already being referred to as the worst in National City’s history, has taken the lives of at least nine people, leaving more than two dozen wounded, and at least three people in critical condition. That’s according to authorities.

“Now, normally, even hours after such an event, we would expect the National City Police Department to be out in force. Tonight, however, the NCPD is nowhere to be seen, and CatCo Tower is surrounded by DEO agents. The DEO, as viewers may recall, is the recently-announced law enforcement agency tasked with investigating alien-related crime, which begs the question, are they involved because the shooters were alien, or because Supergirl was the intended target?”

“Only time will tell.”

KPJT Channel 3 Evening News

Richard Gardner Reporting

“In other Supergirl-related news this evening, some are saying the Girl of Steel is the cause of mass panic in National City today, as an alien space craft called ‘Fort Rozz’ descended from the sky and parked itself over Otto Binder International Airport. As viewers may recall, Supergirl’s Krypton Memorial Foundation purchased the defunct Otto Binder International Airport from the city yesterday, along with several pieces of surrounding land. The land purchase was made possible by an anonymous donation to the Kryptonian Memorial Fund, and several Kryptonians, working under the supervision of Supergirl’s aunt, who goes by the superhero Alias ‘Flamebird’, immediately began demolishing all the buildings in the area.

“Fort Rozz hovered over what some people have already nicknamed ‘Little Krypton’ for several
hours while the robots that the Kryptonians used for the previous day’s demolition quickly stripped the ship and stacked the components on the airport’s old runways. Then, Supergirl herself used some form of alien technology to recycle the various parts of the ship, along with the rubble from the demolished buildings, and erected a number of new buildings in their place.

“Reaction to these events has been decidedly mixed, with some saying they think the new buildings are a beautiful addition to the National City Skyline and others calling them alien eyesores, and still others calling for the arrest of all of the Kryptonians for flying their ship into National City without warning.

“As yet, there has been no comment from Supergirl, Flamebird, the DEO, or Mayor Gates regarding these events.”

The world came back slowly, and with it, a pounding in her head. It felt like someone was screaming in both ears. Siobhan opened her eyes, only to have light flood them, bringing agony with it, like an ice pick to the brain.

“Easy,” a woman said in a thankfully soft tone. “You’re going to be okay, but you might feel a bit off right now.”

Siobhan nodded, not really trusting herself to speak.

“It should help to know the men who hurt you have been dealt with,” the woman said. “Two of them are dead, and the third has been arrested and is going to spend the rest of his life in jail.”

Siobhan wasn’t sure why, but the pounding in her head vanished so quickly, she felt a moment of dizzy giddiness in its absence, and the ringing seemed to vanish with it.

“Better?” the woman asked.

“Yes,” Siobhan said, opening her eyes slowly. This time, the light didn’t bother her at all. She looked around, surprised not to find herself in a hospital. Instead, she was in… She didn’t know what it was, honestly. The whole room was brightly light, with off-white and soft gray walls, and beams that looked almost organic, like bare, snow-covered vines on a trellis. The room was filled with large crystal-like structures and computer terminals. She was about to ask where the hell she was when she saw the flying robot standing next to the woman in the tux and tails.

“Did I die and go to a bad seventies sci-fi movie?”

The woman in the tuxedo laughed, and it was a bright, musical note that brought a small smile to Siobhan’s face.

“No,” she said. “Though I think the décor is more eighties utopian sci-fi than seventies, but you’re probably too young to know the difference.”

“If this is the part where you claim to be a few thousand years old, I’d rather skip it,” Siobhan said as she sat up.

“Hardly,” the woman said. “I’m twenty-nine, but like many women my age, I’ve been twenty-nine for a handful of years.” She gave a small bow. “Zatanna Zatara, at your service.”

“Wait, the stage magician?” Siobhan asked.

“Yes, though I assure you, my magic is quite real,” she said. “Otherwise, our host would never have
asked me here.”


“Not very hard, and because you don’t need one,” Zatanna said. She raised both her hands, gesturing to the room around them. “This is Supergirl’s Fortress of Sanctuary. You’re in a small room off to the side of her medical hall. This particular one is reinforced with Thanagarian Nth Metal, to prevent you from damaging the rest of the Fortress if you have an accident.”

“Thana-whatsit?” Siobhan asked.

“It’s a metal that is, by its very nature, both imbued with, and protected against magic,” Zatanna said. “But I’m getting ahead of myself. How much do you remember?”

“I think I remember everything,” Siobhan said. “I was in Cat Grant’s office, bringing her some papers, and hoping to avoid Ms. Danvers. There were some gun shots, and then three guys came in. They went for the boy, and I... Did I really step in front of a gun?”

“You did,” Zatanna said.

“Well, I got between them and the boy, and one of them shot me. I remember lying on the floor, bleeding. I remember Supergirl showing up, and someone pressing a needle against my neck, and then I woke up here,” she said.

“With a name like Smythe, I assume your family is Irish?” Zatanna asked.

“Yes,” Siobhan said. “What does that have to do with anything?”

“It has everything to do with why I’m here,” she said. “Supergirl brought you here so that her robots could treat your wounds. It turns out you didn’t need treatment though, because your wounds closed on their own.”

“What?” Siobhan asked. “I was shot! I was dying.”

“Yes,” Zatanna said, “which is probably what triggered a bit of latent magic in your system. You, Siobhan Smythe, are apparently descended from Banshees.”

“What?” Siobhan asked. “Are you kidding me?”

“No,” Zatanna said. “The magic in your blood is part of a bargain made long ago. A fae girl fell in love with a mortal. She bargained with the Faerie king for her freedom to marry him, trading away most of her magic in exchange. She kept only enough to defend herself and her family. Ever since then, when a woman of her direct line is wronged, the magic is awakened, as is the need for revenge.”

“Right,” Siobhan said. “How did I end up in the mental ward?”

Zatanna laughed again, that same bright, musical note. “Supergirl told me you would be stubborn, contrary, and hard to convince.”

“How would she know?” Siobhan asked. “I’ve never met her.”

“I believe she spoke to Kara Danvers about you,” Zatanna said.

Siobhan frowned. “That woman doesn’t like me,” she said.
“You’re not wrong,” Zatanna said. “But there is a difference between not liking someone and wanting to see them harmed. Ms. Danvers was quite concerned for your well-being. As was Supergirl.”

“Do you know why she doesn’t like me? Is it because she has a thing for Cat’s assistant? Because if that’s it, she’s got a huge disappointment coming. That boy is gayer than a barbershop quartet,” Siobhan said.

“No. Ms. Danvers tastes run towards the fairer sex,” Zatanna said. “And I might be talking out of turn, but from what I’ve seen, she prefers older blondes.”

“Oh!” Siobhan said. “So much makes sense now!”

“Not as much as you might think,” Zatanna said. “Come on. I’m going to prove that what I’ve said is true, then I’m going to teach you to control your new abilities.”

KPJT Channel 3 News Special Report

Live from DEO headquarters

The back door of the lobby opened, and Director J’onn J’onzz, Assistant Director Lane, Agent Danvers and Agent Sawyer entered the lobby. All four of them were dressed in standard issue DEO tactical uniforms, and all four of them were sporting strange sidearms on their hips. They looked both grim and tired as they mounted the steps to the podium.

Director J’onn J’onzz stepped up in front of the podium, while Assistant Director Lane stood to his left, and Agents Danvers and Sawyer stood to his right.

“Good afternoon,” Director J’onn J’onzz said. “I’m Director J’onzz of the Department of Extranormal Operations. I’ll be making a brief statement about the events yesterday at One CatCo Plaza and Otto Binder International Airport. Afterwards, I will answer a few brief questions.

“This morning, at exactly 10:31 AM, Andrew Baldwin, Marcus Colter, and Carl McConnell, three known members of the anti-alien hate group known as the Planetary Hygiene Action Network, a group founded by Lex Luthor, entered the CatCo Worldwide Media building at One CatCo Plaza with the intention of murdering Cat Grant in retaliation for her support for Supergirl and the Alien Amnesty Act. Upon entering the building, they shot and killed three security guards in the lobby, then used the elevator to travel to the fortieth floor where they began shooting CatCo employees indiscriminately. In total, nine CatCo employees died, and the current tally of wounded stands at twenty-seven. A CatCo employee intervened, killing Marcus Colter and Carl McConnell and wounding Andrew Baldwin. Ms. Grant is, thankfully, unharmed.

“This morning, at exactly 10:30 AM, Supergirl was scheduled to meet with General Samuel Lane of Army Intelligence. Since Supergirl goes to some effort to avoid publishing her schedule, specifically to avoid situations where criminals might use such information to their advantage, both she and the DEO found the timing of the attack to be suspect. Upon review of video surveillance taken at the location of the meeting, one of General Lane’s aides was seen sending a text message. We were able to match that text to one received by a burner phone carried by one of the CatCo shooters, and, in full cooperation with the White House and the Department of Defense, we were able to make a number of arrests, and issue warrants for a number of other people involved.

“As of this evening, General Samuel Lane, Colonel James Harper, General Abraham Braxton, Former Secretary of Defense Winston Lewis, and Andrew Baldwin are all in DEO custody, along with more than a dozen members of the Planetary Hygiene Action Network. At this time, we are urgently seeking Lillian Luthor, Simon Tycho, Maxwell Lord, as well as nearly three dozen
additional persons who we believe are connected not only to this attack, but to the attack on the bar
known as Darla's on Monday of this week, as well as the attempt on Leslie Willis' life last Thursday,
the attempt on Agent Sawyer's life last Friday, and the attempts that were made on Supergirl's life on
Friday of last week and Monday of this week.

“Now, some of you may be asking why I chose to address the shooting at CatCo before I addressed
the events at Otto Binder International Airport, when, however tragic the events at CatCo were, they
did not have anywhere close to the impact of the events at the Airport.

“The answer is simple. Context.

“Supergirl is, by both the standards of both Krypton and Earth, a woman of great intelligence, who
made the connection between her meeting with General Lane and the timing of the attack on CatCo
just as quickly as we here at the DEO did. She rightly saw the attempt on Cat Grant’s life as an
attack motivated by bigotry and hatred towards her people, and those they would call friend. Prior to
the attack, Supergirl and her Kryptonian friends and family had planned on taking Fort Rozz, the
ship which most of them arrived on, to the Island Fortress Supergirl calls home, where they could
break it down and shuttle it back to National City in pieces for use in construction of the facilities
they had planned to build for the use of all the alien inhabitants of our world.

“However, when Supergirl realized that not only had there been a sixth attack in a span of eight
days, but that the attack had been aided and abetted by serving members of the United States
Military, she began to fear for the safety of her people, of her friends, and of the other aliens in
National City. She chose to bring Fort Rozz directly to National City and break it down on site,
rather than take the additional time to haul it out to her home and shuttle the parts back.

“After a long discussion between her, myself, and National City’s City Counsel, Supergirl and her
people have agreed to issue a formal apology, and to pay appropriate fines and penalties for failure to
file a flight plan, violations of restricted air space, and failure to properly communicate with National
City Air Traffic Control.

“At this time, I will be taking a few brief questions,” J’onn said. He pointed at a woman in the front
row. “You.”

“Trevor Paxton, National City News. Did Supergirl respond at all to the attack at CatCo?” the
reporter asked.

“Supergirl arrived shortly after the shooting stopped. She secured the scene, provided medical aid to
the wounded, and even transported three of the injured to her home for life-saving medical care,”
J’onn said. “You.”

“Leyna Nguyen KPTJ Channel 3 News. Is General Lane in any way related to DEO Assistant
Director Lucy Lane?”

“That’s a matter of public record,” J’onn said. “Assistant Director Lane is General Lane’s daughter.”

“Follow up,” Leyna said. “Given the familiar nature of their relationship, is it possible that Assistant
Director Lane was also involved in the conspiracy?”

“No,” J’onn said, as Agent Sawyer reached up and caught Agent Danvers by the shoulder as she
started forward. “Not only is AD Lane an exemplary member of the DEO, but she was personally
present at the arrest of both Colonel Harper and General Lane. There has never been the least bit of
suspicion, or any cause for it where AD Lane is concerned.” He pointed at a different reporter.
“You.”
“Tawny Young for CatCo News. Given Lillian Luthor’s suspected involvement and the Planetary Hygiene network’s connection to Lex Luthor, is anyone looking into a possible connection to Lena Luthor?”

“Obviously, the question was raised, but it was also settled. Lena Luthor is not suspected of any wrongdoing in this or any other matter,” J’onn said. “Does anyone have any questions that aren’t rampant speculation, or aspersions cast on innocent people because of their unfortunate family connections?”

“Vicki Vale, CatCo Worldwide,” Vicki said. “There was reportedly a large explosion at one of Lillian Luthor’s residences in town. Was that in any way connected to today’s events?”

“Yes, it was,” J’onn said. “A DEO team was sent to arrest Ms. Luthor. For safety reasons, a robot was used to make the approach to her home. When the robot attempted to enter the house, the entire house exploded. Fragments of the bomb used indicate that it was manufactured specifically to target Kryptonians.”

“What, specifically, about the bomb gives that impression?” Vicki asked.

“It’s been common knowledge for a number of years that there are substances which can harm Kryptonians. Certain alien alloys. Bones taken from certain alien species. The list goes on. Fragments of one of those materials were found embedded in the bomb. Given that General Lane was one of the people involved in the study of retrieved alien technology, it’s probable that he was the one to supply the material to Lillian Luthor in the belief that Supergirl would accompany any team sent to arrest her,” J’onn said. “No further questions.”

“Well, she said she was going to put your mom in jail,” Sam said as she turned off the TV. “I just didn’t expect it to be this much of a shit show.”

“I don’t know what I expected,” Lena said. “I mean, I always knew my mother was capable of doing truly terrible things, but I never expected… This.”

Sam glanced over at her, more than a little worried about her friend. They’d been holed up in Lena’s house ever since the first reports of the shooting at CatCo had come in, and it was clear Lena wasn’t taking it well.

“I don’t think anyone could have expected this, Lena,” Sam said. “Going after Supergirl was almost a given, but this…”

“It’s horrible,” Lena said.

“What do you want to do?” Sam asked.

Lena turned towards her. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, we can still walk away. Let Danvers have LuthorCorp. You have enough capital to self-fund a startup, and we have all the designs that you were holding back for after the merger. We could go anywhere. Gotham, Gateway City, Hub City, Opal City, Blüdhaven, Coast City, Central City, Keystone City, Midway City, Platinum Flats, Solar City. Hell, we could even go someplace normal like Los Angeles or New York. Just anywhere there isn’t a Kryptonian,” Sam said.

“No,” Lena said. “Everything we’ve ever hoped for is in National City. A chance to make a real impact. A way to change the world for the better.”
“Assuming your mom doesn’t blow it up first,” Sam said.

“Assuming my mom doesn’t blow it up first,” Lena said. She reached out, taking Sam’s hand in hers. “If you don’t want to go, I’ll understand.”

“I’m going,” Sam said. “Someone has to watch out for you while your new girlfriend’s out there getting her head shot off.”

Lena smiled at her. “Thank you,” she said.

Sam just nodded her head. “I just wish I could go with you right now.”

“It’s only two weeks,” Lena said. “Ruby finishes school on the eighteenth.”

“And we’ll see you on the nineteenth,” Sam said. “Do not die on me just because I let you out without adult supervision.”

“I’ll do my best,” Lena said.

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“Is he asleep?” Kara asked as Cat stepped out of the quarters Gideon had assigned Carter.

“For now,” Cat said. “The pill Gideon gave him is supposed to prevent him from having dreams, but he can’t take it two nights in a row.”

“That’s what I wanted to talk to you about,” Kara said. “I have friend who can make him forget.”

Cat stared at her for a moment, completely taken aback by the offer. To be able to wipe the horror of the day from Carter’s mind… It sounded like a miracle. To save her baby boy from the trauma. But she thought of all the horrible things that had happened in her life, and everything she’d learned from those things. She wouldn’t be who she was without them, and she would hate anyone who tried to take those moments from her.

It was a tough decision. Protect her son or let him learn and grow from the experience. But it wasn’t her decision.

“Would it be safe?” Cat asked.

“Absolutely,” Kara said.

“I’ll ask him when he wakes up,” Cat said.

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James opened his eyes slowly, taking in the room around him. It took a few minutes to place it, because he’d never actually set foot in the medical hall, but the architecture was similar enough to the rest of Kara’s Fortress, and different enough from Kal’s Fortress, for him to recognize it. The attendant hovering near by helped too.

“Good evening, Mr. Olsen,” the attendant said.

“Evening?” he asked.

“Yes sir,” the attendant said. “Due to your injuries, you were unconscious for almost eight hours. During that time, you underwent four surgical procedures to repair the damage.”

“Four?” James said. He tried to sit up but found he couldn’t move anything below his neck.
“Please, sir, do not try to move at this time,” the attendant said. “I need to make you aware of some information before I turn off the neural paralysis field.”

“Wait,” Clark said from somewhere behind him. “Sorry, Jimmy. I was in a meeting when I got word that you were starting to wake up.” Clark stepped into his field of vision. “How you doing?”

“You tell me,” James said. “Last I remember, I was standing in Cat’s office.”

“You don’t remember anything after that?” Clark asked.

“No,” James said. “What happened?”

“There was a shooting at CatCo,” Clark said. “You got hit, twice.”

“Oh,” James said. “How bad?”

“Eleven people died,” Clark said. “Three security guards, six people in the bullpen, two of the three shooters.”

“Damn,” James said. “What about Cat? Oh my God!” He tried to sit up again, but still couldn’t move. “Clark, Cat’s son was there!”

“He’s fine,” Clark said. “Cat and Carter are fine. Cat had the Blue Lantern ring. She used it to put a shield around Carter, and when she activated it, it protected her too.”

“Okay,” James said. “Can you let me up?”

“Not yet,” Clark said. “You were hurt, James. You took two shots in the chest, but you got hit at an angle, and the shooters were using expanding bullets. The attendants didn’t have a lot of time. You were losing a lot of blood, and there was extensive damage to your heart, lungs, shoulders and spine.”

“What are you saying?”

“You were going to die, James,” Clark said. “The attendants had to make a decision on how to treat you, and they made the best decision they could, but there were complications.”

“Clark?” James asked.

“The fabbers can make artificial organs in just a couple of minutes. An artificial heart, artificial lungs. They’re easy. Organ growth takes time. Hours. Sometimes days. And some people can’t accept regenerated tissue grafts.”

James tried to look down, but he was covered in a sheet, which did nothing to stop the sickening feeling of dread creeping in.

“James,” Clark said, “your shoulder and part of your spine were pulverized, and the nerves and blood vessels were shredded. They had to amputate above the shoulder. The idea was to use the cybernetic heart and lungs to support you temporarily while they grew new ones, and while your arm, shoulder and spine were regenerated.”

“But?” James asked.

“But your body rejected the regenerated tissue three times,” Clark said.

“What does that mean?” James asked, near panic.
“It means they had to reconstruct large sections of your body with cybernetics,” Clark said. “Once it became clear that the tissue grafts weren’t going to take, they removed your entire spine and replaced it when a synthetic one. Most of your ribcage and your entire left shoulder and left arm as well.”

“Let me up,” James said. “I need to see it.”

Clark nodded, and James shouted as he suddenly felt his entire body. The sensation was so abrupt that he was surprised he hadn’t realized he couldn’t feel anything.

“Easy,” Clark said. “Just take it easy.”

James barely heard him. He reached up and pulled aside the sheet, looking down at his arm. He stopped, shocked because it didn’t look any different.

“The synthetic skin is a good match,” Clark said. “It will be hard for anyone without enhanced senses to tell the difference. But your left arm is a *lot* stronger than it used to be, and nearly indestructible. And, well, Kara had a suggestion.” Clark reached out and moved his arm to a slightly different position, and gave the attendant another nod, and a red forcefield snapped into existence in the shape of a heater shield attached to his left arm.

“It’s got different modes,” Clark said. “Kara suggested this one for the default setting, but it has a round shield, a kite shield, and a bunch of other settings. It can even block a Kryptonian Sun Blade.”

“Turn it off,” James said.

“Okay,” Clark said, and the shield vanished.

“I, uh… I’m gonna need a few minutes,” James said.

“Are you sure you-“

“Just, go,” James said.

“Okay,” Clark said.

From Facebook

Supergirl Zor-El

Thursday, December 3rd, 2015

When I agreed to let CatCo run a set of social media accounts for me, I thought most of my posts would be light-hearted. I planned to pen a few essays on alien rights, on what it means to be a refugee, and maybe even a few pieces on how my own society failed itself in such a terrible and dramatic way. I never dreamed, a month ago, that I would have to write a coming out letter, or that I would have to use it as a platform to defend myself against charges of corruption, bribery, conspiracy, and an attempt to frame me for murder. I never dreamed that I would need to post a video on YouTube to prove that I survived an attempt to murder me.

I never dreamed that I would have to say what I need to say tonight.

This morning, I was scheduled to meet with General Sam Lane of the United States Army. When he requested the meeting, he did so with the full written authority of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I consented to the meeting, fully aware of General Lane’s anti-alien sentiments. I knew, because he has loudly and publicly condemned me, my cousin, and his daughter Lois Lane’s
friendship with my cousin. I also know this because General Lane confronted me at the CatCo Gala several weeks ago, and made his feelings known to me directly. I went to the meeting with the possibility in mind that it might be a trap, and that I would need to be prepared for an attempt on my life, because I was already suspicious that, given the nature of the weapon involved, General Lane might have been involved with the attempt on my life last Friday afternoon.

I went into the meeting this morning fully aware of all of that but determined to try and build bridges. I spoke to General Lane, and to his associate Colonel Harper, offering a truce if they would simply allow my fellow aliens and I to live in peace. I admit, I made a mistake. I underestimated how evil these men are. I was prepared for an attack on myself. I never even imagined that they would use such a meeting for the sole purpose of luring me out of position so that they might strike out at someone whose sole crime has been extending her hand in friendship.

This morning, I failed the people of National City, because I failed to imagine how unimaginably evil Sam Lane and his associates could be.

I was scheduled to meet with Sam Lane at 10:30 AM this morning. The meeting began at 10:31 AM. At that time, three members of the Planetary Hygiene Action Network, a known hate group, entered CatCo Worldwide Media’s headquarters at Number One CatCo Plaza. They proceeded to murder three security guards and used one of the dead guards’ security badges to gain access to the higher floors of the building. Open reaching the fortieth floor of the building, they began shooting indiscriminately, looking to clear a path to reach Cat Grant. In total, nine CatCo employees died before the shooters were stopped, and many more were wounded. My cousin’s best friend, James Olsen, was wounded during the incident. Cat Grant’s son is only alive because a young woman from the clerical pool stepped between him and an assassin’s bullet. Cat Grant herself is alive only because a member of her staff managed to stop the assassins before they could reach their target.

It’s hard to say what I feel right now. Anger feels inadequate. Rage feels inadequate. I live with anger and rage every day. They are old friends and longtime companions. They are the fuel and the motivation that keeps me moving when I want nothing more than to lie down and die.

When you wake up every morning, knowing that you lost everything because of the decisions someone else made, it’s hard not be angry. When you wake up every morning knowing that those people knew what was happening and did nothing, it’s hard not to feel rage. Even when you love them. Even when they were your family.

I said once that I’m slow to anger. That’s not entirely true. It is simply that I have so much anger, so much rage inside me at all the horrors and nightmares I have witnessed, that it takes a very great deal for me to tell the difference in what I feel. It is hard for something to move that needle.

Today, it moved. Today, as I walked through the halls of CatCo, as I stepped over bodies and walked around pools of blood, as I did my best to organize first aid and manage an evacuation, my blood boiled.

Today, General Sam Lane, Colonel James Harper, Lillian Luthor, Simon Tycho, Maxwell Lord, and the members of the renegade former government program Project Cadmus, along with the members of the anti-alien hate group known as the Planetary Hygiene Action Network, came into a place that had welcomed and accepted me and then murdered and tried to murder people because they were kind to me, because they welcomed me, and because they helped me.

Today, they used my willingness and desire to help and to make peace as a weapon against me.

I have said before, I do not always make the best choices when I am angry. That is why National City found itself in the shadow of a Kryptonian Prison Barge. My people and I had intended to move
it to a secure location, scrap it, and bring the parts in for use in the construction of our new home. When confronted with the carnage at CatCo, I decided, in the heat of anger, that we could no longer afford the delay, and I ordered the ship brought into the city, and stripped here.

I apologize for any fear or uncertainty that might have caused the residents of National City, and to avoid further confusion or anxiety, I would like to warn you of other things you might see and hear in the coming days.

You have almost certainly seen the new towers which now grace the National City skyline. As many of you may be aware, through a charitable donation, my people and I were able to purchase a piece of real estate in the South Bay region from National City. The long-abandoned properties were offered to us at a discount, provided we shoulder the expense of clearing and redeveloping the area, which we have done.

Through further negotiation with the city council, the city limits of National City are being redrawn, so this area is outside National City limits. We recognize that this will result in a loss of tax revenue to the city, so in exchange, we have offered to repay the city by providing all of National City’s electrical power for free for the next hundred years.

This newly independent area is already in the process of incorporating as an independent city in its own right. The name of the city will be /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/, which in English, means City of Hope. /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ will provide its own police, sanitation and emergency services. Most of these will be provided by Artificial Intelligence guided drones, and by individual AI’s in robot bodies called attendants. You will be able to distinguish drones from attendants by color. Drones are a dark grey, attendants are gold with silver trim.

Among the towers, you will find the Medical Halls. The Medical Halls contain a five-thousand bed hospital, a women’s clinic, a pediatric clinic, and a host of other focused-practice medical facilities. Care will be provided to all, human and alien, at no expense. Medical services, like other services, will be provided by drones and attendants in most cases.

[accompanying picture of the Medical Halls]

You will also find the Citadel. This is our city hall, our police headquarters, and our court house. It will be open to all.

[accompanying picture of the Citadel]

There are also a number of residential towers, where we will be offering low-cost housing to aliens, and to our human brethren as well. Priority will be given to those in need. To the vulnerable and to the marginalized. Aliens, racial minorities, members of the LGBTQ+ community. These towers will not become the playgrounds of the rich. They will become a shelter for those like me and my people. Refugees, outcasts, and those who have been rejected, spat upon and thrown aside.

As Lady Liberty herself says:

Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!

Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

There will also be a market place. There will be restaurants, vendor stalls and places for carts and tables. An open-air bazaar, where goods, food and culture can be exchanged freely.

[accompanying picture of the market]

Finally, many of you will ask about the /eurredhuhs iahzrhim/. This building is a sacred space for my people, and we will protect it. Non-Kryptonians will not be permitted entrance. This will have the force of law behind it.

[accompanying picture of the Genesis Chamber]

May Rao light your way.

Carter’s nanny had been called shortly after the shooting, letting her know to go home for her own safety. Kara feared Cadmus might make a second attempt on Cat’s life, and since they were already exposed, the attempt might not rely on clumsy proxies. Cat thought she was being ridiculous, but Kara has been insistent, and even Sara had agreed. So, late Thursday night, Kara sent Cat’s attendants.

Kleenex and Gonk appeared in a flash of light, and quickly went to work. The first priority was a structural scan of the penthouse floor. Every wall, every wire, and every girder went into their memory. Once that was done, they quickly moved through the apartment, stripping every item, inventorying it, and transmattting it back to Sanctuary where it was stored.

The process went quickly as they moved through the bedrooms. Furniture, clothing, pictures, a Supergirl poster off Carter’s wall. It all vanished. Cat’s office, the panic room, the living room, the den, the kitchen. All of it went.

Kleenex spotted it first. A small box lined with lead.

A drone was summoned. The drone and the box were transmatted to the DEO missile range. The box was opened.

Inside was a note, wrapped around a piece of Kryptonite.

It read:

My Dear Cat,

We’re coming for her. Best keep your distance.

M.

Alex hung up the phone and tossed it onto her coffee table with a sigh.

“Well, Kara’s pissed,” she said.

“I really hadn’t picked that up from the way she pretty much threatened the life of anyone who goes near the Genesis Chamber,” Maggie said. “Hard to blame her though.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “I don’t know what her deal is, but she’s never been reasonable where Cat’s concerned. I know she's always had a little bit of a power crush, but it’s almost like she’s… Oh,
fuck! My sister is in love with Cat, isn’t she?”

Maggie burst into laughter, and Alex just glared at her.

“I’m sorry,” Maggie said as she gasped for air. “It took me like, ten minutes of knowing Kara to figure that one out.”

“Well, pardon me if I’ve only been gay for… Fuck, has it really only been two weeks?” Alex asked.

“Oh, sweetie,” Maggie said, “You may only have figured it out two weeks ago, but that reaction you had the first night we met was pretty god-dammed gay.”

Alex reached over and gave Maggie a small shove as a blush crept up her neck and into her cheeks. “Shut up,” she said, not quite able to keep the grin off her face.

“Fine,” Maggie said, leaning in. “I won’t tell you that I spent the whole damn night wondering what it would be like to kiss you.”

Alex raised an eyebrow. “You did, huh?”

“I really did,” Maggie said.

“And how did the real thing measure up to the fantasy?” Alex asked.

Maggie reached up, running a finger along Alex’s jaw as she leaned in. “Better,” Maggie whispered just before their lips met.

It only took a moment for Alex to lose herself in the kiss.

“How you holding up?” Sara asked as she sat a glass of Scotch down in front of Cat.

“I’ll be fine,” Cat said. “Believe it or not, I’ve actually had worse days.”

Sara sat down across from her. “Really?”

“Yes,” Cat said, picking up the scotch. She tossed the entire glass back. “I once walked fourteen blocks with a stab wound that perforated my intestines. This is worse than that, but it was over in just a few seconds. Last Friday, someone shot Kara in the head, and I wasn’t sure if she was alive or dead for two days.”

“It’s always worse when it’s the people you love,” Sara said.

Cat looked up at Sara, surprised to see nothing but sympathy on her face.

“How much has Kara told you?” Cat asked.

“All about us?” Sara asked. “That we were lovers in another timeline. That it ended when I died, but she remembers the whole thing.”

“You love her,” Cat said, because the feeling was written all over Sara’s face.

Sara looked down, and Cat tracked her gaze to the metal cuff she was wearing, like the one Kara wore ever since the missile, only this one was inscribed with a string of Kryptonian Text.

“A little,” Sara sighed. “I know I shouldn’t. I barely know her, and I’m not usually one to fall for a
girl just because she takes me home.”

“But she’s Kara,” Cat said.

“Yeah,” Sara said. “She’s bold, and brave, and beautiful, and brilliant… Looking at her, it’s like looking up at the sun on a warm day.”

“I’d say it wasn’t possible to know her without loving her, at least a little,” Cat said, “but I think our current circumstances prove that’s not true.”

“Rip doesn’t like her at all,” Sara said. “But honestly, that’s a point in her favor.”

Cat stared at the metal cuff, and curiosity got the better of her. “Do you know what it says?”

Sara’s face jerked up, and at the same time her left hand covered the cuff and she pulled back from the table, clutching the cuff protectively to her chest.

“I should go,” she said, getting to her feet.

Cat could have called her back before she left the room, told her she hadn’t meant to pry, but she didn’t, because it would be a lie. She had meant to pry, because she desperately wanted to know what was inscribed on that cuff, because clearly, it had been a gift from Kara.

Not that she was jealous, because that would be ridiculous.

Friday, December 4th, 2015

Jeremiah looked out over the skyline of National City. It was still early yet. Enough past dawn that the sky was bright, blue and clear, and even in the middle of December, it wasn’t much below seventy degrees, so he was comfortable enough in the scrubs he’d been given. It had been hard for him to believe, when he first heard it, that he’d lost almost a decade, but the National City skyline was enough to confirm it. Even leaving aside the *Kryptonian* buildings, which was shocking enough in its own right, the skyline was drastically different. The CatCo building wasn’t the tallest in the city, but it seemed to dominate the smaller buildings surrounding it. The Waverly Towers were new too. Twin towers standing fifty-two stories tall. But it was the Solarium that truly drove home how different the world was. A giant glass and steel wing standing some eighty stories high.

And Kara apparently owned it outright, along with a few dozen other buildings in town. His little fifteen-year-old adopted daughter was a twenty-five-year-old billionaire, a Superhero, and the de facto head of the Kryptonian government here on earth. Alex was a doctor and a federal agent.

He’d missed watching his girls grow up. He’d missed ten years with his wife.

None of it made any sense to him. Time travel he understood. It was hard to believe, but standing there, he couldn’t deny it. His little girl, his Alex, had rescued him from the past, where he would have died on a jungle floor. But what he didn’t understand was why they didn’t leave him in the past. Repair his wound, sure, but then why not take him home? Why skip across ten years of time, and deposit him here?

He looked over at the Kryptonian buildings. Ones that, according to Alex, hadn’t been there the previous morning, and wondered why Kara hadn’t come to see him yet. Apparently, the rescue had been her idea. The time travelers had agreed because they owed her a favor. If she wanted him back that much, had spent that kind of currency to bring him back, why hadn’t she come to visit? Didn’t
she owe him that much? After all, she was the reason he’d been in that jungle. If they hadn’t taken her in, or even if she’d just obeyed the rules, he never would have joined the DEO. Never would have gone to Peru.

But no one would tell him why she didn’t come to see him. All he’d gotten were excuses. A shooting, building the new city, helping a friend. Excuses, but not answers. Something was going on, and he was being kept in the dark. He didn’t like it one bit, and found himself, not for the first time, wishing Clark had never signed up for the biology class Eliza had been teaching.

“Do you like it?” Kara asked as she watched Darla, Carl and M’gann inspect the new bar.

“Yes!” Darla said.

M’gann turned around slowly, taking the place in before she came to a stop, facing Kara.

“You came through,” M’gann said.

Kara smiled. “I did,” she said. “A few hours late, but I did.”

“Considering what happened, I’ll give you a pass,” M’gann said.

“That’s pretty generous,” Kara said. “All the buildings are strong enough to survive anything the humans can throw at them, short of a nuke, and as long as the defense screens are working, the city would shrug off one of those. The street lights include weapons and bomb scanners, and the drones will deal with any serious fights between anything less than a Kryptonian or Martian-level threat. For anything that serious, they’ll sound the alarm. People should be safe here, whatever planet they come from.”

“Thank you,” M’gann said.

“You don’t need to thank me,” Kara said. “I brought my war into your House. I didn’t mean to, but I did. This is me, making it right.”

“Well, if this is your idea of an apology, please come over and spill something on my rug. I can use a new apartment,” Darla said.

“Oh, I’ve already got you three down for units in the residential towers,” Kara said. “No spills needed.”

“Seriously?” Darla asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Just do me a favor and delete Maggie’s number from your phone. I promised Agent Danvers I’d throw you into the sun if you drunk-dialed her girlfriend again, and the paperwork on that takes forever.”

“Funny,” Darla said.

“Do I look like I’m laughing?” Kara asked. “Seriously, the form is like, forty pages, and they make you fill it out by hand.”

“Um… right,” Darla said.

“M’gann, can I have a word?” Kara asked.

“Sure,” M’gann said.
Kara nodded her head towards the door and then turned and headed out onto the street. M’gann followed.

“This is really amazing,” M’gann said. “I’ve never seen anything like it.”

“It reminds me of Krypton,” Kara said.

“Must be nice, to have a little slice of home,” M’gann said.

“Maybe it will be, someday soon,” Kara said. “Right now, I’m too busy worrying about all the ways this could go wrong.”

“Well, that’s a cheerful thought,” M’gann said.

“Someone tried to murder three people I love yesterday,” Kara said. “Cheerful isn’t going to be on my list for a while.”

“I heard about that,” M’gann said. “I’m sorry.”

“Thank you,” Kara said. “That’s kind of what I wanted to talk to you about though.”

“What do you mean?”

“Cat’s son is twelve years old,” Kara said. “He saw two people gunned down in front of him. I was wondering if you would…” Kara lifted her hand and tapped two fingers against her temple.

“You want me to take his memory of the shooting?” M’gann asked.

“If that’s what he wants,” Kara said. “My head is full of horrible things I wish I could forget. I don’t want that for him.”

“What does his mother say?” M’gann asked.

“She loves her son,” Kara said. “She doesn’t want him to remember this, but she knows it’s his choice.”

“Why didn’t you ask J’onn?” M’gann asked.

“Because I’m asking you,” Kara said.

“But why?”

“I love J’onn like a father,” Kara said, “but he’s out of practice, and honestly, he’s nowhere near your power level. You’d do it better, cleaner. And when it comes to Carter, I’ll do whatever it takes.”

“You love him that much?” M’gann asked.

“I love both of them that much,” Kara said. “And I know you won’t understand why, but there is literally no one else on this Earth or any other I would trust with this.”

“And I thought I made bad life choices,” M’gann said.

Kara laughed. “Occupational hazard,” she said. “I also wanted to apologize for Monday.”

“You don’t have to—”

“Yes, I do,” Kara said. “I wasn’t myself. I had a nasty concussion from the missile, and my healing
powers were taking longer than normal to fix it. I didn’t have as tight a rein on my temper as I should, and I said things I shouldn’t have.”

“You didn’t say anything that wasn’t true,” M’gann said.

“Doesn’t mean I should have said them,” Kara said. “The truth is a dangerous weapon, especially when you turn it on your friends.”

“Is that what we are?” M’gann said. “Friends?”

“I’d like for us to be,” Kara said. “If that’s okay with you.”

“Hey, anyone who builds an entire city for me and my friends definitely gets to join the party.”

“Great!” Kara said. “Come on. I’ll introduce you to Carter.”

Vicki rubbed her temples and looked at her laptop in frustration, wishing more than anything that she was back in her office. Instead, like almost the entirety of the CatCo headquarters staff, she was logged in remotely, because the lobby of the CatCo building was still a crime scene.

Kara had called her earlier in the day to let her know the CatCo building would be open for business on Monday, but that until then, everyone should work from home. She’d also told Vicki she was in charge until Monday morning, which was terrifying. Not quite as terrifying as knowing someone had tried to murder one of her oldest friends, but still.

She wondered if maybe coming to National City had been a mistake. CatCo was hardly the only job offer she’d had. Pretty much every news agency in the country, except the ones in Gotham, had made her an offer. She knew John had something to do with that. Just like she knew John had something to do with the fact that every news agency in Gotham refused to take her calls. The fix had been in. John wanted her gone before Falcone decided to have another go at silencing her for good.

Now, she wondered if staying would have been safer. Mob bosses and crooked politicians she could deal with. Rogue government agencies, assassination attempts and superhero fights were really more Lois Lane’s wheelhouse.

And then there was Kara Danvers. It hadn’t taken her ten minutes to put together that Kara was Supergirl. She hadn’t been one hundred percent certain until the girl had confessed that Clark was her cousin, though to be fair, Clark probably hadn’t told Kara that Vicki knew his, Bruce’s and Diana’s little secrets. Come to think if it, she wasn’t sure Clark knew she knew. Bruce was always a little fuzzy on that point. It also hadn’t taken her very long to put together the fact that Cat very obviously knew Kara’s little secret. Which meant that Cat had probably worked out who Clark, Bruce and Diana were, and had probably followed all the same bread crumbs Vicki had over the years.

Vicki jumped slightly at the sound of the text alert she’d set for Cat on her phone. She looked down at the offending device and reached for it with all the caution one might use when picking up a rattle snake.

Cat: I have a story for you. Interested?

Vicki: Depends. Is it good?

Cat: Corrupt. Racism. Bribery. The chance to end the carrier of a crooked politician.
Vicki: GIVE!

Cat: That’s what I love about you, Vale. You’re a god damned shark.

Vicki: Takes one to know one. Now give!

Cat: Mayor Gates conspired with the police commissioner, the DA, the captain of the NCPD science division and Lillian Luthor to frame Supergirl for Leslie Willis’ murder.

Vicki: Holy shit balls!

Cat: You spend entirely too much time around Lois Lane. Also, that’s disgusting.

Vicki: To be fair to Lois, I picked that one up from Chloe.

Cat: Either way you’re dealing with Clark Kent’s sloppy seconds. You want the story?

Vicki: Fuck yes, I do! Send me everything.

Cat: One condition.

Vicki: Am I going to like this condition?

Cat: No.

Vicki: I hate you. What’s the catch?

Cat: You can’t use the recording I’m sending as a source, and you absolutely cannot go sniffing around the real estate deal between the city and Supergirl.

Vicki: Cat, what’s going on?

Cat: A lot, Vicki. Lives are at stake. You interested, or not?

Vicki: Yes.

Cat: Good. You’re about to have a visitor. Don’t scream. The flash of light is perfectly normal.

Vicki: What?

Vicki found out a moment later when there was a bright flash in the middle of her hotel room, and a god-damned robot appeared. She decided then and there she was going to murder Cat, but on the plus side, she didn’t scream.

“I take it the lab meets with your approval?” Lillian asked.

Max looked up from the microscope, a smile on his face. “It does,” he said. “I have to say, Lillian, I am impressed, and I don’t impress easily.”

“I have noticed that about you,” Lillian said as she looked around the lab.

“How did you manage to arrange something like this so quickly?” Max asked.

“I didn’t,” Lillian said. “This is one of my son’s off-the-books projects. I just had a bit of the equipment brought up to date. Easy enough. Just send one of our people into the right store with a huge wad of cash, a list, and a story about an angry IT manager or an intern who accidentally trashed
a lab. No one bats an eye at things like that in National City.”

“Well, I suppose I’ll have to remember that for my future as a fugitive,” Max said. “Any word on who gave us up?”

“General Braxton,” Lillian said. “He’s cut a deal that will let him retire on a general discharge, in exchange for his testimony against Lewis and Lane.”

“Do you think they’ll talk?” Max asked.

“Lewis will fold like a cheap suit the first time someone offers him a deal,” Lillian said. “Not Lane. He’s not the sharpest tool in the shed, but the man understands loyalty and duty. Either way, it’s being handled. Our assets will take care of everything.”

“Good to know,” Max said. “And Tycho’s little pet project?”

“Progressing nicely,” Lillian said. “I have to admit, I’m impressed myself. I knew you went to med school, but I had no idea you were this gifted at biology.”

“You know my parents were doctors,” Max said. “I knew more about genetics than most professional researchers before I got to high school. I could have gone into biochemical engineering, but all the money’s in tech right now. Not so much the hardware, as the information it can collect.”

“What information might that be?” Lillian asked.

“Oh, all kinds of things,” Max said. “Did you know that Kara Danvers used to be an avid user of a Lord Tech tablet?”

“That doesn’t surprise me,” Lillian said.

“It didn’t surprise me, either,” Max said. “What *does* surprise me is that on the morning of September 14th, 2014 every account she had on any service owned by Lord Technologies or TychoTech was abruptly emptied of all data and then deleted.”

“That’s odd,” Lillian said. “Any idea why?”

“I suspect that’s the day she learned about project Cadmus,” Max said. “I can’t be certain, of course, but once I knew who to look at, I was able to follow the trail, and she managed to create a veritable dead zone around her with regards to anything connected to Lord Technologies, TychoTech, or LexTel. Three months after she went to work for CatCo, the whole company switched to WayneTech for all of their IT services and hardware. She even managed to get Cat to switch phone brands. Her movements shifted too. She started taking martial arts classes, her Netflix usage dropped sharply, as did the power usage in her apartment. She’s been training to become Supergirl, almost since that night.”

“Curious, but I’m not sure how that helps us,” Lillian said.

“I’m not sure yet, either, but it’s definitely something to keep in mind,” Max said. “That, on the other hand, might help.” He pointed to a large case on one of the tables.

Lillian gave him a curious look as she walked over and popped the latches, opening it to reveal a massive, glowing red crystal.

“What is this?” she asked.
“My first attempt at making Kryptonite,” Max said. “It’s stable, but not quite right.”

“Then how is it of use?” Lillian asked.

“Did you know there was a small amount of nerve tissue mixed in among the blood samples you brought me?” Max asked.

“Nerve tissue?” Lillian said. “You managed to extract Kryptonian nerve tissue?”

“I did,” Max said. “I think we hurt Supergirl a lot worse with that Nth Metal warhead than we thought. But that’s not entirely the point.” Max picked up a remote and turned on the flat screen that took up most of one wall of the lab, then slid over to his computer, and started a video.

“This is what happens when the nerve tissue is exposed to the natural Kryptonite you provided me to work from.” Activity within the cell immediately changed. One of the organelles seemed to just stop doing anything, and the other parts of the cell sped up, working frantically. “The cells are, luckily, still alive. As long as they are regularly exposed to sunlight and provided with nutrients, they keep working. But when exposed to the green Kryptonite, this one organelle, which seems to be responsible for storing solar energy, completely shuts down. The cell is suddenly starved for energy, and once it burns through what the mitochondria can provide, it starts to digest itself. Exposing a Kryptonian to Kryptonite must make them feel like they’ve been starving themselves for months.”

“Interesting, Max, but what does it have to do with your red rock?” Lillian asked.

“Here’s a nerve cell exposed to the red Kryptonite,” Max said. “It inhibits the attachment of certain neurotransmitters, and triggers over-production of almost all of them.”

“Which ones?” Lillian asked.

“I don’t know,” Max said. “Without a larger tissue sample, it’s impossible to tell. If I had to hazard a guess, I’d say you’re looking at a Kryptonian selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, but whatever it is, it’s going to fuck with their brain chemistry in a major way.”

Lillian smiled. “Max, tell me again why I didn’t bring you in sooner?”

“I didn’t like Cadmus’ ties to the government,” Max said.

“Well, I have a feeling we’re about to be a lot more effective,” Lillian said. “We just have to choose the right moment to hit Supergirl with this, and we’ll see how the city feels when the Girl of Steel turns on them.”

“We should test it first,” Max said. “Make sure it has the effect we want. There’s no point wasting the effort if it’s just going to make her cuddle puppies all day.”

Lillian gave a small nod of agreement. “I believe I can arrange a suitable test subject.”

“Then what are we waiting for?”

“So, I would just forget it all?” Carter asked.

“I could take as much or as little as you want,” M’gann said. “Everything from a few minutes before the shooting until now, or just the shooting.”

Carter looked over at his mom, remembering how she reached out with the blue light to protect him. He remembered, too, the other woman stepping in front of him. It had been horrible, and he was
scared, but he didn’t want to forget those things. He didn’t want to forget what his mom or Siobhan had done for him.

He turned back to M’gann. “No,” he said.

“Are you sure, Carter?” Cat asked.

Carter turned to her. “Yes,” he said. “Is that okay?”

“Of course, sweetheart,” Cat said, wearing a look he knew very well. It was his mother’s ‘I’m proud of you’ look.

Kara opened the door of her loft to find a very confused Eve Teschmacher standing outside.

“Good morning, Ms. Teschmacher,” Kara said. “Please, come inside.” She stepped back, making room for Eve to come inside.

“Thank you,” Eve said as she stepped into the loft. “Um, ma’am, you’ll have to excuse me, but what’s this all about?”

“It’s about a job,” Kara said. “I thought I explained that.”

“You did, ma’am,” Eve said. “I’m just curious as to why you called me. I haven’t been sending out any applications.”

“No,” Kara said. “But honestly, I can’t imagine a job as a waitress is going to satisfy someone who studied PhD-level particle physics at Yale.”

Eve shrugged and glanced down. “You do know I didn’t finish my degree, right?”

“I do,” Kara said. “I also know that it wasn’t your fault.” Kara gestured to the table. “Please, have a seat.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” Eve said as she pulled out a chair and sat down.

Kara took the seat opposite her. “You are aware that CatCo Worldwide Media has been heavily involved with Supergirl since she made her debut.”

“I am,” Eve said.

“Are you aware that CatCo was recently purchased?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Eve said. “By your company. Danvers International.”

“We also made a handful of other purchases. Galaxy Communications, and the Daily Planet along with it. Not really your area. What might interest you, though, is that we’ve acquired TychoTech.”

“Oh,” Eve said. She started to get up. “I’m sorry. This was a mistake.”

“Ms. Teschmacher, no,” Kara said, reaching out to catch Eve’s wrist. “I asked you here to let you know that we found proof in the TychoTech computers of what happened. I’ve already forwarded it to the Chair of the Physics department at Yale, and he called me a couple of hours ago for confirmation.”

Eve sat back down. “What are you saying?” she asked.
“I’m saying that you’re not just getting your PhD, Eve, but you’re getting a formal apology from Yale. I’d also be very, very surprised if you didn’t get a rather large cash settlement.” Kara smiled, giving Eve an almost predatory grin. “I can’t promise that your faculty advisor will go to jail, but I think you can be sure he’ll never work in academia again.”

“Really?” Eve said.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I know it won’t really make up for what happened to you, or what TychoTech stole from you, but I would like to offer you a job.”

“What kind of job?” Eve asked.

“Astra In-Ze, Supergirl’s aunt, is going to work for one of Danvers International’s subsidiaries this coming week. She’s a brilliant scientist, but she’s an alien. She’s used to working with technology and equipment much more advanced than what we have available. I need someone who can work with her and help her get used to our methods and technologies while she works to adapt Kryptonian technology so it can be manufactured and put into production here on Earth. You would be her research assistant. You would also work very closely with Lena Luthor, who will be running the subsidiary, and assisting in the research and development of the Kryptonian tech,” Kara said. “Interested?”

Saturday, December 5th, 2015

The CatCo building was empty, surrounded by the best private security money could buy. They had fairly simple instructions. No one goes inside until 6:00 AM Monday morning, except Supergirl, Kara Danvers, Cat Grant, or the DEO. It was more for show than anything else. The defense field Kara had installed would have prevented anyone from even reaching the front doors, much less entering the building.

The drones began arriving early Saturday morning, and the modifications began. Not nearly as extensive as Kara would have liked, but nano-bots were injected into the superstructure, and the steel was slowly, over a period of hours, replaced with Kryptonian composites, increasing the strength of the building. Earthquake dampeners were fitted into the foundations, and all the drywall was removed, replaced with polymer armor stronger than the barrier fabric that had made up Kara’s original suits.

Security systems were upgraded with scanners that could detect guns, knives, and any other sort of weapon. They were matched up with an ID database, and certain, very limited exceptions were created. Cat, Kara, J’onn, Alex, Maggie, Susan, Lucy, Sara, Kaldur’ahm, Diana, Bruce, the four DEO agents in the Supergirl Social Media group, and the CatCo security guards could carry their weapons. No one else.

The standard weapons in the security locker were replaced with modified slaver pistols, and all the security personnel were scheduled for retraining on how to use the pistols. Training Alex and Maggie had agreed to conduct on Sunday at a range outside of town.

Force field traps were installed at every checkpoint. Anyone trying to enter the building armed would be instantly caged, and security would be alerted. All the windows were replaced with the clear armor sheets Kryptonians used as view ports on their ships.

Armored lockers were installed in the walls near every checkpoint. Each locker contained a pair of drones, all controlled by a level seven AI set up in an armored room in the basement.
Cat’s office got more attention than anywhere else. The walls were lined with a full inch of warship armor. The windows replaced with transparent armor almost as tough. All of it was reinforced with high output force fields, and a transmat evacuation system was installed. In addition, a privacy coating was added, so that Cat could black out the windows. In the event of an emergency anywhere in the building, the office would go into lockdown, and if any of the security systems were breached, the level seven AI Kara had tucked away in Cat’s office would evacuate Cat, Winn, and if he was in the building Carter, to the safety of Sanctuary until the emergency was resolved.

It took time, but by midnight Saturday, CatCo was a fortress, with one singular purpose. Making sure the people Kara loved were safe.

Kara knocked on the door. Three short, quick raps, and then she waited. It took almost five minutes before the door opened, and James looked out at her from a door still held by a chain.

“Hey,” she said, smiling as best as she could.

“Hey, Kara,” James said.

“How are you doing?” Kara asked.

“I’m okay,” he said.

“Um… Do you think I could come inside?” Kara asked.

“I.. ah… I’m not really up for company right now,” James said.

“Oh,” Kara said. “Okay. If you need anything-”

“I’ve got the robot,” James said.

“Yeah. Of course.”

“Goodbye, Kara,” James said.

“Bye,” she said. “It was nice-”

She didn’t finish. James had already closed the door.

Kaldur’ahm opened the door to his apartment, somehow not surprised to find Winn was the one who’d been banging on the door for the last five minutes.

“Hello,” He said. The greeting lacked any real enthusiasm, but he found himself unable to muster any of the hostility he might have directed at anyone else.

“Hey,” Winn said. “You know, I’m not sure about manners or anything in Atlantis, but on the surface, it’s kind of traditional to open the door when someone knocks.”

“Is it not also traditional to go away when you knock and no one answers?” Kaldur’ahm asked.

“Yeah, I’m a rebel that way,” Winn said. “Especially when I know that my friend shouldn’t be alone.”

“You seem awfully certain of what I need, for someone who’s known me for just a few weeks,” Kaldur’ahm replied.
“Yeah,” Winn said. “You going to let me in, or are we having this conversation in the hall?”

Kaldur’ahm stepped back, allowing Winn to enter the apartment, then closing the door. “I am unsure what conversation you intend to have,” he said.

“The one where you blame yourself for what happened, and the one where I tell you you’re being an idiot,” Winn said. “Which you are, by the way.”

Kaldur’ahm sighed and shook his head. “My purpose here was to protect Ms. Grant. I’ve failed.”

“Bullshit,” Winn said. “You were put in a bad position, and you did the best anyone could do. Or did you forget the fact that you were the one who had me call in Kara *after* you’d killed two of the assassins and crippled the third one?”

“I do not argue the facts of the case,” Kaldur’ahm said. “Only the fact that, had there not been other precautions in place, purely by chance, then Ms. Grant and her son would both be dead.”

“But she’s not, and those precautions were in place,” Winn said. “Look, it sucks. People died. But you can’t just stand there and blame yourself. Cat sent you out to get drinks, so you went out to get drinks. The instant you realized there was trouble, you climbed forty flights of stairs, and you arrived less than a minute behind the shooters. You’re a hero, Kaldur. You may not believe that right now, but it’s true.”

Kaldur’ahm took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “It does not feel that way, Winn.”

“I know,” Winn said. “You couldn’t control it. You couldn’t see it coming. But you still feel like it’s your fault somehow, and it fucking sucks.”

Kaldur’ahm stared at Winn for a moment, remembering their conversation from a few nights earlier about Winn’s father, and had to look away for a moment, remembering his own horror when he found out that he was Black Manta’s son.


“You just get on with it,” Winn said. “You get up every morning, and you tell yourself it’s not your fault. And every time you start feeling like it is, you just say it again. It’s not my fault.”

“Do you ever believe it?”

“Eventually,” Winn said. “Not all the time, but most days. I was just a kid. Eleven years old, when my dad murdered half a dozen people. Then, when the cops came to arrest him, he murdered one of them, too.” Winn shrugged. “What could I have done?”

“Nothing,” Kaldur’ahm said. “You were a child.”

“And you were out of the building, across the plaza, because Cat Grant, your boss, told you to be,” Winn said. “And you still arrived in time to stop them. You did everything you could, and more than anyone should expect from you.”

“You make a good argument,” Kaldur’ahm said.

“Only when I’m right,” Winn said. “Come on. You’re off guard duty for another day or two. Let’s go get a beer and pretend the whole situation isn’t fucked up.”

“I think that’s the best idea I’ve heard all day,” Kaldur’ahm said.
It was late, past midnight, but Cat never had an easy time getting to sleep, and with memories of the shooting on a loop in her head, she was having a harder time than normal. She’d climbed out of bed and headed to the kitchen, in search of a bit of the scotch from earlier, but a sound had caught her attention, and like her namesake, curiosity had gotten the better of her, making her turn towards the bridge.

A faint giggle echoed down the hall, the voice muffled, but recognizably Kara’s, and the sound brought a smile to her face, and Cat picked up her pace just a bit. Kara’s company was a better way to soothe her nerves than scotch.

“Captain Lance,” Gideon said, the voice echoing down the hall towards Cat.

“Not how, Gideon,” Sara said.

“But Captain Lance-”

“NOT NOW,” Sara said.

“Very well,” Gideon replied. “Ms. Zor-El.”

“I’m a little… Oh, right there… busy,” Kara said.

Cat stopped, realization of what was happening on the bridge driving the fog of exhaustion out of her brain. She turned around, and headed for the kitchen, trying to ignore the hurt and the jealously. It wasn’t Kara’s fault. Kara couldn’t help it if a foolish, idiotic old woman had a crush on her. She was supposed to be Kara’s friend. Not some jealous, scorned lover. Kara had begged for her understanding and support, and no matter how much Cat might want there to be something there other than friendship, Kara had never tried to move the relationship in a romantic direction.

And Sara already had a claim on Kara’s heart. Even if this wasn’t the right Sara. Even if it was going to end in disaster. Cat would put on her big girl pants, and she would be there for Kara, because that’s what Kara deserved.

Cat stormed into the kitchen and demanded a bottle of Macallan 17 from Gideon, who promptly spit it and a glass out of the food dispenser. Cat grabbed both, and stomped her way back to her room, just managing to get the door closed before she broke down.

Sunday, December 6th, 2015

Kara had tried to do it legally. She really had. She’d made calls, she’d begged, she’d done everything she could to get the inspection done, either Friday or Saturday, but the fact was, building inspections took weeks. Weeks Kara didn’t have. So, Kara told Nimda to deal with it, and twenty minutes later, according to every record in the city and the state, the Solarium was fully inspected and up to every single code. All fees were paid, all permits issued, photos and physical copies of the paperwork sat in filing cabinets, and everything was ready to go.

She hated the idea, because she was trying to do as much as possible on the up and up, but if keeping the people she cared about safe meant breaking a few laws and forging a few documents, it wouldn’t be the first time.

So, at just past 2:00 AM Sunday morning, a sunstone was inserted into the foundation of the Solarium. This one didn’t liquify the entire structure the way the /zhrygrrahs im shahrrehth/ sunstone had. Nimda had programmed it very, very carefully, so that anyone watching would never notice a
thing happening. Not under the cover of darkness. It took longer to work than the /zrhygrahs im shahrrehth/ sunstone, but in the end, the entire Solarium was dissolved and replaced with Kryptonian construction. The interiors were made of programable smart materials, and the entire building could stand up to amounts of punishment that would put most warships to shame. Kryptonian construction was sturdy, by any measure, and while the proper Kryptonian towers in /zrhygrahs im shahrrehth/ were a bit sturdier, simply by virtue of having fewer windows, nothing short of a contact nuke was going to damage the building. If its defensive shields were up, even that wouldn’t do more than burn off the landscaping.

By 3:00 AM, the building was finished, and the drones moved in, carefully and quietly taking down the construction fencing, laying in landscaping and exterior fittings while other drones began the process of fitting out the apartments, labs and offices that would fill the building. By 5:00 AM, Cat and Carter’s possessions had been moved into the penthouse, and Kara’s things had been moved into the eightieth floor, which was immediately below the penthouse, and apartments had been set up for Alex, Maggie, J’onn, Lucy, James, Leslie, Kaldur’ahm, Winn, Susan, Eliza and Jeremiah, Sara, Lena, Sam and her daughter, Astra, and Zatanna, along with labs, fabbers, and a medical hall.

There was still a lot of empty space, but that just meant a lot of room for growth.

By 6:00 AM, the entire interior had been fitted out, and the building was ready to be occupied. All that was left was convincing the intended occupants to actually move in.

Cat wasn’t entirely sure what to expect when she and Carter stepped through the door into their new home. She’d occupied several hours over the past few days talking to one of Kara’s robots about what she wanted, but honestly, what she’d really wanted was to go back home to the penthouse she’d spent years getting accustomed too. Oh, sure, there were a handful of annoyances that she’d wanted corrected over the years, but she loved that apartment, and she hated the fact that Lillian Luthor and her little band of xenophobes had taken it from her.

What they found when they walked into the penthouse on top of the Solarium was a near duplicate of her home. There were differences, of course, but they were differences she’d specifically requested. A larger foyer. A bigger coat closet with a pocket door instead of a hinged door. A second refrigerator and a wine fridge in the kitchen. Larger counter spaces with more room for the various small appliances that she’d accumulated, along with a larger pantry. More closet space in the bedroom. A bigger bath tub in all the bathrooms in the house. A second guest room, in addition to the one she’d decorated for her mother that had never been used. But it was, by and large, the same as her old home. Her and Carter’s things had already been moved in, in fact.

The only thing out of place was the small note she found on her bedside table while Carter was off exploring his new bedroom.

Dear Cat,

Thank you for agreeing to move in here. I know this isn’t what you wanted, and I know you must resent the disruption I’ve brought to your life. What happened at CatCo Thursday happened because you have been my advocate, my supporter, my mentor and if I’m honest, my dearest friend. I wish I could make the world a more forgiving place for you and for Carter. A place untouched by the hatred, fear and cruelty that put you in so much danger. Maybe someday, that will be a reality, but until then, know that you are safe here, and that I will do everything in my power to protect you and Carter.

Yours always,
P.S. The Olympic-size swimming pool on the roof is entirely your fault. Level 4 AIs are not good at sarcasm.

Cat’s eyes got a little big, but just for a moment, as a smile spread across them. It was a wistful smile, nothing more than a wish that things could be different. She enjoyed it for a moment, then carefully tucked it, along with the note, away, reminding herself, carefully, of what she’d heard coming from the bridge of the Waverider the night before. Reminding herself that Kara didn’t know how she felt, and wouldn’t understand the effect those words would have on Cat’s already tattered heart.

“Mrs. Danvers,” J’onn said, a note of surprise in his voice.

Eliza looked up from the case she was loading. “Eliza, please,” she said.

“Only if you’ll call me J’onn,” J’onn said. “I didn’t expect to see you back at the DEO so soon.”

“I’m raiding your supply cabinet,” Eliza said. “I hope that’s okay. Kara’s ordered me everything I need for my lab at the Solarium, but delivery time on some of the reagents is holding me up, so Alex said I could take what I needed as long as I replaced it when the deliveries arrived.”

“It’s fine,” J’onn said. “How’s Jeremiah doing?”

Eliza sighed as she closed the case. “He’s having trouble taking it in,” she said. “I think it might go better if Kara would talk to him, but I’ve been afraid to push. She’s been through so much, with the attack last week and the shooting at CatCo, and Sara showing up. Reliving it all again can’t be good for her.”

“I could talk to him if you like,” J’onn said.

“Would you?” Eliza asked.

“Of course,” J’onn said. “Jeremiah saved my life.”

“I would really appreciate it,” Eliza said.

General Lane looked up as Kara entered the room, and his eyes narrowed slightly as he stood up.

“I’ve been wondering when you’d show up,” he said.

Kara stopped a few steps away from the door to his cell. “I had to wait until I was sure I was calm enough not to kill you on sight,” she said.

“So, you’ve finally stopped pretending you’re not a killer now that you’ve gotten what you want,” Lane said. “I should have expected as much.”

“I never pretended,” Kara said. “For a long time, I wasn’t. Then circumstances forced my hand, and I was. The first time I took a life, the person I killed was trying to murder an entire world. At the end of the day, one life for seven and a half billion people didn’t seem so bad.

“It changes you, though. That first kill. The ones that come after are easier. The line for when it’s acceptable to kill starts getting lower and lower with every life you take. Kill enough people, and pretty soon, ‘they’re inconvenient’ and ‘they’re annoying’ become good enough reasons,” Kara said. “I’m not quite there yet. But you… You…” Kara shook her head.
“You know, I meant it,” she said. “I really did. I would have let it all go. Let you walk away. For Lucy’s sake, and for Lois’s.”

“You act like I need your absolution,” Lane said.

“You need somebody’s,” Kara said. “The men you sent. They pointed a gun at a twelve-year-old boy and pulled the trigger twice. An assistant stepped in the way. Nearly traded her life for that little boy’s. Would have, if I hadn’t been able to get her medical treatment almost immediately. You did that, General. You might not have pulled the trigger, but every one of those murders, every drop of that blood is on your hands.”

“Not mine,” Lane said. “Yours. You and people like you. Invaders, criminals, monsters. Those men were after you.”

“Still a coward,” Kara said. “Still weak. You don’t even have enough courage to admit what you’ve done.”

“All I’ve done is what I’ve sworn to do,” Lane said. “Protect this country.”

“You keep telling yourself that, General,” Kara said. “But you’re going to be remembered as a coward and a murderer. By history, and by your own children.

Lane glared at her. “Why did you come here today?”

“Because I still care about Lucy, and I still care about Lois. Because I thought, for just a moment, I might be getting through to you Thursday morning, and I wanted to give it one last chance,” Kara said. “I came here to ask you to tell me what ‘Brain’ is, and where Lillian, Max and Simon are hiding.”

“And why would I do that?” Lane asked.

“Because, General, you’re being charged in federal court. That means the Death Penalty is on the table, and if you don’t think the prosecutors are going to be out for blood, you’re fooling yourself. Cooperation will save your life,” Kara said.

Kara watched him. She could see him mulling over her words, but in the end, she knew it wasn’t enough. She could see it in his eyes, the moment the decision was made.

“When you see my daughter, you tell her I forgive her,” he said.

“Well,” Kara said, “I had to try.” She took one step closer to the glass walls of his cell. “I just want you to remember. This was your last chance, and you threw it away.”

She turned and left before he could say another word.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

zrhgyrhahs im shahrrehth

City of Hope
Shrine of Beginnings

Semantic: *Genesis Chamber*
Red Sky Morning

Chapter Summary

Kara prepares for the National City Earthquake

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Studio One, Number One CatCo Plaza, National City, 7:30 AM, December 7th, 2015

“Good morning National City, I’m Tawny Young, coming to you live from Studio One at Number One CatCo Plaza with a special report. Here with me this morning is National City’s local superhero, political activist, and emerging spokesperson for the alien community, our very own Supergirl,” Tawny said.

“Thank you, Tawny,” Kara said. “And I’d also like to thank Cat Grant for allowing me this air time to speak to the residents of National City. As we speak, you should see an emergency alert arrive on your phones, and at the conclusion of this message, which is being shared across all local networks everywhere in California, there will be a general broadcast by the emergency broadcast network.

“Last Thursday afternoon, when my people built our new city of /zrhygrahs im shahrrehth/ we emplaced a number of seismic and geological sensors. This is standard practice in all Kryptonian construction. Just a short time ago, those sensors alerted us to the possibility of an eminent seismic event near National City. I immediately notified the DEO, who passed the information on to FEMA, the US Geological Survey, and to local and state emergency workers.

“To be absolutely clear, our computers are predicting an earthquake sometime before noon today, ranging between six point two and six point six on the Richter scale, with the possibility of aftershocks over the next ten to fifteen hours. As we speak, emergency services are closing and clearing all bridges and elevated roads. We are advising all non-emergency personnel to stay at home this morning and asking all emergency personnel and first responders to be in to work and ready to help before 10:00 AM.”

“Thank you for the warning, Supergirl. Would it be okay if I asked just a few questions?” Tawny asked.

“Of course,” Kara said.

“How long have you known the earthquake was coming?” Tawny asked.

“The computer which operates our seismic sensors notified us of the situation around 6:45 AM local time, which was about forty-five minutes ago,” Kara said.

“And what will your people be doing to assist?” Tawny asked.

“At the present time, my fellow Kryptonians are directing a number of our automated drones to attach vibration dampers to as many major structures as we can. It’s our hope that these vibration dampers will prevent a great deal of structural damage. My people, as well as a number of other aliens possessed of superpowers in various forms will be assisting emergency services once the
Earthquake strikes. At the moment, my cousin Superman is in town, prepared to assist, and of course, Director J'onzz, the Martian Manhunter, will be out there with us, along with my aunt, Flamebird. We’ve be providing rapid rescue response, fire suppression, medevac and emergency supply transport throughout the day. As well, our drones and AI attendants will be mobilizing to provide search and rescue and first aid assistance, and we’ll be using our transmat system as appropriate to respond to the emergency. We’re already coordinating with area hospitals on providing emergency transport to the medical halls in /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ for any cases with injuries too severe for treatment at area hospitals,” Kara said.

“Thank you, Supergirl,” Tawny said. “Just one final question. If you have seismic sensors capable of predicting earthquakes, why haven’t you shared that technology before?”

“I’m afraid I’ll have to give you the same answer I gave before, Tawny,” Kara said. “There are risks associated with the free distribution of Kryptonian technology. Our technology destroyed our planet. My cousin made the decision not to share any of that technology, because of that very reason. I’ve decided otherwise, and fully intend on sharing as much of that technology as possible. The major constraint there is that the technology has to be adapted for manufacture here on Earth, using human manufacturing methods. I am pleased to say that an agreement has been reached between my people, and Danvers International, CatCo’s new parent company, to create a new subsidiary specifically to adapt Kryptonian technology. In the coming months, you should expect to see a number of pieces of our tech rolled out.”

Tawny turned back to the camera. “Well, there you have it. Supergirl is warning us to expect a major earthquake here in National City later today. For more information, you can visit CatCo.com and click on the ‘Earthquake Preparedness’ banner on our home page. Good luck and be safe. For CatCo WorldWide, I’m Tawny Young.”

“Giving interviews to other reporters now?” Cat asked as Kara touched down on the balcony outside Cat’s apartment. “Careful, or I’ll get jealous.”

“Oh, Cat,” Kara said, batting her eye lashes and crossing her hands over her chest, “you’ll always be my first, and my favorite.”

Cat laughed, shaking her head as Kara smiled at her.

“How’d I do?” Kara asked.

“As well as could be expected, considering the news you were delivering,” Cat said.

“Think National City will shoot the messenger?” Kara asked.

“I don’t think so,” Cat said. “You’ve built up enough goodwill that even your little ultimatum seems to have gone relatively unremarked.”

Kara turned away from Cat and looked out across the city to where the Genesis Chamber stood out amongst the National City skyline. “I didn’t give nearly as harsh a warning as I wanted to,” Kara said.

Cat took a couple of steps forward, reaching up and resting a hand between Kara’s shoulder blades. “I’m not sure I can blame you,” Cat said. “The last couple of weeks have been hard.”

“My whole life has been hard,” Kara said. “I’m starting to wonder if I should have taken Alex up on her suggestion. A year in the past, to nurse my wounds.”
“I think that would be a terrible idea,” Cat said. “You’d spend the whole time worrying over every little thing.”

Kara laughed and gave a little shake of her head. “Sometimes it’s scary how well you know me,” she said.

“I wish I could make all of this easier for you,” Cat said.

Kara turned to look at her. “You do,” she said. “Every day, you make it easier.” She turned around and reached up, taking Cat by the shoulders, and leaned forward. Cat let out a small sigh of contentment as Kara’s lips touched her forehead.

“I wish I could stay with you today,” Kara said. “But this building and CatCo will be safe. I promise.”

“I know,” Cat said. “Go on. Go be a hero. I have to go oversee my empire.”

“Take the transmat,” Kara said. “I don’t want you out on the street today.”

Cat rolled her eyes. “Fine,” she said. “I’ll get my atoms scattered across the city.”

Kara giggled. “If you start telling people you’re just an old country doctor, I’m taking away your beaming privileges.”

“Don’t be silly, dear. I’m a reporter, not a doctor,” Cat said, with a perfectly straight face.

Kara was still laughing two minutes later when she took to the air and headed for /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/.

Kara touched down gently next to Astra where she stood on the top of Argo Tower. Argo was the residential tower that had been set aside for Kryptonians. The tower itself was a massive affair, boasting some five thousand individual apartments, spread across a hundred floors. It was also one of only three buildings inside the five-story security wall Kara had dubbed ‘the fence’. The other two buildings were Kandor Tower and the Genesis chamber. While the Citadel was the official seat of government in /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/, Kandor was the de facto seat of Kryptonian government, and after a bit of negotiation, and more than a little getting yelled at by Olivia, the three buildings - Kandor, Argo and the Genesis Chamber - constituted the Kryptonian Embassy.

“How are we doing?” Kara asked.

“Preparations are going well,” Astra said. “Production of the vibration dampers is the major bottleneck. We need more raw material.”

“I expected as much,” Kara said. “We’ll do what we can with what we have for now, and I’ll work on increasing our resources for the future.”

“People will likely die today,” Astra said.

“People die every day,” Kara said. “As much as I wish it were otherwise, we can only do so much. The drones will help, and a lot less will die than if we weren’t here.”

“I wonder if it’s worth the effort, Little One,” Astra said. “I know you have friends among them, but…”

“But they’ve tried to murder me and my friends repeatedly over the last few weeks,” Kara said.
“Dru-Zod tried to murder the entire House of El because uncle Jor prevented his coup. Would you paint all Kryptonians with the same brush as him?”

“No,” Astra said.

“Humans are people, just like us. No better or worse than Kryptonians. With our help and guidance, they could be a great people one day. And with their help, we might be a great people again someday,” Kara said.

“It’s hard to believe in them when I see them causing you so much pain,” Astra said.

“I can take it,” Kara said.

“For how long, Little One?” Astra asked.

“For as long as I have to,” Kara said. “Be well, Aunt Astra, and be safe. /ukiemodh w rraop”

“/ukiem w rrip, eh shed kir/” Astra replied.

Kara gave her a bright smile before she took to the air again.

Kara wasn’t surprised to find Sara waiting for her when she dropped out of the sky into a large, abandoned lot. Somehow, even this younger version of Sara seemed good at anticipating her. Something which was both good, and bad. Good because Kara knew they would work well together. Bad because it made her miss her Sara that much more.

“/ehrosh :bem i khehshtom/” Kara said.

“Sabah alkhyr ya Alkawala al-Saghir,” Sara replied, a grin on her face. “I figured you’d come to check up on us.”

“I wanted to make sure you were okay,” Kara said.

“We’ll be fine,” Sara said. “I’m just sorry this isn’t the kind of fight we can help with.”

“It’s fine,” Kara said. “Any idea what you guys are going to do?”

“Yeah. We’re going to head back to Earth 1 for a little bit. I know a spot a few hundred miles east and ten or fifteen decades ago where we might be able to find some dwarf star alloy,” Sara said. “Nimda fitted a pair of drones with mining equipment and loaded the control protocols into Gideon. We’ll pop back, see if we can find the alloy, and be back tomorrow morning.”

Kara nodded. “Good plan,” she said. “I wish I could come along. Digging in the dirt sounds a lot more fun.”

“Yeah, but you get to be a hero,” Sara said. “Out there, looking all heroic and buff. Think of all the girls swooning.”

Kara laughed. “Jealous?” she asked.

“Of superhero groupies? Never,” Sara said. She put her hands on Kara’s shoulders and went up on her toes, brushing her lips lightly over Kara’s. “You just be careful. There are still people out there gunning for you, and with all the chaos today, they might decide to take another shot.”

“I will,” Kara said. “I’d tell you not to do anything stupid, but considering how often stupid saves
your life, I think it’s safer not to.”

Sara laughed, and smacked her on the shoulder. “Go on,” she said. “Go be a hero.”

Kara nodded and leaned forward, kissing Sara on the forehead. “/:.zhao zhindif w rrip i khehshtom/” she said, so low it was almost a whisper. She didn’t wait for an answer before she lifted off into the sky.

“How’s the training going?” Kara asked Diana as she dropped down onto the DEO missile range.

“Well,” Diana said. “Though I am grateful for the repulsor field generators. Without them, I doubt the bunkers would still be standing.”

“Why do you think I wanted to do this out in the desert?” Kara asked as she watched Alex and Maggie weave back and forth between a series of polls Diana had driven into the ground. “Alex is still telegraphing her turns.”

“I had noticed that,” Diana said. “It will be a difficult habit to train out of her if it’s not dealt with soon.”

“How are you planning on dealing with it?” Kara asked.

“Effectively,” Diana said with a grin.

A moment later, someone out on the range opened fire with an energy cannon. Maggie pulled a hard turn, as she flew over the desert floor and dropped down, behind a small rise. Alex was just a bit slower, turning and checking her flight path before committing to the turn. Whoever was in the ground was watching, because the second Alex swung to her left, a blast caught her square in the chest.

“Victor?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Diana said as they watched Alex plow into the ground.

“He never gets tired of that, does he?” Kara asked.

“No,” Diana said with a malicious grin. “It’s a good thing, too. It took us months to train that habit out of Kal-El.”

“We don’t have months,” Kara said as she watched Maggie zip across the field at super-speed to where Alex had gone down.

“I know,” Diana replied. “Still, for only having the suits for such a short time, they are doing very well. Though I admit I’m surprised that Maggie seems to be learning more quickly.”

“I’m not,” Kara said. “Alex has spent too much time daydreaming about what it would be like to have powers. The fantasy is interfering with the reality.”

Alex and Maggie took to the air again, though this time, they stayed low, hugging the terrain and shifting flight paths at random.

“You’ve given this a lot of thought, haven’t you?” Diana asked.

“I’ve been through it before,” Kara said. “That’s why I asked you to train them. You can judge their progress with an unbiased eye.”
“I appreciate the faith you’ve placed in me,” Diana said. “But I will admit, those suits terrify me.”

“They terrify me, too,” Kara said. “X-Kryptonite in the wrong hands would be a nightmare.”

“Yet, you still built them,” Diana said as Alex and Maggie split up, shooting off in different directions. Alex went high, drawing Victor’s fire. She glanced to her right, and Kara watched as she tensed for the turn, expecting her to get tagged again, but instead, she shot off to the left while Victor’s shot went off wide to the right.

“She’s learning,” Kara said, and turned to Diana. “I built them, because I need Alex and Maggie to be in the game, all the way. The same reason I’m going to build two more of them.”

“Just two?” Diana asked.

“There’s only two people in the world I’m willing to give that kind of power,” Kara said.

“I take it one of them is for this younger version of Sara?” Diana asked.

“God, no,” Kara said. “My Sara would crawl up out of hell and kick my ass for even thinking of giving *her* one of those bracelets. Much less a version of her with a decade less experience managing her own demons.”

“I wish I’d met your Sara,” Diana said. “She sounds remarkable.”

“She was,” Kara said. “She stood on the field of battle, with the power to remake all of reality in her hand, and she gave it up, along with the chance to save her own sister from death, because it was the right thing to do.”

“It sounds like she would be the kind of person you could trust with that kind of power,” Diana said.

“It’s not a matter of trust,” Kara said. “It’s a matter of how much it would hurt her to have that power, and not use it. You and I, Diana, we have it easy. We are always free to act. But for Sara, for what she does, the most important and hardest thing is knowing when *not* to act.”

Kara turned back to the battle playing out on the missile range, just in time to see Maggie swoop in from behind and snatch Victor out of his fox hole as he tried to take down Alex.

“Hey, Reynolds,” Kara said as she walked into the control room at the Desert facility.

“Morning, ma’am,” he said.

“Congratulations on the promotion,” Kara said. “Head of security to agent in charge. Quite a jump.”

“Thank you,” Reynolds said, in a flat, almost annoyed tone.

Kara frowned, just a bit. She didn’t really remember Reynolds very well from the previous timeline, other than the fact that in that timeline, today was the day he’d died, killed by Jemm, but she didn’t remember anyone at the DEO being particularly cold to her.

“Something I can help you with, ma’am?” he asked.

“I just wanted to make sure the backup power supplies we sent over got installed in the high threat cells,” she said.

“We finished installation yesterday, ma’am,” Reynolds said.
“Okay,” Kara said. “Did Vasquez and Willis arrive yet?”

“They’re in the break room, ma’am,” Reynolds said. “Anything else?”

“No,” Kara said, frowning. “You take care.”

She turned and headed for the breakroom, wondering what that was all about.

“Hey, sunshine,” Leslie said as Kara walked into the breakroom.

“Hey Leslie, hey Susan,” Kara said.

“Kara,” Susan said.

“Shouldn’t you be out saving the city, or something?” Leslie asked.

“We have a bit of time,” Kara said. “I’m just making the rounds, making sure everything’s set. How are you two doing?”

“We’re in a hole in the ground, waiting for an Earthquake,” Leslie said. “So, not so great.”

Susan laughed, and gave a small shake of her head. “We’re good,” she said.

Kara glanced down, making sure both of them had their war suit cuffs on. “Good,” she said. “Just remember, if Jemm gets loose, your suits have neural inhibitors built in. As soon as you activate the suits, you’ll be immune to any sort of telepathy, including his mind control powers.”

“We got it the first five times,” Leslie said.

“Hey, you volunteered for this,” Kara said. “Don’t complain about me trying to keep you alive through it.”

“I volunteered because it was this, or sit at the DEO all day, because I still don’t have anywhere to live since NCPD won’t release my apartment,” Leslie said.

“Tell you what,” Kara said. “Make it through the day, and I’ll find you a new one.”

“Really?” Leslie asked.

“Well, I do own an eighty-story, mixed-use high rise,” Kara said. “If you don’t mind having me and Cat as neighbors.”

“You and Cat?” Leslie asked. “When the hell did that happen?”

“Oh, um, no,” Kara said, feeling the blush creep up her neck. “No. Cat’s got the penthouse. I’ve got the next floor down.”

“Wait, you own the building, but Cat’s still got a better apartment than you?” Leslie asked. “Jesus, you’re whipped.”

Kara looked at Susan, hoping for a little help, but Susan already had a hand over her mouth, and was trying not to laugh, and failing miserably.

“Traitor,” Kara said. She turned back to Leslie and stuck her tongue out, because it was the most mature response she could come up with. “Be careful, both of you. Three people died down here last
“We got it, sunshine,” Leslie said. “Go fetch kittens or something.”

“Fine,” Kara said.

“Hey, Kal,” Kara said as she touched down on the helipad on top of the LuthorCorp building. “You know you don’t have to be here, right?”

“Doesn’t hurt to have an extra pair of hands,” Kal said. “Besides, I’m still worried about James.”

“He’ll be okay,” Kara said.

“How can you be so sure?” Kal asked.

“Because I need him to be okay,” Kara said. “Because if he’s not okay, he’s just one more person I let down. Because I can’t deal with him not being okay. So, he’ll be okay, or I’ll find a way to make him okay.”

“How are you holding up?” Kal asked.

“I’m here. I haven’t torn every building in the state down to the foundation looking for Lillian. Not sure anybody can expect any more than that,” Kara said.

“If you need some time…,” Kal said.

“I need Lillian, Max and Simon in a cell, or in a hole,” Kara said. “I can have a breakdown once that’s handled.”

“We’ll find them,” Kal said.

“I hope so,” Kara said. “You just make sure Lena’s safe.”

“Will do,” Kal said.

“You know, I do have an office door,” Lena said as she stepped out onto the balcony.

Kara smiled at her. “What fun would that be?” she asked.

“Think of all the juicy gossip,” Lena said. “Supergirl storms Lena Luthor’s office!”

Kara laughed. “That would be good for a headline or two on TMZ, wouldn’t it?”

“Probably,” Lena said. “I will say this is turning out to be a bit more exciting a first day than I had in mind.”

“Well,” Kara said, “I’m hoping it won’t be too exciting. We’ve got the vibration dampers installed, so the building should be fine, and most of your staff stayed home, so that should help.”

“I just hope my hotel is still there at the end of the day,” Lena said.

“Yeah, about that,” Kara said. “I know we’d discussed you buying one of the penthouses at the Waverly Towers, but I want to make another suggestion.”

“What did you have in mind?” Lena asked.
“I bought the Solarium,” Kara said. “I’ve got a whole floor set aside. I wasn’t sure how much space you’d need. It’s not a penthouse, but I thought you could have half and Sam and her daughter could have the other half.”

“You want me to move into your building?” Lena asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I know it might sound a bit odd, but short of moving you into the Kryptonian residential tower in /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/, it’s the safest place in the city for you, Sam and her daughter to live.”

“I thought it was still under construction,” Lena said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “You’ll find that things happen fast when I need them to, and after what happened last Thursday, I needed a safe place associated with my civilian identity.”

The smile vanished from Lena’s face. “I… Kara, I’m sorry…”

“Why?” Kara asked. “Lena, you didn’t do anything. You are no more responsible for what happened than Lucy is.”

“Lucy?” Lena asked.

“Lucy Lane,” Kara said. “She’s a friend. And Sam Lane’s daughter.”

“Well,” Lena said. “That must make family dinner awkward.”

“You have no idea,” Kara said. “I have to go. I have a few other stops to make. But promise me you’ll think about it?”

“Well, I don’t know if Sam will agree, but I don’t need to think about it. I hate house hunting, and if it’s as secure as you claim, it should do nicely,” Lena said.

Kara beamed as she reached out and pulled Lena into a hug. “Thank you!” she said, then she let go, realizing that she didn’t know this Lena well enough for spontaneous hugs. “Sorry,” she said, to a fiercely blushing Lena. “Sorry. I get excited.”

“It’s… um…”

“I’m gonna go,” Kara said, and she did, diving over the balcony railing before she could embarrass herself anymore.

——

Kara dropped down next to M’gann in the middle of the /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ market square.

“Hey,” she said.

M’gann looked up from the stack of supply crates she was inspecting. “Hey,” she said unenthusiastically.

“Everything okay?” Kara asked.

“Everything’s good here,” M’gann said.

“Something’s wrong though,” Kara said.

“I can’t convince some of the aliens that this place is safe,” she said.
“Why not?” Kara asked.

“It’s too exposed,” M’gann said. “Too public, too high profile. Some of them are convinced it will turn into nothing more than an alien ghetto.”

“How many?” Kara asked.

“I don’t know,” M’gann said. “Hundreds. Maybe more. Doesn’t help that people keep taking shots at you.”

“Damn,” Kara said. “I knew some people would be hard to convince, but I didn’t realize it would be that many.”

“They’re scared,” M’gann said.

“So am I,” Kara said. “For a lot of the same reasons. But this place is as close to a fortress as I could make it, and still have it be functional.”

“I know,” M’gann said. “And I really appreciate that you’re out here, trying. I may think you’re hopelessly naïve about what you can actually accomplish, but at least you’re trying.”

“I’m not sure if I should take that as a compliment or as an insult,” Kara said, “but thank you.”

“I do have a question for you, though,” M’gann said.

“Okay,” Kara said.

“How did you know who I am?” M’gann asked.

“That is a very long, and very painful story,” Kara said. “I’ll tell you, if you want. But you should make sure you’re ready to hear it, because it will change your life.”

“Always so dramatic,” M’gann said.

Kara shrugged. “I’ve been called a drama queen a time or two,” she said. “I’ve got to go. I’ve got a few more stops left but think about it. We could use your help.”

For the second time that morning, Kara touched down on Cat’s balcony at the Solarium. This time, though, she’d made sure that Cat wasn’t present. Largely because Cat was going to kill her as soon as she found out about this, and Kara wanted to at least live through the day. She glanced down, making sure her companion was ready, and got a slightly impatient look in return.

“Fine,” she muttered. “Everybody’s a critic.” She raised a hand and knocked firmly on the sliding glass door.

It took a minute, but Carter poked his head cautiously into the living room, and his face lit up when he spotted Kara. He rushed over quickly and unlatched the door.

“Supergirl!” he said. “Are you looking for my mom?”

“No,” Kara said. “I already talked to her this morning, and I know she’s going to be busy. I was actually hoping to ask you for a favor.”

“Me?” Carter asked. “What can I do?”
“Well, today’s going to be a big day,” she said. “I’m going to be running around helping a lot of people, and, well…” Kara stepped aside, letting Carter see the snow white Kryptonian hound she’d brought with her. “I’m not going to be able to spend any time with my friend here. And he gets lonely when I’m away too long.”

Right on cue Krypto tilted his head and gave a perfectly timed whine, and Kara could actually see the moment Carter fell in love.

“You have a dog?” Carter asked in wonder.

“Well,” Kara said, “technically, he’s my cousin’s. But he’s staying with me for a little bit.”

“Cool!” Carter said.

Kara smiled. “Think you can help me out?”

“Yeah!” Carter said. “Does he need food, or to go for a walk or anything?”

“The robots I gave you and your mom will be able to make him his lunch and dinner,” Kara said. “All you really need to do is let him out onto the patio if he asks and keep him company.”

“Okay,” Carter said.

Kara turned and gave Krypto a very stern look. “No flying in the house, and no chasing airplanes,” she said in a very serious look, doing her best not to crack up laughing at the ‘bitch, please!’ look Krypto gave her in return, but sure enough, he barked once and nodded his head. “Good boy!”

She knelt down and rubbed Krypto’s head for a moment, giving him a good scratch behind the ears. “/kaotronivohd/” she whispered, the kissed him on the forehead and stood back up.

Kara turned back to Carter. “Thank you so much,” she said. “I’ll feel better knowing he isn’t alone today.”

“I’m happy to help,” Carter said.

Kara nodded, and stepped back. “I’ll see you tonight when I come by to pick him up,” she said as she lifted off gently, and headed for the DEO.

Kara touched down on the landing pad outside the DEO and took a moment to look out over the city before she turned and headed inside.

“Morning, Supergirl,” J’onn said.

“Morning, J’onn,” Kara replied. “How are we doing?”

“Everything seems to be going well,” J’onn said. “Progress on the vibration dampers is right on schedule and all the Kryptonians are in place at their assigned posts. The desert facility reports all green, and first responders are standing by, ready to move out the moment we know where the damage is.”

“Good,” Kara said. “Are the roads clear?”

“We have a few stragglers, but it looks like everything will be clear well ahead of the quake,” J’onn said.
“You okay running the show without Susan here?” Kara asked.

“You know, I have been doing this for ten years,” J’onn said.

Kara stared at him for a minute, grinning. “Need me to show you how to work the comm system?”

J’onn sighed and waved his hand at the comm console. “It’s a completely different interface than the one at the desert base,” he grumbled.

“Hey, Lucy,” Kara said as she stepped into the garage.

Lucy looked up from the checklist she was reviewing and gave Kara a small smile. “Hey,” she said.

“How are we doing?” Kara asked.

“Good,” she said. “All the response teams are geared up and ready to go. I’ve got transport vans loaded with emergency supplies, and Wilma is tied into Sanctuary’s transmat system and the real-time map the drones are updating, so we can beam around any obstructions.”

“You named it Wilma?” Kara asked, looking at Lucy’s attendant.

“Yeah,” Lucy said, grinning. “I was going to ask if I could get her repainted white, with a rainbow arm band, but I’m not sure how many people would get the reference.”

“I know I wouldn’t,” Kara said.

“Oh, Kara, no…,” Lucy said. “I’m afraid you’re going to have to hand in your lesbian card if you don’t know who Wilma Deering is.”

“Why do I get the feeling there’s a TV marathon in my future?” Kara said.

“Because you haven’t seen Buck Rogers, and that has to change,” Lucy said.

Kara laughed and shook her head. “You’re as bad as Winn,” she said.

“That reminds me, I’m going to have to yell at Winn for not making you watch it sooner,” Lucy said.

“He might have tried,” Kara said. “But between the video games he made me play, and the Doctor Who incident, it might have gotten lost in the shuffle.”

“Let’s pretend it didn’t. I want to torture him a bit,” Lucy said.

“Done,” Kara said. “How are you doing?”

Lucy shrugged. “Honestly, I’ve been better,” she said. “Any word on James?”

“He’s at home,” Kara said. “Still not talking to anybody.”

Lucy sighed. “Maybe I should go by and see him tomorrow.”

“Maybe,” Kara said. “But sometimes, people just need space.”

“Maybe,” Lucy said.

“I tell you what,” Kara said. “Cyborg’s in town at the moment. Why don’t I ask him to talk to James?”
“That’s actually a really good idea,” Lucy said.

“So shocked,” Kara replied.

Lucy swatted Kara’s arm with the clipboard.

“Hey,” Kara said.

“Hush,” Lucy said. “Not like you felt it.”

Kara stuck her tongue out.

“Real mature,” Lucy said.

Kara smiled. “I try. You be safe.”

“I will,” Lucy said. “You do the same.”

“Kara!” Eliza called out, and Kara winced. She’d been hoping to sneak out of the DEO without Eliza seeing her, but that obviously wasn’t happening.

She plastered a smile on her face and turned around. “Hey,” she said. “I’m kind of busy. Earthquake, you know.”

“Which won’t happen for at least another half hour,” Eliza said. “Jeremiah’s been asking for you.”

“I know,” Kara said in a defeated tone.

“Why haven’t you been to see him?” Eliza asked.

“And say what?” Kara asked. “Hey, Jeremiah. You look great. Sorry you got you stabbed in the liver and missed ten years of your family’s lives because of me.”

“I think you could start with ‘hello’,” Eliza said.

Kara sighed, and motioned for Eliza to follow her as she walked through the doors to the landing deck. Once they were back in relative privacy, she turned around and faced Eliza again.

“I’m not ready to face him,” she said. “I’m trying, I really am, but every time I make up my mind to go visit, all I can see is the light going out of his eyes after I shoved a four-hundred-pound steel beam through his chest.”

“Oh, sweetie,” Eliza said. “I’m sorry. I didn’t even think…”

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “I… J’onn and I agreed that I’d go see someone. Try to work through some of this. But I was supposed to go last Thursday, and with the shooting, and the Earthquake, there hasn’t been time.”

“Tomorrow,” Eliza said. “Whatever else comes up, you take tomorrow.”

Kara nodded. “I doubt one session will have much of an impact,” Kara said, “but I’ll go, and I’ll keep going, as often as I can.”

“Good,” Eliza said. “Go be a hero, and I’ll figure out what to tell Jeremiah.”

“The truth,” Kara said.
“What?” Eliza asked.

“Kolex recorded my confessional last week,” Kara said. “Take him out to Sanctuary and have Kolex play back the recording.”

“Kara, something like that-“

“I know,” Kara said, “but I’m not sure how many more times I can relive it, just to be polite. Every time I talk about it, every time I tell the story, or answer questions, it dredges up every horrible moment of the war, all over again. I don’t know how many more times I can do it. I’m already having flashbacks and… Just, take him to Sanctuary.” She shook her head and turned away from Eliza.

“I have to go,” she said, and before Eliza could stop her, she lifted into the air.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

Zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope

ukiemodh w rraop
I love you

ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir
I love you, Little One

.ehrosh :bem i khehsptom
Literal: Good journey, my Captain
Semantic: Good morning, my Captain

.:zhao zhindif w rrip i khehsptom
I will always love you, my captain.

!kaothronivohd
Protect!

Translated from the Arabic:

Sabah alkhyr ya Alkawala al-Saghir
Good morning, my Little Koala
Little Earthquakes

Chapter Summary

Kara deals with the National City Earthquake, Sara tries to recover her future memories, and Susan is an absolute badass.

Chapter Notes

Bonus Chapter, because of reasons.

Also, I posted a couple of one shots the last couple of days. A Modest Proposal and Quality of Life

Liberty Colorado, Earth 1, 5:00 AM, June 1st, 1872

The Waverider appeared in the still dark sky just before first light one universe away from where they’d started, and one hundred and forty-three years, six months, six days, four hours, twenty-two minutes and thirty-four seconds earlier than she left. It then swung around, in a banking maneuver both her captain and the engineers who designed her would have insisted was impossible before dropping into a clearing just big enough for her to land in without losing any paint.

“I think I could get used to Sara remembering the future. That has got to be the smoothest time jump we’ve ever made,” Jax said as Sara put the ship into landing mode.

“I adjusted the trim on the temporal inertial dampeners and the Higgs dampeners,” Sara said.

“You did what?” Rip asked, a bit of panic in his voice.

“Relax,” Sara said. “She draws a bit more power in flight, but I figured it was a fair trade-off considering how much more maneuverable she is. The smoother ride is just a bonus.”

“Ms. Lance,” Rip ground out between clenched teeth. “Please refrain from making modifications you don’t understand to my ship.”

“Actually Captain Hunter, Ms. Lance was a great deal more conversant in both inertial theory and special temporal physics than you are. She explained the reason for the modifications and was even able to give the resulting changes in performance envelopes. While the change does reduce temporal zone loiter endurance by roughly five percent, it increases space frame endurance by nearly two hundred percent, while increasing maneuverability under power by seventy-five percent. Given our current lack of dry dock access and refit capabilities, I thought the trim adjustments quite prudent,” Gideon said.

“And just what happens when Ms. Lance pulls some trick out of her future memories, but forgets some vital detail that could compromise all of our safety?” Rip asked.

“That’s why I had Gideon double check my numbers,” Sara said.
Rip closed his eyes and took a long, slow breath. “Ms. Lance, I realize you’re trying to be helpful, but transtemporal memory is dangerous. It’s almost invariably full of gaps, which can have horrible consequences to people who become reliant on it.”

“Relax, English,” Mick said. “She fixed the ship so I don’t want to vomit every time we jump. That’s a win.”

“You know what,” Sara said. “Rip’s right. I mean, it’s not like our whole purpose for being here isn’t based on my future memories or anything.” She reached down, and unlocked her restraint, swinging it up, so she could stand up. “I think I’m just going to sit this one out. If you need me, I’ll be in my quarters.” Before anyone else could say anything, Sara stormed off the bridge in a huff.

“Man, Rip, do you always have to be an asshole?” Jax asked.

“I think what young Jefferson is trying to say, in his own, crude way, is that perhaps you should remember that Sara is a valuable part of this crew, who’s saved all of our lives on more than one occasion, and that maybe you should remove your head from your ass and stop treating her with disrespect.” Stein put in.

“Ms. Lance,” Gideon said.

Sara looked up from the knife she was sharpening. “Yes, Gideon?”

“You asked me to inform you when the rest of the crew was off the ship,” Gideon said.

“Thank you, Gideon. Are the hyperchronoton particles ready for infusion?” she asked.

“Yes, Ms. Lance. However, I feel that I would be remiss if I didn’t recommend against the procedure. As you are aware, it’s only successful in fifty-three percent of cases,” Gideon said.

“And if it’s not, it will either kill me, lobotomize me, or give me the worst case of double vision in the multiverse. I got it. How long will it take to prepare the medical bay for infusion?” Sara said.

“Three minutes,” Sara said.

“Start the process,” Sara said, “and get ready to record a couple of messages. If this does kill me, I want Laurel and Kara to know what happened.”

Number One CatCo Plaza, National City, 10:21 AM, December 7th, 2015

It happened just like it did the first time. A perfectly normal day. Bright, clear and sunny, and then the earth moved.

The first time, the city had been devastated. Pieces of sky scrapers broke off, gas lines exploded, entire buildings in some of the poorer sections of the city had come down. This time, with vibration dampers attached to almost a thousand structures throughout the city, Kara could see the differences immediately. None of the high rises were damaged. Only one of the bridges came down, and with the roads cleared well in advance, there wasn’t a single accident.

None of which meant the city was untouched, however, and Nimda’s voice was in her ear almost immediately.

“Drone surveillance is reporting damage to numerous single-family dwellings. Initiating response

Kara listened as Nimda responded to dozens of problems across the city, dispatching drones, initiating transmats, in a handful of cases, dispatching Kara, or if Kara was busy, calling Astra or one of the other Kryptonians to do things humans and drones couldn’t do without heavy equipment.

Kara had placed herself at the top of the call list so people could see Supergirl out and about, helping the city heal from this disaster, and because the first time she’d lived through this day, she hadn’t been able to save a hundred and thirty-seven souls.

This time, she was determined to do better, and with all the resources at her disposal, it was a nice, peaceful little natural disaster, right up until she got the call from Susan.

“Agent Vasquez calling the DEO. Request assistance. Urgent.”

DEO Desert Containment Facility, 30 miles outside of National City, 10:21 AM, December 7th, 2015

Leslie wasn’t sure what the hell she was doing. Oh, the moment to moment was easy enough. Kara had asked her to come out to the desert base in case some boogieman with psychic powers escaped during an earthquake. No big deal.

No, the part Leslie absolutely could not figure out was how a woman she’d had nothing but complete contempt for only two weeks earlier had turned things around to the point where Leslie was willing to sit in a hole in the ground, in the middle of a fucking earthquake, just because that woman had asked her too. She couldn’t quite put her finger on how that had happened.

Oh, if anyone asked, she’d brush it off. She didn’t have anything better to do. Supergirl had saved her life, and let her off the bastard who’d attacked her, so she figured a couple of favors were in order. But it went deeper than that. Leslie had never been much of one for self-reflection. She’d honestly thought it was a load of horse shit. Why spend time contemplating your own feelings when you could be having fun?

Except, over the years, there was less and less fun to be had. Getting blasted on a Friday night wasn’t nearly as fun at thirty-two as it had been at twenty-two. The whole sex thing had never interested her before Cat, or after Cat, and Cat had gone out of her way to show Leslie she wasn’t interested in return. And Leslie had kind of turned into a lonely, friendless bitch. She hadn’t even realized how miserable she was until Henshaw had been standing over her and she realized she was about to die.

Which is how it came back to her being here. Supergirl might have saved her life, but Kara was the one giving her a second chance. Leslie’s usefulness to Supergirl had ended the moment she’d stood on the steps of police headquarters and told the world who’d attacked her. But Kara, as much as it might irk Leslie to admit it, was the real deal. Oh, the Supergirl goodie-two-shoes act was definitely a lot of PR spin. Kara was made of a lot sterner stuff than anyone realized. She was a killer. She might not enjoy it. She might not want to do it. But Leslie had seen it with her own eyes. When push came to shove, Supergirl might talk the talk, but Kara walked the walk. She had ice in her veins. You had to, to be the kind of person who’d drive a sword through your own chest just to make a fucking point.

And that same girl, the one who walked into her cousin’s sword, the one who calmly and easily took some cyborg monster’s head off with a sword of her own, who’d walked through nine kinds of hell
Leslie couldn’t even imagine, had basically decided that she and Leslie were going to be friends. She’d offered Leslie forgiveness when Leslie had no right to expect it. She’d offered Leslie sympathy for one of the few hurts in her life she couldn’t just shake off. She’d offered Leslie the chance to find her own justice and peace by confronting Henshaw, and she hadn’t been accusing when Leslie had punched Henshaw’s ticket. She’d been proud.

It had been a long time since anyone had looked at Leslie with pride in their eyes.

And then, just like that, she’d let Leslie in on the big secret. Told Leslie that in that horrible future, Leslie had been a hero.

If anyone else had told her that, Leslie would have laughed in their faces. She was many things, but some do-gooder superhero who fought aliens and evil gods… Bullshit. Except it was true. Kara said it, and magic lasso or not, Leslie believed her. She’d always been good at reading people when they were up close and personal, and Kara was telling the absolute truth. About everything. Wanting to be her friend, understand her feelings about Cat, about Leslie being a hero.

Truth wasn’t something Leslie got a lot of in her life. And Kara had turned truth, trust and pride into some kind of secret sauce that Leslie couldn’t really seem to get enough of. Which is what led her to crawl into a hole in the ground to wait out an earthquake.

Of course, it didn’t hurt that Susan was there. She wasn’t quite sure what it was about Susan, but she’d liked her from the moment they’d met. Something about the mix of being able to be perfectly respectful to someone, while looking completely done with their bullshit. There was also the fact that Susan hadn’t dismissed her when she’d offered to help. She’d just asked Leslie what she could do, then gave her a task that took advantage of her skill set. It was a simple thing. Probably stupid, to be honest. But it had made Leslie feel like she was actually doing something at a moment when she’d been feeling completely powerless, despite being able to throw God-damned lightning bolts.

Leslie was shaken out of her thoughts, quite literally, when the quake hit. The entire control room shook, though not nearly as much as Leslie had expected. She glanced over at Susan who was standing back and staring up at the status board.

“Looks like the vibration dampers worked,” she said.

“Looks like,” Reynolds said.

“Wait,” Susan said. Leslie glanced up at the status board, trying to see what had caught Susan’s attention. “Looks like we’ve got movement in the village.”

“That can’t be right,” Reynolds said. “The prisoners are all gone.”

Susan shot him a look, a subtle one, but one filled with annoyance, before she glanced back up at the board.

“We’ve definitely got movement in the village, sir,” Wilson said. “Two of the motion sensors are reading it now.”

“Send response teams alpha, bravo and charlie down there,” Reynolds ordered.

Leslie saw the slight frown on Susan’s face, but it was gone almost as fast as it appeared. “Everything else looks green,” Susan said. “Why don’t Willis and I get out of your hair and let you run your base.”

Reynolds was good at keeping himself closed off, but there was a slight twitch in his features. It was
subtle, and she almost missed it, but she’d spent enough time in the broadcast booth interviewing guests to learn how to read even the tiniest micro-expressions, and Reynolds was absolutely pissed off.

“Of course, Ma’am. You heading back into town?” he asked.

“No. If something does go wrong and I’m not here, the Director will have my ass, but it’s your post. I figure I should let you run it without back seat driving,” she said. “If you need us, we’ll be goldbricking in the break room.”

Reynolds seemed to relax, just a bit. “Nice work if you can get it,” he said.

Susan nodded and turned around, headed towards the break room. “Come on Leslie. Let’s see if the coffee has gotten any worse in the last thirty minutes.”

“Not sure that’s possible,” Leslie said as she fell in beside Susan. She waited until they were out of earshot of the control room before she spoke again. “What the hell’s going on with that guy, anyway?”

“I don’t know,” Susan said as she reached down and touched the cuff on her wrist, triggering the freaking magic armor Supergirl had given them. “But given that we’ve already caught one double agent, I don’t intend to wait to find out.”

Leslie smiled as she activated her own armor. “I like the way you think,” she said.

Cat looked up from her computer at the sound of someone clearing their throat awkwardly. As soon as she saw who it was, she immediately understood how someone could put that much fear and discomfort into a single cough.

“Yes?”

Winn turned several shades lighter, but Cat had to admire his bravery as he walked right up to her desk.

“Hey, Ms. Grant,” he said.

“Is there something I can help you with?” Cat asked.

“No!” he said. “I just… I mean… um… I know Kara usually checks on you… not that you need checking on… but she’s out… you know… and it’s your first day back, so… are you okay?”

Though she would never admit it, the minute long pause that followed was born of pure shock. She knew that Winn adored Kara, of course, and if he’s said she had asked him to come check on her, she wouldn’t have been surprised. But for him to come and do it on his own was completely unexpected and caught her entirely off guard. Her first instinct was to say something biting and send him on his way, but she stepped on that impulse. He had taken care of her during her panic attack after Kara was shot, and he was trying to do the same thing now. He was being kind, in his own, awkward way, and he deserved better than cruelty in exchange for the sort of genuine kindness she encountered far too rarely in her life.

“I am,” she said. “Thank you for checking.”

The relief on his face was almost enough to make her laugh, which would never do. She had a reputation, after all.
“Don’t you have some dolls to play with?” she asked.

“They’re action figures!” he said.

She glared.

“I’ll just go now,” he said, already fleeing towards the door.

Cat smiled as she turned back to her computer.

Sara dropped into the chair in the medical bay, and carefully fitted the head piece Gideon had prepared. There was a part of her that thought she was crazy. It was the part of her that wanted to go home, to spend time with her sister. To maybe make up a white mask to match her suit and spend the next dozen years beating the crap out of muggers and abusing Oliver’s name at the drop of a hat. It was the part of her that wanted to forget all the horrors she’d seen in her memory over the last few days.

It was the losing part.

Because those nightmares told her there was a bigger threat out there than Malcolm Merlin’s drugged daughter, or Vandal Savage, or Ra’s al Ghul. Those nightmares held the memories of friends whose names she only knew in certain moments, and of a life spent with Kara, fighting a monster whose name still sent chills down her spine. She’d died for what was in those nightmares, and she couldn’t walk away from it.

A fifty-three percent chance. It was a good number. Better odds than making it through League of Assassins training. A fifty-three percent chance she would recover her future memories. A fifty-three percent chance she would remember why her heart ached with longing every time she so much as thought of Kara. A fifty-three percent chance she could find a way to make Rip give up on the idea of fixing the Time Aberration and wiping her sister from her life again.

Fifty-three percent. She was the White Canary. She was Ta-er al-Sahfer. She was Sara Lance. She’d come back from the dead. She’d beaten longer odds.

“Gideon,” she said. “Begin infusion.”

“Beginning infusion,” Gideon said. “And Ms. Lance, if this kills you or drives you irredeemably insane, I would just like to say, it’s been a pleasure working with you.”

“It’s been a pleasure working with you too,” Sara said, right before the future tore her mind apart.

“Where are we?” Leslie asked.

“Not the break room,” Susan said as she stopped in front of a heavy steel door and started punching in an access code. “Which right now, is the best place to be.” The door moved, sliding to the side slowly and not quite smoothly, like it wasn’t used regularly.

“This is probably redundant given your powers, but do you know how to use a gun?” Susan asked.

“Yeah, you point and click,” Leslie said.

“I was hoping for a little bit more training than that,” Susan said as she led them into the room.

“I grew up in rural Nevada,” Leslie said. “I can put twenty rounds in the ten ring at thirty yards out
of an AR-10.”

“An AR-10?” Susan asked.

Leslie shrugged. “Dad always said .223 was for pussies, liberals and Europeans.”

“Sounds like a swell guy,” Susan said as she flipped on the lights, revealing more guns than you’d find at an NRA-sponsored picnic.

“He was a drunk asshole,” Leslie said. “I especially liked the part where he wrapped his car around a telephone pole with him and my mom inside.”

“Shit!” Susan said. “I’m sorry.”

Leslie shrugged. “Not like you knew,” she said. “But there is a reason Cat Grant’s listed as my next-of-kin.”

Susan shook her head and walked over to a locked cabinet. “I swear I’m the only person on this whole god-damned planet who doesn’t have a tragic backstory,” she said as she pressed her hand to a biometric lock.

“Really? No family drama when you got caught making out with the preacher’s daughter?” Leslie asked.

“Nope. Both my moms high fived me for that one. She was hot,” Susan said as she swung open the locker. “Biggest drama in my family is one of my moms nagging me for Supergirl’s autograph.” She reached in and pulled out a weird looking pistol. “Slaver pistol. Gift from Kara’s little bag of future tech goodies. Do not turn it above setting three.”

“Why not?” Leslie asked.

“You’ll start shooting through walls and bring this whole place down on our heads,” Susan said. “Not all of us can turn into lightning and travel through the rebar in the rubble.” She held out a gun belt.

“Setting three it is,” Leslie said, taking the gun belt and fastening it on before slipping the pistol in her holster. By the time she was finished, Susan had a vest on with two different kinds of pistols tucked into it, a slaver pistol in a drop holster on her hip, and a rifle that looked like a scaled up version of the slaver pistol.

“Why do you get more guns that me?” Leslie asked.

“Because before I joined the DEO, I was an FBI sniper. Also, you can shoot lightning bolts out of your fingers,” Susan said.

“Good point. Who am I going to fry?” Leslie asked.

“Hopefully no one,” Susan said, “but Reynolds is acting shifty as fuck. I don’t know for sure he’s working for Cadmus, but I do know we’ve already had one mole. If he is working for Cadmus, my guess is he’ll try to break out Lane and Harper.”

“Those two fuckers who are responsible for the attack on CatCo?” Leslie asked.

“Those are the fuckers in question. You up for this?” Susan asked.

“Damn right I am!” Leslie said.
“Then grab that case over there,” Susan said, pointing to a large suitcase.

“What’s in it?” Leslie asked.

“Bombs,” Susan said. “Lots and lots of bombs.”

“Sara?” Jax called as he stepped into the darkened med bay. “Sara, you in here?”

“Did you know there are no animals on Apokolips,” Sara said, her voice coming from a dark corner.

“What?” Jax asked.

“Animals,” she said, and Jax stopped, because there was something just a little broken about her voice. “Not a single animal on the whole planet.”

“Sara, I’m going to turn on the lights,” Jax said, reaching for the control panel.

“No!” Sara said.

“Okay,” Jax said, his hand stopping just short of the button. He stepped a little further into the med bay. “Why is that important? That there aren’t any animals.”

“Because they feed you,” Sara said. “When you’re in the slave pits… They feed you meat.”

Jax inched a little closer to Sara. “Okay,” he said. “But if there are no animals where…” He stopped, because somehow, he knew that he didn’t want the answer to that question. He didn’t want it at all. Ever.

There was a horrible retching sound from the shadows, and the scent of vomit filled the air for a moment before the air filter kicked on.

“We were there three months,” Sara said.

More retching.

“I didn’t want to. I didn’t. But there was nothing else, and they worked us so hard, and after a few days, you get hungry, and…”

More retching.

“Gideon,” Jax said, “tell Rip to get down here, *now*.”

Susan moved through the base like a ghost. Silent and nearly invisible. Leslie, much to her surprise, was nearly as quiet. It took a couple of false starts for Leslie to pick up the hand signals, but by the time they made it from the reserve armory down to the prison level, the two of them were moving like a well-oiled machine.

Something was definitely wrong though. They’d passed two guard positions, and in both cases, the guards were gone. Susan wasn’t sure what that meant. They might be dead, might be unconscious and/or stashed away, or the whole damn base might be lousy with fucking traitors.

The thought made her blood boil. She might not be a rock star like Alex, Lucy, or Kara, but she was loyal. It was simple. You take the shilling, you serve the king.
She stopped, not quite sure why, but a second later, she heard it. The sound of electric motors. She touched her bracer, deploying the war suit’s helmet as she backed around the corner she’d just turned. She reached down and pulled a small camera from her belt and pointed it around the corner. The image from the camera popped up on her helmet’s visor, and she watched as Reynolds, Lane and Harper came into view. Reynolds was wearing one of the Kryptonite-driven exoskeletons from the main armory, and Lane and Harper both had sidearms and were carrying Tavor assault rifles.

“We don’t have much time, sir,” Reynolds said. “There’s a DEO agent and a meta loose in the facility, and I wasn’t able to neutralize them.”

“What meta?” Harper asked.

“The Willis woman,” Reynolds replied. “I know it sounds weird. She’s just a DJ, but she took down Henshaw.”

“I thought that was Supergirl,” Harper said.

“No sir,” Reynolds replied. “Willis can throw lightning and electrical discharges. It was kept out of the official report that the Martian sent up line.”

“How many people are we going to have to go through to get out of here?” Harper asked.

“Shouldn’t be any, unless Vasquez and Willis turn up,” Reynolds said. “For all I know, they’re off fucking in a closet somewhere. I wouldn’t bet on it though.”

“Vasquez is an analyst,” Harper said. “I think we can handle her.”

“Sir, if you think you can *handle* Susan Vasquez without body armor and a full squad backing you up, you go right ahead. I’ll try not to point out how stupid you are at your funeral. She’s one of the Martian’s hand-picked and hard-trained specialists, and she might be an analyst here, but the Martian recruited her after she killed a Boloxavian with an FBI-issue Glock.”

“Point taken, Agent Reynolds,” Lane said. “Let’s get out of here before we run into them.”

“Sorry, sir, but I have orders,” Reynolds said. “Ms. Luthor instructed me to bring the Kryptonian prisoner, and if possible, the Coluan.”


“I wasn’t given that information, but I was informed that Non has a higher priority for extraction than you or General Lane, so I’d assume it’s important,” Reynolds said.

“Where are they now?” Lane asked.

“Five levels down in the Supermax cells,” Reynolds said.

“Lead the way, son,” Lane said.

Susan pocketed the camera as soon as they started down the hall towards the elevators. She waited a minute before reaching up and tapping her ear bud, only to get a burst of static. She reached down, touching a spot on her bracer, which brought up a holographic menu, and she switched over to the Kryptonian tech comm built into her suit, only to frown when she couldn’t get a signal from that, either.

She turned to Leslie. “We need to get back to the command center,” she said.
Susan tried to stay calm as they walked into the command center but seeing people she’d worked with for years sprawled out on the floor like so many corpses made her stomach turn. She immediately dropped down on her knees next to Wilson and checked his pulse. To her relief, he was alive.

“Are they dead?” Leslie asked.

“No,” she said. “There’s a small, armored room just down the entrance hall on the right. Move them in there. I’m going to see if I can call for backup.”

“On it,” Leslie said, grabbing Wilson, and dragging him towards the empty room.

Susan dropped into the ops chair and tried to log in. She immediately got an invalid user alert, which didn’t surprise her at all. Reynolds was good at security. Of course, she was better. She entered a different username and password combo, and the system opened for her. She immediately tried to pull the comm system but cursed when she got a hardware disconnect alert. Someone had physically yanked the connections to the comm tower.

“Help is not coming,” Susan said as Leslie came back, grabbing another tech to haul to safety.

“What do we do?” Leslie asked.

“I’m not sure yet,” Susan said. “Keep working.”

“Right,” Leslie said.

Susan pulled up the security grid and frowned. Non and Indigo’s cages were already open, which meant they didn’t have a lot of time. She threw the entire prison into lockdown, which should buy them a little more time, but with Reynolds in one of the exoskeletons, they had maybe ten minutes before things went straight to shit.

She pulled up the trackers. Three of the response teams were locked in the village, and again, someone had pulled the hardlines. There was no way she could free them without going down there. The fourth response team was split. Half of them were down in the prison with Reynolds, and half of them were topside in one of the hangars. She pulled up a video feed, confirming her suspicions that they were prepping the gunships.

“That’s all of them,” Leslie said, making Susan look up.

“Okay,” Susan said. “Here’s what we’re going to do…”

Reynolds did not like this. Not one little bit. Comms with the team prepping the copters had cut out, and while he had the Kryptonian comm unit Lillian had given him, he would have to turn off the jammer to use it, and that meant Vasquez would be able to call for help too. The bitch of it was, he had actually liked Vasquez. She wasn’t a soldier, not like he was, and certainly not like Danvers, but she wasn’t soft. He wasn’t sure if it was her time in the FBI, or if she was just naturally tough, but he had respected her as the gloved hand that protected the DEO from Henshaw and Danvers’ iron fists. Add to that, the fact that she was supremely competent, and he really thought she should be leading the field teams instead of running operations control. Or he had, right up until he found out she was as much of a sell-out as Danvers.

Reynolds had sworn an oath to protect his country against all enemies, and a Martian who mauled a federal agent then stole his life was about as big an enemy as Reynolds could imagine. He hadn’t understood, at first, why Lillian hadn’t exposed the imposter, but she’d explained that leaving him in
place allowed them to lure out any alien sympathizers he might recruit as allies.

Danvers was a given, of course. The Kryptonian freak was her “sister”, who had obviously been running psy-ops from the day she caught that plane, but he’d thought better of Vasquez. He’d been disappointed when he found out she’d known about the Martian. That, more than anything, made him realize just how far gone the DEO was.

He stepped into the command center ready for a fight, only to find it empty.

“This doesn’t feel right?” he said.

“What do you mean?” Harper asked.

“When they laid this place out, they used a lot of pre-existing caves. This chamber was the only one large enough to handle command, but it’s also the first large chamber in the network, so they designed it to be a choke point,” Reynolds said. “If Vasquez wanted to stop us, she should have fortified here.”

“Maybe she realizes she’s outmatched,” Lane said.

“Maybe,” Reynolds said, not believing it for a minute. Sure, he had the exoskeleton, and he had four members of Delta squad with him, along with Lane and Harper, but while Vasquez might not be Supergirl, she was definitely one of the DEO’s heavy hitters. He really did not want to tangle with her if he could help it. Especially not hampered by two prisoners. He just wanted to get to the choppers and get out.

Then it hit him.

“She’s going for the choppers,” he said.

Susan hunkered down in the cat walk at the top of the hangar. The four members of Delta team who’d been in the hangar were all unconscious, zip-tied, and stuffed in the parts locker. Also, thanks to a little judicious sabotage, the gun-ships weren’t going anywhere. Which meant that she just had to take down Reynolds, Lane, Harper and the rest of Delta.

She was definitely not getting paid enough for this shit.

She took a bead on the door leading up from the underground facility and double checked the setting on the slaver rifle. She didn’t want to kill anyone if she could help it, but this had to go down fast. A quick look told her Leslie was ready.

The door opened and Susan refocused. Two of the Delta squaddies came out first, followed by Non and Indigo. Susan gave a small nod, and Leslie shifted so she had a line of sight, and before anyone could spot her or react, she let loose with a massive electrical discharge, right into Indigo. The Coluan dropped like a stone, her chest blown open and red chucks of digital flesh spilling out, at which point, Susan started pulling the trigger. The two members of Delta dropped like stones as Leslie hit Non with a lightning bolt.

Non went down, hard, but the wall between the stairwell and the rest of the hangar burst open as Reynolds came through it, using the strength of the exoskeleton to cut a new path. The exoskeleton also enhanced his speed enough that Susan wasn’t able to get off a shot before he was in cover again.

“Stand down, Vasquez,” Reynolds yelled. “You can’t win.”
“Funny, I’ve been down three quarters of Delta, along with a Kryptonian and a Coluan,” Susan said as she lifted the detonator and selected two of the bombs. “That’s eight to zero, my favor.”

“You know what this suit can do,” Reynolds replied.

“Yep,” Susan said. She triggered the charges, and Reynolds was knocked out of cover, slamming into the hangar wall. He staggered just a bit, and Susan cursed Kara for the barrier fabric uniforms she’d supplied to the DEO, because that blast would have crippled him if he hadn’t been protected. She dialed the slaver rifle up to eight and took a shot, bouncing him off the wall again before he could recover.

“We can sit here and play pinball with you as the ball all damn day, Reynolds. Or you can surrender.” She waited until he almost had his feet and shot him again. This time, he didn’t even try to get up.”

“You might want to reconsider,” Reynolds said.

“Why?” Susan asked. “I’ve got your ass pinned down, and you have to know the choppers aren’t going anywhere.”


Susan felt a sense of dread as she ran through possibilities. “What’s that?” she asked, even as she racked her brain.

“Wild fire protocol,” Reynolds said.

Susan felt her blood run cold. “You wouldn’t,” she said. “Those are your men down there.”

“If they are working for the Martian, they’re traitors. To the country, and to the whole damn planet,” Reynolds said.

“I’m going to kill you,” Susan said.

Reynolds laughed as he finally sat up. He gave a small tug on the uniform shirt. “That’s the beauty of it. You can’t. That freak you love so much was *so* ready to give us her technology. Dumb bitch never imagined it being turned against her.”

“What do you want?” Susan asked.

Reynolds climbed to his feet. “What did you do to the choppers?”

“I tripped the emergency fuel cut-offs,” Susan said.

“That’s it?” Reynolds asked.

“As far as you know,” Susan said.

“Here’s the deal,” Reynolds said. “We’re going to load up and fly out of here, and you’re going to let us, or I’m going to set off the nuke down in the basement.”

“You do, you’ll die too,” Susan said.

“Better that, then let a bunch of aliens take over the damn planet,” Reynolds said.

“Fine,” Susan said. “Fine. You walk today. But I am going to find you, and I am going to kill you.”
“You do that,” Reynolds said. “Just remember, even one shot, and I’ll turn this whole base into a smoking hole in the ground.”

Susan turned to Leslie. “Yeah, the nuke in the basement. I got it.”

Leslie nodded and disappeared, an arc of electricity shooting into the base’s power grid, leaving Susan to watch as Reynolds and Harper fixed the choppers and loaded his men into them. Harper, Lane, Non, and what was left of Indigo went in one, along with the two members of Delta who were still awake. The six unconscious members of Delta went into the other chopper. Reynolds used the suit to push both of them out of the hangar, and Susan cursed, wondering what was taking Leslie so long.

She was still cursing a two minutes later when they both lifted into the air. They were already headed for the horizon when Leslie reappeared.

“You got it?” Susan asked.

“Yeah,” Leslie said.

Susan jumped from the catwalk, her war suit taking the impact that normally would have shattered her legs. She ran for the door, and raised her rifle, taking aim.

The tailing chopper blocked a shot at the lead, but that was okay. She dialed the slaver rifle up to twelve, and raised it, lining up the shot, then pulled the trigger.

The trailing chopper exploded in a massive ball of oily black smoke as the slaver rifle cooked off both the fuel and the ordinance, and Susan cursed again, knowing there was no way the smoke would clear in time for her to get a second shot off.

She lowered her rifle and hit her comm, praying as she did.

“How can I assist, Agent Vasquez?” Nimda asked.

“Put me through to Supergirl,” Susan said.

“Any sign of them?” J’onn asked as Kara walked into the desert base command center where he and Susan sat.

“No,” Kara said. “I found the second Blackhawk crashed into the side of a mountain about a hundred and twenty miles from here, right where the black box’s recovery beacon said it would be, but no sign of Lane, Harper, Non or Indigo.”

“I’m sorry,” Susan said. “I fucked up.”

“No, it was a good plan,” Kara said.

“If it was a good plan, then they wouldn’t have gotten away,” Susan said.

“Well, Reynolds didn’t,” Kara said. “Idiot took off his helmet once he got in the chopper. We found what was left of him and the exoskeleton he was wearing. The kryptonite has been contained. But I’m the one who fucked up,” Kara said. “I should have insisted on you having more people.”

“Ma’am,” Susan said, “with respect, as far as you knew, I had four response teams, Leslie, and the whole damn base staff. You were worried about a prisoner break out, not one of our own switching sides. Honestly, you insisting I bring Leslie along is probably the only reason this place isn’t a hole in
“I still can’t believe she managed to disarm a nuke,” Kara said. “Hell, I can’t believe I never knew there was a nuke in the basement.”

“You never looked?” J’onn asked.

“I knew there was a lead-lined room down there,” Kara said. “I just figured it was you being paranoid about your bobblehead collection or something.”

J’onn gave her an annoyed look.

Kara shrugged. “You lined your cookie jar with lead foil, J’onn.”

“I lined the shower stalls, too,” J’onn said.

“Which I did not know, but am going to take as a personal insult,” Kara said.

“You seem awfully calm about this, ma’am,” Susan said.

“Do I?” Kara asked. “Because I don’t feel calm. I feel like flying over to Stryker’s Island, ripping Lex Luthor’s head off, and mailing it to Lillian along with a Christmas Card. But, I can’t do that, because I don’t have a current address for her. Which is probably a good thing, because if I did know where she was, I’d just go there and toss her into orbit.”

“Kara-” J’onn started.

“Don’t,” Kara said in a tone that silenced even J’onn. “I’m trying to save the entire fucking multiverse. Fifty-three universes, teetering on the brink of eternal enslavement to a god that makes the worst monsters you can imagine look like ill-tempered teddy bears. But instead of focusing on that, I have to deal with this. I have to worry that the next time I’m distracted for five seconds by whatever disaster has come along, a bunch of bigots are going to try to murder the people I love. Again.”

Kara shook her head. “I’m not calm. I am so far from calm, I don’t even have a word to describe it. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to go finish putting National City back together, so the police can frame me for another murder, or the mayor can try to arrange the deaths of my entire species, again.”

Kara turned and headed for the door.

“That could have gone better,” Susan said.

“Yeah,” J’onn agreed.
Aftershocks

Chapter Summary

Cat and Kara have a discussion about dog sitting, Alex and Maggie fail as spending the night apart, Leslie gets a new apartment, and Jeremiah and Kara talk.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sun had long since set, and night enfolded the California coast, though someone at street level might be forgiven for not knowing that. From her vantage point high above the sprawling metropolis that was National City, Kara could see it all too well. The deep, infinite black outside the massive dome of light pollution given off by people working late, by rescue workers and first responders working the tail-end of the crisis, by the drones still working frantically to repair the city that mother nature had tried so hard to bring low that very morning.

Even with the drones working their hardest, it would be days before all the damage was put right. Nearly two thousand families had been displaced, though all of them had found temporary housing in the one of the residential towers within the newly-drawn city limits of /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/.

She closed her eyes, and allowed her senses to expand, repeating the Torquasm Vo mantras she’d learned from Powergirl that helped her hone and focus her perceptions and filter out the noise. She heard things, a man thanking God for protecting his family. A woman inviting her lover to bed. Someone hailing a taxi, and a man making change for a customer in a convenience store. The sounds of the city coming back to life now that the curfew had been lifted. She breathed it in, let it wash over her, and then pushed it aside, searching through layers upon layer of background noise, listening for voices which had haunted her nightmares for more than a decade.

Lillian Luthor, Maxwell Lord, Sam Lane, Simon Tycho. Each a monster who roared in her ear in moments when she was weak and couldn’t keep propping up the wall she’d built between herself and the past. And yet, this night, when she wanted to hear them, when she desperately needed to hear them, the monsters were silent, drowned out by the sheer mundanity of reality.

But still, she listened. She heard Winn asking Kaldur’ahm if he wanted to go for a beer. She heard Clark and Diana talking on the roof of the LuthorCorp building. She heard Lena on the phone with Walter Steele, finalizing some detail or other of the buy-out of Queen Consolidated. She heard J’onn and Lucy discussing the legality of requiring everyone in the DEO to submit to a telepathic scan to determine if they were working for Cadmus.

She heard Cat calling her name.

There was no thought in the response. It was reflex. She was diving towards the sound of Cat’s voice before she even realized she’d heard it, fear of what might be wrong mixed with the thrill she got any time she saw Cat as she flew towards the Solarium.

“Well,” Cat said as Kara came to a stop, floating about the roof of the building she now owned. “There you are.” She gave Kara a warm, slightly amused smile.
“Hey, Cat,” Kara said. “What can I do for you?”

“You can tell me why I came home to find my son dog-sitting for you,” Cat said. Her tone was one which would have made a younger Kara tremble in fear, but Kara could see the slight upturn of Cat’s lips, the way she was trying her best not to smile.

“You know some animals are sensitive to earthquakes and other natural phenomenon,” Kara said. “I couldn’t bring myself to leave him home alone.”

“Right,” Cat said. “Would you mind calling your mutt?”

Kara drifted down until her feet touched the balcony, then gave a sharp whistle. “Here, Krypto!”

There was a bark, and then a moment later, Krypto came trotting up to the sliding glass door. He reared up on his hind legs and caught the handle with one of his paws, pulling the door open before he trotted through, wagging his tail with a happy little doggie smile.

“Were you a good boy?” Kara asked, bending down to pet him.

“No,” Cat said.

Krypto turned and looked up at her, letting out a little whine as he gave her a pair of puppy dog eyes.

“Krypto, what did you do?” Kara asked in a stern tone.

He turned to look up at her, opening his mouth and letting his tongue hang out as he panted excitedly and wagged his tail, laying on the cute in a way that told Kara he was feeling at least a little guilty.

“There are paw prints on the ceiling of my kitchen,” Cat said.

Krypto dropped his head and let out a whine.

Kara looked down at him. “Really? The ceiling? I know I said no flying in the house, mister!”

Krypto dropped down, resting his chin on the balcony and put both of his paws over his head, letting out a low, pitiful whine.

“Quite the little actor, isn’t he?” Cat asked.


“Better,” Cat said. “Aside from the paw prints…” there was another whine, “… this fuzzy little monster made quite the impression.”

Kara smiled. “Well, you know how busy I am these days,” Kara said, kneeling down to scratch behind Krypto’s ears. “I hardly have time to do any of the five different jobs I have, much less dog sit for a dog that occasionally fetches cars when he gets lonely and board.”

“You don’t say,” Cat replied.

“I mean, it would be a huge favor to ask, I know…” Kara said.

“Well, Carter is taken with him,” Cat said.

“He’d be very well-behaved, if you think you could get Carter’s school to allow it,” Kara said.
“Carter’s therapist has broached the idea of an emotional support dog,” Cat said, “and the school’s policies allow it.”

Kara looked down at Krypto. “What do you say, boy?” she asked. “Would you like to stay with Carter for a while?”

Krypto leapt to his feet and let out an excited bark, making Kara laugh.

“Well, I guess we know how Krypto votes,” Kara said. She looked up at Cat. “It would be temporary,” Kara said.

“How long will be I burdened with this flea magnet?” Cat asked.

“Well, we’re expecting a litter in about three months,” Kara said. “They take about six months for proper training. I think Krypto might be talked into hanging around that long.”

Cat let out a dramatic sigh. “I suppose I can manage that,” she said. “As long as he stays off the ceiling.”

Kara looked down at Krypto. “Think you can behave yourself?”

Krypto wagged his tail and gave an enthusiastic bark.

Kara grabbed his ears and wiggled them back and forth as she leaned down and planted a kiss on his forehead. “Good boy!” she said, then she let go and stood up. “Go on. Go to Carter.”

Krypto turned and ran back inside, disappearing into the depths of the apartment fast enough that she knew she needed to remind him about not using super-speed in the house either.

“Your attendants will know what to feed him,” Kara said.

“Kara,” Cat said.

“Yes?” Kara asked, but before she knew what happened, Cat was pulling her into a hug.

“Thank you,” she said.

Kara slipped her arms around Cat’s slight frame and hugged her back, and for the first time since she got the call from Susan, the tension seemed to melt away, and like she always did when she got the chance to hug Cat, she felt just a little bit of the weight lift off her shoulders. She turned slightly and placed a soft kiss on Cat’s cheek.

“Thank you for letting me,” she said.

Alex dropped down on the couch in her new apartment, utterly exhausted, and frustrated beyond words. Spending the last couple of days working on learning the suits Kara had given her and Maggie had been worth it, especially since she and Maggie had been able to help out with the Earthquake relief efforts that afternoon, but she was still angry about Lane and Harper escaping. She knew Susan had made the right choice. Had made the only choice, in fact. Letting the Wildfire charge go off would have killed dozens of DEO agents, and more than a hundred aliens.

There was a time when she’d have been a lot less worried about the latter, but Kara, Maggie and J’onn had completely changed her outlook on that topic. Which brought her back to part of the reason she was so frustrated.
Maggie wasn’t there.

It was stupid, really. So far, they’d only actually managed a single date, but this was the first night they’d spent apart since the night of Kara and Clark’s duel. Things hadn’t really progressed much beyond making out and cuddling, but she found herself really, really hating the idea of spending the night alone. It was a surprise, because she’d always hated having her boyfriends stay over almost as much as she hated sex.

She should have known it would be different with Maggie. Everything was different with Maggie. She sometimes wondered how much of that was just being able to be honest with her. There was no pretense, no having to be normal, no having to avoid drawing attention. She could just curl up in Maggie’s arms and be Alex.

She looked up at the sound of a knock on her door, frowning as she wondered who it could be. She climbed to her feet, already feeling grumpy about being interrupted while she was feeling sorry for herself. She stomped over to the door and twisted the lock before jerking it open.

Her bad mood instantly evaporated when she found Maggie standing there. Before she could say anything, Maggie stepped forward and went up on her toes, kissing Alex like her life depended on it. Alex didn’t object. She wrapped her arms around Maggie and kissed her back.

“I hate my new apartment,” Maggie said as she broke the kiss.

“What’s wrong with it?” Alex asked.

“You’re not in it,” Maggie said.

“I was just thinking the same thing about mine,” Alex said.

Maggie stretched up and kissed her again, making Alex moan.

“This isn’t too clingy, is it?” Maggie asked.

“No,” Alex said. “This is just the right amount.”

Maggie smiled at her. “Good,” she said. “Because I think you’re stuck with me.”

“I think I can live with that,” Alex said.

“How do you like it?” Kara asked. Leslie looked around the apartment, taking it in as Kara watched her. The expression on her face was unreadable, even when Leslie turned back to her.

“You been creeping on me or something, Sunshine?” Leslie asked.

“What?” Kara asked.

“The furniture, the… Everything. It looks like my old apartment,” Leslie said.

“Oh,” Kara said. “Is that bad? I thought you’d prefer it that way.”

“Not bad,” Leslie said. “Just creepy. How did you know what my place looked like?”

“I sent Konex over to your old apartment and had him do a scan. Then Nimda searched online catalogs to find the best matches for furniture and stuff. Once she had the designs, she ran everything off on the fabbers downstairs and transmatted it up here. Your new clothes are all made of
Kryptonian fabric, so short of a magically-enhanced anti-tank missile, they should last for a long time and keep you safe. I’ve got duplicates of most of the stuff in your apartment, including all your makeup, soaps, shampoo, fresh boxes of pads and tampons. We stocked the pantry and the refrigerator based on what was at your old place, too,” Kara said. “I wanted you to feel at home.”

“Sunshine…” Leslie said, her tone a little exasperated, “this is too much.”

“What do you mean?” Kara asked.

“I mean, insurance would have paid for replacing my shit,” Leslie said. “And you can’t just let me live here, rent-free.”

“Why not?” Kara asked. “I own the building. I’ve got an Omegahedron in the basement, so it’s not like I have to worry about a power bill or anything, and the property taxes are the same if you’re here or not. If you want, I can charge you for water and sewer.”

Leslie huffed and shook her head. “Un-freaking-real,” she said. “You don’t even get it, do you?”

“No,” Kara said.

“I don’t know how to accept this,” Leslie said. “I don’t know what you want from me.”

“From you?” Kara asked. “Leslie, I just want you to be safe. I… Before, we weren’t friends. I don’t want it to be that way this time.”

“Is this about Cat?” Leslie asked.

“In a way,” Kara said. “I know you’re important to Cat, and I know Cat’s important to you, so if I can help the two of your get back to being friends, I want that. But you’re my friend too, and this…” Kara gestured to their surroundings, “it’s nothing. It’s a space that would be empty, and a few commands to one of my attendants. Giving you this apartment and the clothes, it’s about me being able to sleep at night, knowing the people I care about are safe. It’s about not waking up, wondering if one of my enemies is going to murder someone I love in their sleep. Cat’s here. My foster mother, my foster father, my sister, and as soon as I can talk them into it, all of my friends. Susan’s moving in tomorrow, and…”

“Susan’s moving in?” Leslie asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “She’s got the unit across the hall.”

Leslie looked around the room one more time and gave a small nod. “Okay,” she said. “I wouldn’t want to seem ungrateful.”

“Okay,” Kara said, not quite clear on what just happened. “Come on. I’ll show you how to set up your attendant.”

“I get one of those robot things, too?” Leslie asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“Sweet!”

James stared into the mirror, and the only thing he could think was that the worst part of it was not looking any different. There were no scars. There weren’t even any wounds still in the process of healing. He just looked normal. The same way he had before he went to work the previous Thursday
morning.

He wasn’t even sure it felt any different. He thought it did, but he wasn’t sure if the difference was real, or just in his head.

What he did know was that under the artificial skin, which blended perfectly with his real skin, his left arm, his lungs, his heart, and a huge section of his spine were a mass of metal and plastic. Memory fibers replacing muscles, wires replacing nerves, alloy replacing bone. He wasn’t sure how much of his former self was just gone, but it was a huge chunk.

He didn’t know why he was having such a hard time with it, either. If he couldn’t tell the difference, or wasn’t sure if he could tell the difference, then why did it matter? Was it because this was the first time he’d ever gotten hurt? Oh, sure, hanging out with Clark, he’d gotten his share of bumps and bruises. He’d even been shot before. But this wasn’t a through and through in the arm that left him with a story to tell his kids someday. He’d almost died, and without Kryptonian technology, even if he’d lived, he would have spent the rest of his life as a paraplegic.

All the times he’d been in some tight scrape or other, he’d never really believed he was going to die. He’d been scared, sure, but ever since that day he fell and Clark caught him, he’d always known that he wasn’t in any real danger.

Except he was. This was real.

He looked over at the Guardian armor that Kara had given him on Thanksgiving. The armor he’d barely had a chance to try on. The armor that, according to Kara, had gotten him killed in the other timeline when the entire CatCo building had come down on top of him.

It wasn’t that he was afraid of dying. Going out trying to save people didn’t give him pause. It was that, for the first time ever, he realized how woefully unprepared he was for the life he’d been living. He thought about what would have happened had Bruce, Dick, Jason, Tim or hell, even Damian had been in Cat’s office, and it made him angry. Angry at himself, because for fourteen years, he’d been treating this like a game.

He wondered how many people that got killed in the other timeline.

He walked over to the case, and closed the lid, locking it carefully, before hauling the whole thing to his closet and putting it away.

He wanted to be Guardian. He wanted it more than he’d ever wanted anything. But if he was going to do it, he had to be ready, and he had to be worthy before he went out on the streets, which meant he needed to make a call.

Once the case was safely tucked away, he picked up his phone, selected a name from the contacts, and hit send.

“Hey James,” Dick said when he answered. “I heard about what happened. How are you doing?”

“I’ve had better days, but I’ll be okay,” James said. “I need a favor though.”

“Sure,” Dick said. “What is it?”

“How quick can you get to National City?”

Kara dropped onto the sofa in her new apartment, sighing with relief as the smart cushion remolded
itself to cradle her. It had been a long day, after a long week, and all she really wanted was a few
days to rest.

Maybe Alex was right. Get Nimda to run off a copy of the Sanctuary Sunstone, pop back in time a
few decades and drop it in some innocuous spot and have an instant vacation home. The question
would be where. Maybe deep inside a mountain. The ocean floor was tempting, but then she’d have
to deal with Atlantians, and Kaldur’ahm and Mera aside, she honestly didn’t have much patience for
them. As a people, they were so arrogant they made the Kryptonian Houses look meek and humble,
which was saying something, because Kara had dealt with enough alternate versions of Krypton
during the war that she would be the first person to admit that most Kryptonians from the Houses
were smug, arrogant assholes who needed a good solid punch in the face. It was a trait she really
hoped she could train out of the next generation.

The moon was a possibility. The transmat system would reach a good bit past lunar orbit, so she
could set up on the far side of the moon and be left in peace. Maybe drop the Sunstone a couple of
thousand years ago and give herself plenty of time to just relax. Of course, she didn’t have a way to
travel back and forth in time, unless she dedicated resources to building a timeship, or she could lay
hands on a time courier.

“Lady Kara,” Konex said.

Kara looked over at where the attendant floating. “Yes?”

“You asked to be informed as soon as project Seed Stock was completed,” Konex said.

“It’s done?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Konex said. “The project was completed with lower than expected losses. Provided no
unexpected issues occur, we should have thirty kilos of Nth metal remaining after the completion of
Project Sunblade.”

Kara frowned. Thirty kilos was a narrow margin of error for Sunblade, which was almost as critical
as Seed Stock. She glanced at her watch. It would be a little past midnight in Gotham.

“Initiate project Dragon’s Teeth and ask the Batbot if Bruce is available,” Kara said, smiling as she
pictured the annoyed look on Bruce’s face everytime he saw the attendant she’d sent him, all shiny
black with bat ears molded into the head assembly, and a bat logo embossed on the chest.

“Mr. Wayne is available,” Konex said.

Kara pulled out her phone. “Put me through,” she said.

“Hey, Kara. What can I do for you?” Bruce asked.

“I need Nth Metal,” Kara said. “In quantity.”

“Hmmm… What kind of quantity?” Bruce asked.

“Maybe a hundred kilos, just to be safe,” Kara said.

“That’s a lot,” Bruce said. “Can I ask what it’s for?”

“Nth Metal is naturally resistant to Lantern powers,” Kara said. “If the Guardians of the Universe
make it to Earth, I’d prefer we weren’t completely defenseless against them and the third army.”
“That’s not an answer,” Bruce said.

“Wow. You really are the world’s third greatest detective, aren’t you?” Kara said.

“Third?” Bruce asked.

“You live in a world where Tim and Maggie exist, Bruce. Accept it and move on.”

“I... You still haven’t answered the question,” Bruce said.

“Do I really need to?” Kara asked.

“No,” Bruce said.

“And are you, who keeps a case of Kryptonite for use against me and one for use against Kal, going to argue with the need?”

“No,” Bruce said.

“So, can you get me what I’m looking for?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Bruce said.

“When?” Kara asked.

“Three, maybe four days,” Bruce said. “Some of my stashes are hard to reach.”

“You could just give their locations to the Batbot,” Kara said.

“We’re not calling it that,” Bruce said.

“You’re not calling it that,” Kara said. “I’ll bet you a new painting for above the mantel in the library that everyone else is taking great delight in calling it that.”

“You’re worse than Tim,” Bruce said.

“I will take that as a compliment,” Kara said.

“It’s not meant that way,” Bruce replied.

“I know,” Kara said. “That makes it better. I-"

The sound of a knock on her door cut Kara off, and she glanced over, using her X-Ray vision to see who it was.

“Bruce, I’ve got to go,” she said.

“Is everything okay?” Bruce asked.

“Fine,” Kara said. “I’ve got company. The awkward conversation you don’t want to have kind, not the punching kind.”

“Go,” Bruce said.

Kara hung up the phone and stood up, walking over to the door to her apartment, already dreading what was coming. She unlocked it and opened the door.
“Hey,” Jeremiah said.

“Hi,” Kara said.

They stood there in awkward silence for a couple of minutes before Jeremiah spoke again.

“Um, do you have a few minutes to talk?” Jeremiah asked.


“Yeah,” Jeremiah said. “A beer might be good.”

“Konex,” Kara said. “Two beers.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex said.

Kara led him over to the couch and sat down. He took a seat just as Konex returned with two beers, handing one to Kara and one to Jeremiah.

“Would you like something to eat?” Kara asked.

“No,” he said. “But if you’re hungry, go ahead.”

“I’m fine,” Kara said. “I had four Big Belly Bacon Double Cheeseburgers on the way home.”

Jeremiah smiled. “Same appetite, I see.”

Kara gave him a weak smile. “Yeah,” she said. “Um, I should apologize. I know I should have come and seen you.”

“It’s okay. I’ve seen enough news to know you’ve been busy,” Jeremiah said.

“Okay,” Kara said. “Busy. Yeah. We can go with that.” She took a sip of her beer, and sat it down, picking up one of the cushions off the couch and cradling it in her lap.

“Go with that?” Jeremiah asked.

Kara shook her head. “Sorry.”

“Did… Kara, did you not want to see me?” Jeremiah asked.

Kara turned, looking away from him.

“Oh,” he said. “I… I’m sorry.”

“Not your fault,” Kara said. “I should be the one apologizing. I’m glad you’re okay. Glad you’re back. But…” She forced herself to look him in the eye. “How much did Eliza tell you?”

“A lot,” he said. “She told me about you and Alex and high school, and college. She told me about you working as a nanny, and then as a waitress, and about you getting the interview at CatCo. She told me about Alex working for the DEO, and that you’d been a superhero for the last ten weeks.” He looked around the apartment. “She wouldn’t tell me how you can afford all of this. Or how you ended up owning CatCo and LuthorCorp.”
“Don’t forget Galaxy Communications, Queen Consolidated, Lord Technologies and TychoTech,” Kara said.

“I didn’t,” he said. “I’m just trying to process one thing at a time.”

“Did you meet Maggie?” Kara asked.

“No,” he said. “Who’s Maggie?”

“That’s probably a conversation you should have with Alex,” Kara said.

“Well, she’s been almost as busy as you,” he said. “Though she has come to visit a couple of times.”

Kara looked down again. “It’s easier for her,” Kara said.

“Why?” Jeremiah asked.

Kara opened her mouth to say something, but she couldn’t think of any way to explain why she didn’t want to see him without telling him everything, and she had her appointment with Doctor Foster tomorrow afternoon, which meant she was probably going to have to go through the highlights, at least, and the thought of having to go through it twice in less than twenty-four hours was just too much.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I can’t do this.”

“Do what?” Jeremiah asked. “Talk to me?”

“No,” Kara said. “Yes. I can’t look you in the eye and pretend that everything is okay.”

“Then tell me what’s wrong, so we can fix it,” he said.

“There’s no fixing it,” Kara said. “There’s no making it better. It just is, and I don’t have it in me to tell you what it is, because every time I talk about it, I have to remember it. I have to live through it again.” She stood up and picked up her beer, heading towards the door to the balcony. The automatic door slid out of her way, and she stepped out into the night air, looking out over the city.

It only took a moment for Jeremiah to join her.

“You remember the flashbacks I used to have?” Kara asked. “When I first got to Earth. Krypton dying. My pod getting hit by the blast wave. Drifting in the phantom zone, trapped in that coffin.”

“You used to wake up, floating three feet off the bed, screaming in Kryptonian,” Jeremiah said.

“I had a flashback last Tuesday,” Kara said. She took a sip of her beer and rolled it around, trying to taste something other than the bile rising in her throat. “Then Wednesday morning, I had a full-on panic attack. Alex and I were arguing and suddenly, I just couldn’t breathe. It was like being back in that pod, drifting in the endless dark, no hope that I’d ever see another soul again. No hope that I’d ever join my family in Rao’s light.”

She raised the beer to her lips, taking another sip.

“You know, I’ve never been a good liar,” Kara said. “Kind of ironic, considering my life. It seems like I lie more than I do anything else. Someone asks me who I am, and I have to lie. Lie about my name. Lie about my species. Lie about what planet I was born on. Lie about how old I am.
“I hate it. I hate everything about it. I get up every morning, hating that I’m going to have to spend my day living a lie. And here you are, one of the few people in the entire world that I can be honest with, and the only soul in the entire universe I don’t want to tell the truth.”

“Kara,” Jeremiah said, “whatever it is-”

“Don’t say it,” Kara said, cutting him off. “I failed you. I failed a lot of people in my life. Astra, Alex, Maggie, Cat, Eliza… It’s a long, long list. But you…” She shook her head. “I can’t. I just can’t go through it again. I have to, tomorrow. I have to go the whole thing again, and I know that I owe it to you to tell you face to face, but I can’t. But I can’t twice in less than twenty-four hours.”

“So, please, go back down stairs. Tomorrow, ask Alex to introduce you to Maggie. She deserves to have that conversation with you first. Then, once you’ve talked to Alex, ask Eliza’s attendant to do what I told Eliza to do and replay the record from the Sanctuary Audience Hall from Monday, November 30th, 2015. I’ll clear you for access to the recording. It’s about four hours or so, and I would really suggest you not watch it alone.”

She raised the beer to her lips, draining the rest of the bottle before setting the empty on the railing.

“Once you’ve seen it, then make up your mind,” she said. “I won’t blame you either way.”

Not willing to wait to see if he was going to follow her advice, she leaned forward, letting her weight drag her over the rail, pushing off just a bit. She let herself fall a good forty stories before she pulled up and shot out over the city, heading for the coast. Once she was out over the water, she went hypersonic, and headed for Sanctuary.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope

.:zhaolahm ghao
Literally: It fucker
Semantic: Motherfucker
The Last Fleeting Moment of Sleep

Chapter Summary

The Waverider returns to Earth 38

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

It was just after sunrise and Kara circled the city, slowly, letting the wind whip through her hair as she enjoyed the morning. She still missed her longer hair. The crew cut had just barely started to grow out, but she had to admit that not having to spend time detangling after a hypersonic run was a definite advantage. She wondered if Diana had that problem.

She glanced towards the Solarium as she turned to do a flyover of downtown, smiling just a bit as her X-Ray vision let her catch a glimpse of Cat and Carter sitting down to breakfast. Today would be his first day back at school since the shooting, and she knew Cat would be nervous about letting him go, but she hoped that Krypto’s presence would help with that.

One of the few benefits of last night’s little face to face with Jeremiah, and her subsequent trip to Sanctuary, was that she got the Birthing Matrixes for the Kryptonian Hounds seeded. In twelve weeks exactly, they’d have a litter of a dozen of the little monsters. She was hoping, with Krypto’s help, they could get them trained a bit faster than the normal six months. Aside from the one she was giving Alex and Maggie, the one she was giving Carter, and the one she was planning on keeping for herself, they’d be able to field nine hounds, which would be almost as good as having nine extra Kryptonian troops.

It would help. Every little thing helped.

She shifted her gaze to the Genesis Chamber, feeling a bit of elation and a bit of trepidation. When she’d lifted the eradicator protocol, it had been a long-term plan. A dream for the future. Something to celebrate after Apokolips was gone. Fendra had other ideas. She’d come to Kara Sunday night with a list of names of Kryptonians who wanted a child. Fifteen names. Fendra’s the first on the list. She wanted to seed the birthing matrices immediately. Kara had talked her into waiting until after the earthquake. Not because she was worried about any damage from the quake, but because she wanted the Kryptonians thoughts firmly focused on the relief effort. The seeding was scheduled for today. The fifteen Kryptonians who wanted children would each give a drop of blood. The other parent would be selected using a matching algorithm from the genetic archive.

One of the few rules Kara had insisted on was that the child would *only* inherit the living parent’s House, whatever the archive parent’s ancestry. A part of her rebelled at the idea of robbing the child of their heritage, but she also knew that if she didn’t insist, she might very well find herself sitting on the Council with fifteen newborns who were all technically higher in rank than she was.

She and Fendra really needed to sit down and sketch out a new Kryptonian government, but that was
something she planned to put off, at least until after Apokolips was dealt with. Being the de facto ruler of her people was a huge asset when it came to flexibility in planning. It also was going to make it a lot easier to enforce some of the changes she was planning, like decoupling the government from the great Houses, and making sure the Kryptonians had no choice but to accept Alex and House Danvers as a part of Kryptonian Society.

She just hoped that Alex was ready for what Kara intended for that to mean, because if Alex or Maggie balked when the time came, her plans for restructuring Kryptonian society might die in the birthing matrix.

“Hey cousin,” Kal called.

Kara turned, spotting him approaching from the east, and smiled.

“Hey, Kal,” she called as he pulled alongside her. “I thought you went back to Metropolis last night.”

“I did,” he said, “but the transmat system makes impromptu visits a lot easier.”

“Lazy-” Kara said. “Metropolis is ten minutes from here. Five, if you push it.”

“Yeah, some of us can’t cruise at Mach forty,” Kal said.

“Weak,” Kara said. “You just checking up on me?”

“James, actually,” Kal said. “I out here hoping to talk to him.”

Kara frowned. “I should probably do that, too,” she said, “but last time I tried, he wouldn’t see me.”

“I had the same problem this morning,” Kal said. “He told me he was busy.”

“Well, I’ll give it another try tomorrow. See if I can convince him to move into the Solarium,” Kara said. “I’m probably not going to get around to house calls today though.”

“Busy day?” Kal asked.

“I’ve got a meeting with Siobhan Smythe this morning,” Kara said. “She was one of the people injured in the shooting and has developed magical abilities as a result.”

“You sound like you’d rather eat Kryptonite,” Kal said.

“That’s because I’d rather eat Kryptonite,” Kara said ruefully. “I knew her in the other timeline. She was annoyingly persistent about trying to kill me. Kara me, not Supergirl me. Hard not to take that personal.”

“Why did she want to kill you?” Kal asked.

“Remember the Red Kryptonite I mentioned?” Kara said.

“Yes.”

“While I was high on it, I might have logged into her computer and forwarded an email she was composing to Perry White, offering him a story Cat had refused to run. Cat takes things like that personally, and Siobhan took getting fired and having her entire career in journalism spiked personally,” Kara said.
“Ouch,” Kal said.

“Yeah. I had intended to arrange a nice little job as a gossip columnist in Hub city for her once the Galaxy merger is complete, but she had to go and step between Carter and a gun, so now I have to pretend I don’t want to chuck her into the sun,” Kara complained.

“Poor you,” Kal said.

“Yeah, yeah. My life sucks. Which reminds me. We’re seeding the first birthing matrices in the Genesis Chamber today,” Kara said. “If you want to drop by, it’s scheduled for noon.”

“I’ll think about it,” Kal said.

“Well, while you’re thinking about it, keep in mind that with the eradicator protocol lifted, we have access to Chrysalis chambers,” Kara said. “If you and Lois ever decide…”

Kal glanced over at her, a look of shock on his face.

Kara gave a shrug. “Something to consider,” Kara said. “Unless you want to outlive her.”

“No,” Kal said. “I… It just hadn’t really occurred to me.”

“Well, think about it, Kal,” Kara said. “Even with the Genetic Archive open, I don’t like our chances. If any of the Kryptonians in Astra’s crew were going to pair off, they’d have done in by now, which means that sooner or later, intermarriage is going to become an issue. I’d like to set the precedent now, with someone I trust.”

“I can understand that,” Kal said, “but I don’t want to marry Lois as some political stunt.”

“Kal, you love her, right?” Kara asked.

“Of course I do,” Kal said.

“What’s holding you back?” Kara asked.

Kal didn’t answer right away. In fact, they’d done an entire loop around the city before he spoke again. “I’ve always wondered if I was really what was best for her,” he said. “A partner who would never age while she grew old…”

“Doesn’t have to be that way,” Kara said. “Talk to her. Let her know the option exists.”

Kal nodded. “I’ll think about it.”

“Kal, *talk* to Lois about it,” Kara said. “It’s as much her decision as yours, and she deserves better than for you to make it for her.”

“Okay,” Kal said. “I-”

“Lady Kara,” Konex said, “the Waverider has returned. Mr. Jackson requests your presence. He says that there is an issue with Sara.”

“Where are they?” Kara asked.

“Currently parked at the location they departed from yesterday,” Konex said.

Kara didn’t bother saying goodbye to Kal.
Kara dropped down into the seemingly empty parking lot, her super senses allowing her to make out the Waverider even while she was cloaked. Jax, apparently, was waiting for her, because the hatch opened almost immediately.

“Where is she?” Kara asked as she marched up the ramp.

“In the med bay,” Jax said as he closed the hatch and fell in behind her.

“What happened?” Kara asked, navigating the corridors of the Waverider on autopilot.

“We’re not sure,” Jax said. “She and Rip got into an argument, and she stayed on the ship while we mined the Dwarf Star Alloy.”

“And she didn’t argue?” Kara asked.

“It was her idea,” Jax said.

“Then what?” Kara asked, a suspicion already forming in her mind.

“When we came back, she was hiding in the med bay, with the lights off. She started talking about how there weren’t any animals on Apokolips—“

“Fuck,” Kara said. “Gideon, enable root access. Authorization Romeo Hotel One Eight Six Eight.”

“Root Access Enabled,” Gideon said. “Standing by for new commands.”

“Reset root password to Authorization Sierra Lambda Six Nine Four Two Zero, and lock to voice prints for myself, Sara Lance, and Jefferson Jackson.”

“Access protocol updated. Standing by for additional commands.”

“Build user account for me, locked to my voice print. Admin level access, with override of security protocols on Authorization Kilo Zulu One Five Four Eight One.”

“User account built and active,” Gideon said.

“End root access,” Kara said.

“Root access terminated,” Gideon said.

“What did you just do?” Jax asked.

“Stole the ship from Rip,” Kara said.


“Rip uses the same password for everything. Gideon, what happened to Sara?” Kara asked as they rounded the final turn before the med bay.

“That information is locked on a need to know basis,” Gideon said.


“Ms. Lance enabled root access to my systems and ordered me to collect Hyperchronoton particles to inject into her brain in an effort to facilitate more detailed recall of her transtemporal memories. She also ordered me not to inform Captain Hunter of the procedure,” Gideon said.
“How long has it been, by Sara’s personal clock, since injection?” Kara asked.

“Nine hours, twenty-six minutes,” Gideon said.

Kara stepped into the med bay, where Sara was laying on one of the diagnostic chairs. Rip and Stein both stood over her with concerned looks on their faces.

“How is she?” Kara asked.

“Sedated,” Stein said.

“You know what happened?” Kara asked.

“She attempted the transtemporal memory enhancement procedure,” Rip said, venom dripping from his voice.

“And you just let her?” Kara asked as she stepped up to Sara’s side.

“No, Ms. Danvers, I didn’t ‘just let her’,,” Rip said. “She went behind my back and undertook a dangerous procedure I never would have allowed, because she wanted to remember her future with you.”

Kara felt her temper flare at the insinuation and had to fight to control her temper. Something which was a lot less easy that it would have been with anyone else, since her default mood around Rip involved wanting to break every bone in his body.

“Stop it,” Stein said. “Both of you. We can argue about whose fault this is later. What’s important right now is that we help Ms. Lance.”

Kara shook herself and turned back to Sara.

“What else do we know?” Kara said.

“She seems to be experiencing the early stages of temporal schizophrenia,” Rip said. “It’s a condition-”

“I know what it is,” Kara said.

“Then you know that her condition puts her beyond help,” Rip said. “Temporal schizophrenia invariably destroys the mind.”

“Yeah,” Kara said, “You’re wrong about that. It can be treated. But first, let’s see if she’s actually got it. What are her symptoms?”

“It’s like I said,” Jax answered. “When I found her, she was curled up in a corner of the medical bay with the lights off, talking about how there weren’t any animals on Apokolips, but how they fed the slaves meat. She said something about being in the slave pens for three months.”

“She was having a flashback,” Kara said. She turned to Rip. “It’s not Temporal Schizophrenia. It’s post-traumatic stress disorder, you moron.”

“Ms. Lance has never exhibited any signs of PTSD before,” Stein said.

“That’s because the Ms. Lance you know never watched her ex-girlfriend and her current girlfriend get torn to pieces in front of her, or watched her friends die one by one in a losing war that lasted a decade,” Kara said. “All of us had it. More than one of us died from it.”
She reached down, brushing aside a strand of Sara’s hair. “Harley was the only one that it never seemed to touch.” She took a deep breath, preparing herself for what was coming.

“Gideon,” she said, “end sedation.”

The world shifted around her as the fog lifted. She had to swim through endless horrors to reach for the light. Three months in the slave pits of Apokolips. The fall of New Genesis. The day she found out Laurel was dead. Watching Nyssa and Ava get cut down by Parademons as they tried to cover Barda’s flank. Zari falling to Devilance while trying to shield Constantine long enough for him to complete the summoning ritual and tear down the literal gates of hell. The horde of Demons they’d let loose on Earth Seven to hold back Darkseid’s army. Mick, burning alive as his flame thrower exploded in his hand.

“Sara,” a voice called. It sounded far away, but it sounded like home and warmth and sunlight.

"/.zhgames zehdh khaq bim i khehshtom/” the voice whispered, full of pleading and love. ‘Come home to me, my Captain,’ in a language she knew and loved. A private language.

Sunlight caressed her face, and she looked as the nightmares receded, staring into eyes bluer than any ocean. Eyes that shone with love, and hid bottomless depths of grief and loss.

"/>.zhao w rrip, eh ,kahrah,zor,ehl,/” Sara whispered, and a smile broke over Kara’s face like dawn breaking over the horizon. She turned slightly, pressing into the touch of the fingers lightly caressing her cheek.

“You wonderful, beautiful idiot,” Kara said. “I’m going to kill you.”

“You love me too much,” Sara said, smiling.

“I’m going to kill you because I love you,” Kara said, “and because you scared the life out of me.”

“Please,” Sara said. “I scare the life out of you at least twice a day.” She reached up, covering Kara’s hand with her own. “Now kiss me, then tell me what I did wrong this time.”

Kara leaned down and kissed her, and Sara knew she was in real trouble, because wake up kisses like that usually meant one of two things. Either Kara was about to ravish her, or she’d nearly died, and since Kara was mad at her, it probably wasn’t the former.

Kara pulled back, and Sara whimpered, because really, the way Kara was kissing her, Sara never wanted it to end.

“What do you remember?” Kara asked.

Sara sighed and frowned, because she hated this part. Hated the remembering. Remembering always hurt, always brought back some fresh grief or pain. Some new moment spent in the hell that was their reality outside of the moments they stole in each other’s arms.

She thought back to the most recent memory. The Waverider sailing out of a boomtube on Apokolips. They’d come out almost on top of a Parademon patron. Bad luck. So much bad luck. The Temporal Displacement Manifold blowing out the side of the ship when they tried to overload it enough to engulf all of Apokolips. Plugging the Omegahedron directly into the Hyper-Temporal Delineator.

“Oh,” she said, sitting up suddenly. Only Kara’s super speed kept Sara from smacking Kara’s nose
with her forehead. “Oh, fuck.”

“What do you remember?” Kara asked.

“Everything,” Sara said. “I remember the transfer. I remember Apokolips.”

“What happened there?” Kara asked, and Sara could see the trepidation on her face.

“The plan didn’t work,” Sara said. “The Temporal Displacement Manifold couldn’t handle the power flow. It blew out the side of the ship, and we crashed. We were near the royal armory though, so I thought if I could overload the Hyper-Temporal Delineator, I might be able to set off the Hellspores.”

Kara nodded. “Did it work?”

“I don’t know,” Sara said. “I plugged the Omegahedron in, and it definitely overloaded. The last thing I remember was getting hit by the hyperchronoton backwash. Not the most pleasant way I’ve ever died.”

“How many do you have to choose from?” Rip asked.

Sara jumped slightly at the sound of his voice, and looked around, more than a little taken aback to realize she and Kara weren’t alone.

“Do you remember anything after that?” Kara asked.

Sara frowned, trying to sort her future memories out from her present ones. The new timeline. The one where Laurel and Snart were alive. She remembered that. She remembered…

“I… Yes. Yes. The time quake,” Sara said. “Then coming here. Seeing you again. Taking Alex and Maggie going back to rescue Alex’s dad, and…”

She stopped, because she remembered then, what she saw. Remembered what had compelled her to try to recover her future memories. She remembered seeing Kara and Cat. Remembered the confusion and the jealousy she had no right to feel but which felt nearly all-consuming. She remembered everything.

Including her and Kara’s last night together.

“Give us the room,” Sara said, her tone suddenly hard.

“I don’t think-“ Rip started.

“I don’t care what you think, Rip. Give us the room,” Sara said, in the same tone Kara was used to hearing give orders in the heat of battle.

“You’re upset,” Kara said as soon as the hatch to the medical bay was closed.

“You broke your promise,” Sara said.

Kara turned away from Sara. “Which one?” she asked, already knowing the answer.

“You’re really going to play that game?” Sara asked.

Kara spun around to face Sara, anger boiling up inside her. “Well, what did you expect?” she
snapped. “It’s not like I could put ‘time traveling alien from the future, recently widowed, enjoys long walks on the beach and hopeless wars to defend the multiverse against fascist extra-dimensional deities’ on a tinder profile.”

Sara closed her eyes and bit down on her bottom lip, tilting her head to the left. It was an expression Kara knew well. Sara’s ‘I’m trying not to say something I’ll regret the instant it comes out of my mouth’ expression.

“Go ahead and say it,” Kara snapped.

“Fine,” Sara said, looking up at her. “We’ve fought wars across forty-seven different universe, and you still throw a tantrum like a thirteen-year-old.”

“And you’re still a pissy bitch any time you don’t get your way,” Kara said.

“My way?” Sara asked. “You really think I wanted any of this?”

“You must have,” Kara said. “You’re the one who made the decision.”

“What other decision was there?” Sara asked.

“You could have stayed,” Kara said.

“You know the rules, Kara,” Sara said. “You know what would have happened. The moment I ran into myself, time would have shattered.”

“Then we could have found another way,” she said. “We could have gone back before the Sara on this planet got on the Queen’s Gambit, or we could have gone to Earth One after Laurel brought you back.”

“And then what?” Sara asked. “Risk changing the timeline here? Risk your chances of being able to stop Myriad and keep Darkseid from getting the Anti-Life Equation? And if we’d gone to my Earth, instead, what then? It wouldn’t have changed anything.”

Kara wrapped her arms around herself, hugging herself tightly. “You left me alone,” she said.

“I didn’t want to,” Sara said, and Kara could hear her getting up, could feel the vibrations in the deck plate as she approached. “You know I didn’t want to.”

Sara slipped her arms around Kara and Kara leaned back, her whole body relaxing as the feeling of Sara pressed up against her.

“I never wanted you to be alone, Alkawala al-Saghir,” Sara said. “It’s why I made you promise you would find someone.”

“You knew I was lying when I made that promise,” Kara said. She pulled away enough that she could turn around and face Sara. “You had to know.”

“I knew,” Sara said. “Kara, so many people love you. I just hoped that making you promise would be enough to convince you to let them. I never wanted you to be alone.”

“Then stay with me,” Kara pleaded.

“You know I can’t,” Sara said. She leaned forward slightly, resting her forehead against Kara’s. “I would do anything for you, but you know I can’t stay. No matter how much I want to.” She lifted her head, so she could look Kara in the eye. “Besides, you did find someone.”
“No,” Kara said, shaking her head, trying to fight past the tightness in her chest. “No. Never. I haven’t. I wouldn’t.”

“It’s okay, love,” Sara said. “It’s not a betrayal.” She reached up, cupping Kara’s face in her hands. “I want you to be happy. And as much as I wish I could stay, as much as I wish I could make you happy, you know I have to go back.”

Kara closed her eyes and tried to hold on to herself, but it felt like she couldn’t breathe, like her throat and her chest were being crushed in a vice, and all there was left in the world was pain and misery.

“I don’t want you to go,” Kara said. “I don’t know if I can do this without you.”

“You can,” Sara said. “That’s why it had to be you. Not just because you had a connection to Astra, and not just because you had access to all the technology. It had to be you, because you’re the only one who could carry the weight. You, Kara Danvers Zor-El, are the strongest person in fifty-three universes, and two God Realms. You can do this. You are the only one who can, but you don’t have to do it alone. Go to Cat.”

Kara opened her eyes. “Why?”

“Because you love her,” Sara said. “I saw it the first time I saw you two together. You love her, and she loves you.”

Kara shook her head. “No,” she said. “No. I- It’s just a crush. It’s just left over from before.”

“Kara,” Sara said, “It’s okay. It is okay. It’s not a betrayal. I know what you feel for me, and I feel the same for you, and I know that you could never betray me.”

“I love you,” Kara said.

“I know,” Sara said. “I love you too. And if I could stay, if we could be together, I would show Cat Grant exactly who she’s up against.”

Kara laughed, smiling despite herself. “I’d love to see that,” she said, reaching up to wipe the tears she felt welling up.

“She wouldn’t stand a chance,” Sara said.

“Oh, really?” Kara asked.

“You remember that week we spent in on the Crystal shore?” Sara said.

Kara felt her cheeks color and she looked down, fighting the grin spreading across her face.

“Hey,” Sara said, “look at me.”

Kara looked up, seeing the tears spilling from Sara’s eyes too.

“You can call me, any time you need me,” Sara said. “You know I will always come for you.”

“But you can’t stay,” Kara said.

“You know I can’t,” Sara said. “I have to deal with the Spear of Destiny, and this time, see if I can do it without unleashing Mallus and the other demons.”

“And after that?” Kara asked.
“You know what comes after that,” Sara said. “Time pirates. Gods. Demons. Supervillains. The time masters may have been bastards, but we killed them, so someone has to do the job.”

“Is this how it felt like? In that cell in Nanda Parbat?” Kara asked.

“This is worse,” Sara said. “So much worse. I loved Nyssa. I wanted Nyssa, but I hated that life. But you… I want you. I want this life. Watching you be the hero you were born to be, instead of the soldier you were forced to be. Helping you build a future for your people. I used to dream of this. But that’s all it ever was. I beautiful, wonderful dream. I would love to live in that world with you…”

“But we both have to live in this one,” Kara said.

“You should tell Cat how you feel,” Sara said.

Kara shook her head. “I can’t.” She closed her eyes. “I can’t. Don’t ask me to. Please, don’t ask me to,” she pleaded.

“You love her,” Sara said.

Kara shook her head. “No,” she whispered.

“Yes, you do,” Sara said.

“I don’t,” Kara said. “I won’t. I can’t love someone else and lose them.”

She felt Sara’s arms wrap around her, squeezing her tightly.

“You already love her,” Sara said. “Would it really hurt any less if you lost her without telling her how you feel?”

“No,” Kara whispered.

“I should have married you,” Sara said.

“You shouldn’t have waited until our last night together to propose,” Kara replied.

“You’re right,” Sara said. “I should have asked you that night we spent on the Slaver’s Moon.”

“I would have said yes. I would still say yes. I don’t want you to go.”

“I don’t want to leave you behind,” Sara said.

Kara felt Sara’s lips brush hers and she leaned into it, kissing Sara back desperately, knowing this was goodbye. Not the last time they would say it, but the last time they would say it as lovers.

When it was over, Kara pulled back and opened her eyes, taking in the sight of Sara, one last time.

“When you see Ava again,” Kara said, “you tell her that if she doesn’t treat you right, she’s going to answer to me.”

Sara laughed, the sound filling the room with joy and memories of happier times, and for a moment, Kara felt her heart swell, but it didn’t last. It was the one constant of her life. The happiness never lasted.

She leaned forward, brushing her lips over Sara’s forehead.
“Mae alsalamat, Ta-er al-Sahfer,” Kara whispered.

"/.ehrosh :bem I zhor/” Sara answered, and then, there was nothing more to say.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

.zhgames zehdh khahp bim i khehshtom
Come home to me, my Captain

.zhao w rrip, eh ,kahrah,zor,ehl,
I love you, Kara Zor-EL

.ehrosh :bem I zhor
Goodbye, my heart.

Translated from the Arabic:

Alkawala al-Saghir
Little Koala

Mae alsalamat, Ta-er al-Sahfer
Goodbye, yellow bird.
Moments of Transition

Chapter Summary

Kara deals with losing Sara again, Sara and Cat have a talk, Jeremiah Meets Maggie and watches the recording of Kara's debrief at Sanctuary.

Chapter Notes

You can find Kara's break up play list here.

You can find a list of the Kryptonian parents and their children here.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Kara stepped out of the elevator on the forty-second floor and headed straight for her office, cursing herself for being late, even if she did have a really good excuse.

“Hey, Kara,” Winn said. “Ms. Vale is waiting in your office with someone.”

“Thanks,” Kara said. “How’s the Ben and Jerry’s?”

“Fully stocked,” Winn said with a note of concern in his voice. “Are you okay?”

“I will be,” Kara said. She stepped through the door of her office to find Vicki and Siobhan waiting. She walked over to the built-in refrigerator she’d installed in the same spot where Cat had her bar. She opened the freezer and sighed with relief as she pulled a pint of chocolate chip cookie dough out of the freezer and closed it before dropping into her chair.

“I’m sorry I’m late,” she said as she opened her desk drawer and pulled out two two-hundred gram Cadbury Dairy Milk and Roasted Almond chocolate bars, a plate and a butter knife.

“It’s okay,” Vicki said.

“Not a problem,” Siobhan said.

Kara tore open both of the chocolate bars, and dropped them on the plate, then used the butter knife to spread the ice cream on top of one of them, before she topped it with the second chocolate bar. Then she picked up the resulting sandwich and took an enormous bite, chewing it quickly before swallowing. She sat the sandwich down and looked across the table.

“I’m going to be honest,” Kara said. “I’m having a terrible morning, and mostly just want to close the door and eat my feelings. The reason I didn’t reschedule this meeting is because you, Ms. Smythe, deserve a lot better than to be pushed off until it’s convenient.”

“Um… Thank you,” Siobhan said. “Honestly, I was kind of under the impression that you didn’t like me.”
“I didn’t,” Kara shrugged. “I know more about you than you realize, Ms. Smythe. I know more about everyone in this building than they realize. I know you want to be a reporter. I know you are extremely capable when it comes to investigative tasks and developing sources. I know you graduated from journalism school Summa Cum Laude. I also know more than one of your professors thought you had no understanding of journalistic ethics and would throw your own mother under a bus to get a byline. That’s why I’ve gone out of my way to keep you away from Ms. Grant. You are pretty much the walking embodiment of all of her worst impulses, without any of the compassion and idealism that temper them.”

“I.”

“Except, it turns out I might have been wrong about all of that,” Kara said, cutting Siobhan off. “You took a bullet-two bullets, in fact - for Ms. Grant’s son.”

“Yes,” she said, and Kara was a little surprised that there wasn’t any boasting in her tone.

She took a second to remind herself that this was a different Siobhan from the one who’d tried to kill her.

“Supergirl didn’t give me any details, but she did say that after her robots were done with your medical care, they’d turned your case over to a specialist. I understand the details are private, but I want to start by making sure you’re happy with the care you’re receiving,” Kara said.

“Yes,” Siobhan said.

“Good,” Kara said. “You still want to be a reporter?”

“I do,” Siobhan said.

“Done,” Kara said. “You’re a reporter.”

“Just like that?” Siobhan said.

“Just like that,” Kara said. “Ms. Smythe, you saved the life of someone I care about a great deal. Ms. Grant and her son are like family to me, and I take that very seriously. So, you’ve earned a chance. If you want to be a reporter, Ms. Vale here is going to make you into the best reporter you can be.”

“Thank you!” Siobhan said.

“There are conditions,” Kara said. “First off, this is on a probational basis. If at any point, for any reason, Ms. Vale decides you’re not cutting it, you go right back to the assistant pool.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Siobhan said.

“Second, you will stick to stories you are assigned, until Ms. Vale clears you to work your own stories. If you find anything you think might be a story, you will take it to Ms. Vale. You will *not* pursue it on your own. Is that understood?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Siobhan said.

“Third, if Ms. Vale tells you to spike a story, you will drop it. You won’t keep investigating. You won’t pursue it in any way. Is that understood?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Siobhan said, though this time, the answer came with a bit of hesitation.

“Relax, Ms. Smythe,” Kara said. “CatCo is not in the business of covering up information or hiding
the truth. The rules I’m laying out are to keep you alive, and to keep you safe. Both Ms. Grant and Ms. Vale can tell you from experience that there are people out there who are more than willing to stick a knife or put a bullet in an inconvenient reporter.”

Siobhan glanced over at Vicki, and Kara could see a little trepidation in her features. That was good.

“Also, Ms. Smythe,” Kara said. “I took the liberty of paying off your student loans, your car loan, and your credit cards.”

“What?” Siobhan asked, a completely stunned expression on her face.

Kara turned to Vicki. “She’s all yours,” she said. “Now, if you’ll both excuse me, I want to finish my sandwich and listen to every break up playlist Spotify has.”

Jeremiah opened the door and smiled when he saw Alex standing there with the small, dark-haired woman he’d seen at the DEO standing next to her.

“Hey, Alex,” he said. “What brings you by this early?”

“We’re about to head to work,” Alex said. “You mind if we come in?”

“Oh! Yeah, of course,” he said, stepping out of the way. Alex stepped inside followed by the other woman. Jeremiah closed the door and followed them into the apartment.

“Where’s mom?” Alex asked.

“Right here,” came Eliza’s voice as she stepped out of the kitchen. “Morning, Alex, morning Maggie.”

“Ms. Danvers,” the woman, Maggie, apparently, said.

“Please, call me Eliza,” Eliza said. “You’re family.”

Jeremiah gave Eliza a questioning look, before turning back to take in Maggie. “I have to admit, you’re not what I expected,” he said.

“What do you mean?” Alex asked. “How do you even know about Maggie?”

“Oh,” Jeremiah said. “Kara asked if I’d met her yet, but the way she asked, I was kind of worried I had a granddaughter no one was telling me about.”

The reaction was instantaneous. Alex’s eyes tripled in size, and Maggie burst out laughing.

“Oh, God,” Maggie managed to get out between fit of laughter. “I call dibs on telling Kara.”

Alex covered her face with both hands, and mumbled something about killing her sister, before saying, “You can have this one.”

“I’m missing the joke,” Jeremiah said.

Maggie gave a little wave of her hand. “Kara’s kind of the queen of giving people the wrong impression,” she said, still trying to contain her laughter. “The first time I met Cat, I’m pretty sure she thought I was bringing Kara her stuff back after a...” Maggie stopped, her eyes getting wide and her face turning an impressive shade of red as she looked over at Eliza. “Actually, I don’t think anyone wants to hear that story.”
“Oh, by all means,” Eliza said, a beatific smile on her face.

Maggie’s eyes narrowed into a glare directed firmly at Eliza. “You didn’t tell me your mom was evil, Danvers,” Maggie said.

“You think that’s evil, you should see what she used to do to keep Kara out of the Halloween candy,” Alex said.

“Was there Kryptonite involved?” Maggie asked. “Because I’ve literally seen Kara eat a sixty-piece box of Lindt truffles in her sleep.”

“No,” Eliza said. “I just told Kara if she went near it, I’d ban potstickers *and* pizza until Christmas.”

“It was hilarious,” Alex said. “Watching Kara’s two most basic instincts warring with each other. Chocolate vs. Pizza and potstickers. I thought her head was going to explode the entire week.”

Jeremiah watched the moment unfolding between his wife, his daughter and this woman who was a stranger to him and couldn’t help but feel like he was the outsider here. Eliza had called Maggie family. It seemed recent, like they were still getting to know her, but Maggie clearly knew Kara’s alien nature.

“Alex,” Jeremiah said, “are you going to introduce me?”

Alex blushed again. “Sorry, Dad,” she said. “Maggie, this is my Dad, Jeremiah. Dad, this is Maggie… My girlfriend.”

“Oh,” he said as the world seemed to stop around him. Maggie was Alex’s girlfriend. Alex had a girlfriend. Alex, his little girl, was dating. Alex, his teenage daughter, was twenty-seven years old, and dating a woman. Alex was gay. Or bisexual. He’d need clarification on that last point.

“Jeremiah,” Eliza said, and he wondered for a moment why her tone was so harsh, but then the look on Alex’s face registered. She looked absolutely crushed, and Maggie was taking her hand at the same time she moved between him and Alex with a look of pure fury on her face.

“No, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean… I’m just having a little trouble taking everything in,” he said. He took a deep breath, trying to settle himself and closed his eyes. “I’m sorry,” he said again, wearily.

“It’s okay, Dad,” Alex said.

“No, it’s not,” he said. He opened his eyes and smiled at her, and he looked at Maggie, taking her in again. The way she stood between him and Alex. The way she held Alex’s hand, but somehow still looked like she was ready to put someone in a body cast if they so much as looked at Alex the wrong way. He remembered the easy way Eliza had greeted her, and how comfortable Alex had been with her before he’d screwed it up.

He turned to Maggie and gave her a smile. “I’m not sure how late I am saying this, but welcome to the family,” he said.

Then he looked his daughter in the eyes, and he told her the truth. “I’m happy for you Alex,” he said. Because wasn’t Maggie exactly what every father dreamed of for their daughter? Someone who loved her, cared for her and protected her from anything that might hurt her.

Alex lit up, smiling so brightly it hurt as she stepped around her girlfriend to hug him so hard he was afraid she was going to crack his ribs, and he hugged her back, just as fiercely, because he was
really, truly happy for her.

Even if he was miserable for himself.

Cat frowned slightly as the knock on the door, wondering who it could be. She checked for the comforting weight of the ring on her finger as she walked to the front door, taking a moment to check the video of the hall. She was only a little surprised to see Sara Lance standing there.

She opened the door, not entirely sure what to expect.

“We need to talk,” Sara said.

“Do we?” Cat asked.

“It’s about Kara,” Sara said.

The defensiveness Cat had been feeling suddenly vanished, replaced by concern. She stepped back, creating space for Sara to enter the apartment. “Come in,” she said.

Sara walked into the apartment and waited patiently as Cat closed and locked the door, then followed Cat as she led them into the den.

“Are we alone?” Sara asked.

“Just you, me and the robots,” Cat said. “I was about to leave for the office.”

Sara nodded. “Is there any chance I could get a drink? I don’t think I can handle this conversation sober.”

“Should I be worried?” Cat asked as she headed over to the small bar in the corner of the den.

“I don’t know you well enough to say one way or the other,” Sara said. “I’d ask you to join me, but from what Kara tells me, nine AM is a little early for you.”

“I didn’t realize my drinking habits were such a hot topic of conversation for pillow talk,” Cat said as she poured a glass of the Ardbeg.

“You were always one of Kara’s favorite topics of conversation,” Sara said.

“Well, of course,” Cat said, glad her back was to Sara, so the younger woman couldn’t see the slight blush Cat could feel in her cheeks. “Ice?”

“No,” Sara said.

Cat turned around and walked over to Sara, handing her the drink.

“You’d think it would be hard to be jealous of a dead woman,” Sara said, “but somehow, watching her face when she talked about you, I always managed it.”

“You’re her,” Cat said, startled by the realization. “You’re Kara’s Sara.”

“No. Not really. Or yes, but not just her,” Sara said. “It’s complicated. I wasn’t Kara’s Sara when I got here. I had a handful of memories from that future. It’s something that happens to time travelers sometimes. Usually ones who die in the temporal zone in one or more branches of their timeline. Their consciousness gets dispersed into the time stream.”
“And that happened to you?” Cat asked.

“That happened to me a lot,” Sara said. “There are so many timelines out there where I die in the temporal zone that I can’t even begin to count, but that’s not what happened to Kara’s Sara. She burned to death in the heart of a time machine. When that happened, I got just a hint of her memories.”

“But now you have them all,” Cat said.

“And more,” Sara said.

“What happened?” Cat asked.

“What always happens,” Sara said. “I did something profoundly stupid.” She lifted the glass to her lips and downed its contents in a single swallow. “Mmmm. I thought Lena was the one who liked Ardbeg.”

“Kara introduced me,” Cat said.

“Of course she did,” Sara said as she walked over to the bar.

“Does she know?” Cat asked.

“That I remember that timeline? Yes,” Sara said as she poured herself another glass of scotch. “The process which allowed me to get all my future memories wasn’t easy. When the rest of the Waverider crew found out what I’d done, they panicked and called her for help.”

“If this is going to be some speech about staying away from your woman-”

“Just the opposite,” Sara said as she turned around. “I can’t stay.”

“You’re leaving her,” Cat said, unable to keep the anger out of her voice. “Again. You’re leaving her again.”

“You think I want to?” Sara asked.

“Well, you seem to do it a lot,” Cat said. “You abandoned her here, alone, heartbroken, with the weight of the entire universe on her shoulders.”

“I’m not having this argument with you,” Sara said. “I’ve already had it a dozen times with Kara. Wishing things could be different doesn’t change anything. I couldn’t stay then, and I can’t stay now.”

“Really?” Cat said. “You ‘can’t’. How convenient.”

“Fuck you,” Sara said, slamming the half full tumbler of scotch down on the bar. “Just fuck you.”

“I think you should leave,” Cat said.

“Probably,” Sara said, “but I’m not going to. Not until I’ve said what I came here to say.”

“Then say it, and get out,” Cat said.

“She loves you,” Sara said. “I don’t just mean ‘you’re her friend and she cares about you’. I mean, she is in love with you. And not just some dumb little crush, or hero worship, or even something left over from before the time loop. Kara is in love with you.”
Cat shook her head. “Don’t be ridiculous,” she said.

“I’m not,” Sara said. “God, do you know how hard this is for me? Half of me wants to strangle you, and half of me wants to get down on my knees and beg you not to take her away from me, and it fucking kills me that I’ve got to stand here instead and shove her into your arms.”

“What?” Cat asked. “You can’t possibly think—”

“Cat, stop,” Sara said, and Cat was taken aback by just how exhausted she sounded. “Please, just stop.” She reached up to rub her eyes, and that’s when Cat noticed just how red they were and how they were brimming with tears.

“I can’t stay,” Sara said. “I can’t. I’m not just Kara’s Sara. What she did, what that Sara did… I can see futures. I can see timelines, where they branch, where they run parallel. Not all of them, and not all of any one of them. It’s hard to describe. But I can see enough to know the consequences if I stay are just as bad as the consequences if Kara were to leave with me. Fifty-three universes and a God Realm on fire. The entire multiverse in Darkseid’s grip. All life as you know it coming to an end. Trillions of species gone, converted into Parademons in Desaad’s hives. Everything you know, everything you love, dead and wiped away.”

Sara closed her eyes as tears began to spill down her cheeks. “She was supposed to be my wife,” Sara said. “I love her so much that sometimes I think I’ll die of it. I would do anything for her. It’s why I have to leave. So she doesn’t have to watch everything she loves burn, again.” Sara opened her eyes again, and Cat could see the pain in them, the grief, and the pleading.

“You have to take care of her, Cat,” Sara said. “Please.”

Cat shook her head. “There has to be someone else,” she said. “Someone better. Someone—”

“There isn’t,” Sara said. “There never was. Not for her.” She reached out and picked up the glass of scotch, downing the whole thing before setting the empty glass back down and reaching up to wipe the tears off her face. “She loved you, before. In the old timeline. I don’t know if she ever realized it, but I could hear it when she talked about you. And being here, seeing her with you… I don’t know if she’s still in love with you and it just grew when she came back, or if she fell in love with you all over again, and it doesn’t matter, because I know the look on her face when she looks at you. I’ve seen it directed at me too many times not to recognize it.”

“What do you want me to do?” Cat asked.

“Be there for her. Tell her how you feel. Love her, and let her love you,” Sara said.

“Why?” Cat asked. “I don’t understand why you’re asking me to do this. Someday, this is going to be over.”

“Not for me,” Sara said. “Kara and I, we worked in that other world. But this is the world we have to live in, and in this world, there’s no happy ending for Kara and me. I’m not like Kara. I’m not a hero. And sometimes, the world needs a Legend more than a hero, and my world needs me, just as much as your world needs Kara. But Kara needs someone, Cat. Someone who can be there for her now. I can’t be that person, and I can’t stand the thought of leaving her alone.”

Cat closed her eyes, feeling her own resistance starting to waver. “I’ll hurt her,” she whispered, if only to remind herself of why she’d sworn to keep her hands to herself in the first place.

“You think I never hurt her?” Sara asked. “Of course you’re going to hurt her. You do your best not to, but sooner or later, you do. People who love each other always end up hurting each other. But
you say you’re sorry, you do everything in your power to make it better, and you try your best not to do it again, but you fuck up and you do, because that’s part of being human. It’s part of being in love. She forgives you, and you forgive her, and in the end, you’re just so happy to be together, nothing else matters.”

Cat opened her eyes when she felt Sara’s hands settle on her shoulders.

“All I know about you is what she told me and the little bit I saw watching you with her and your son, but I do know that she loves you, and I do know what it’s like to be loved by Kara. Make the choice to be worthy of that, because I promise you, it’s worth it,” Sara said. Then she smiled. “And also, keep in mind that her ex-girlfriend is a trained assassin who knows five hundred different, incredibly painful ways to kill you with her bare hands, so no pressure.”

Cat couldn’t stop herself from laughing.

Astra glanced at her reflection in the surface of the elevator doors, more than a little unnerved by what she saw. The human clothes were serviceable enough. A black suit with a white button up shirt that Kara had selected for her. What disturbed her was her hair. She’d had the white stripe for so long that she barely recognized herself without it. It was too much like seeing her sister.

She would have done without it, but Kara had insisted. She’s argued with her, but Kara had been insistent, much like she had about using the name ‘Flamebird’. The argument Kara had made sense, that by wearing a costume and a using a code name, people would begin to separate Astra’s public identity from her private one. It wouldn’t be a truly secret identity, but it might give her some measure of privacy in her civilian life. She’d asked why she couldn’t hide the stripe while she was in uniform, but Kara had pointed out that the public had already seen her with the stripe in her hair, and it was both visible and recognizable, and Astra had finally yielded to her niece’s wishes.

The elevator stopped, and Astra took a deep breath as the doors opened. She stepped out onto the twenty-third floor of the LuthorCorp building.

“Can I help you, ma’am?” A woman seated behind a large desk asks.

“I’m Astra In-Ze,” she said, “I’m here to begin work.”

“Oh,” the woman said. “Yes, Ma’am. Ms. Luthor is expecting you. Down that hall, second door on the left.”

“Thank you,” Astra said. She turned and followed the woman’s directions which led her to a steel door with a sign on it indicating it was lab twenty-three zero four. A quick glimpse with her X-Ray vision told her the Luthor woman was alone inside, so she opened the door and entered.

Luthor looked up from her work, and Astra was taken aback by how much she was reminded of the women in the Science Guild. This woman had the same posture, wore her hair pulled back in the same severe fashion, and carried herself with a confidence few humans managed. It was refreshing, at least, for a moment. Then Astra remembered Fendra’s lecture on the things this family had done to Kal-El.

She stepped inside the lab, closing the door behind her.

“Good morning,” Luthor said.

“To you, as well,” Astra replied. Courtesy was called for. Kara trusted this woman and demanded cooperation. Astra lifted the case she carried. “My niece sent this. It contains one of your data storage
“Excellent,” Luthor said. “Please, have a seat.”

“Thank you, Ms. Luthor,” Astra said as she walked over to the work area where Luthor herself was seated and took the second chair.

“Please, if we’re going to be working together, I’d prefer you called me Lena.”

“As you wish,” Astra said. She handed over the hard drive, watching as Luthor connected it to her computer. A few moments later, she had the first of the schematics displayed up on a display that took up most of one of the lab’s walls.

“Let’s start by working through the theory,” Luthor said. “If will be easier to adapt the engineering to Earth’s materials and manufacturing methods if I understand the underlying principles.”

“A reasonable assessment,” Astra said. “I believe your term for the phenomenon is the Casimir Effect. The hedrons use this phenomenon to tap into the energy inherent in what your people call the quantum foam by…”

“Oh, thank God,” Winn said as Maggie stepped off the elevator.

"How bad is it?" Maggie asked.

"Bad," Winn said. "She's been through a gallon and a half of ice cream and is on her third time through the play list."

"Who’s on the play list?" Maggie asked.

"Roxette, Shania Twain, Taylor Swift. God, so much Taylor Swift," Winn said, giving a small shudder.

Maggie squared her shoulders and took a deep breath. "Okay, I'm going in. If I'm not back in thirty minutes, order pizza and potstickers, and then call Edible Arrangements and order the biggest chocolate dipped fruit arrangement they have."

"What? Those things go up to like, two thousand dollars," Winn said.

"So, use your corporate card," Maggie said.

"That's for an emergency," Winn said.

"Taylor Swift is an emergency, Winn," Maggie said.

"Point taken," Winn said.

Maggie slapped him on the shoulder, causing him to stagger a couple of steps. “Wish me luck,” she said, and headed for Kara’s office. She pulled the door open and got assaulted by Melissa Etheridge’s ‘If I Wanted To.’

“Shit, Kara,” she said. “Winn told me it was bad, but he didn’t say it was Melissa Etheridge bad.”

Kara looked up from the computer, and Maggie winced when she saw how red Kara’s eyes were. She closed the door behind her and walked across the office to Kara. Kara practically leapt out of her
chair and into Maggie’s arms, and Maggie just wrapped her in a tight hug as she started sobbing.

“What’s wrong?” Maggie asked softly.

“Sara’s leaving,” Kara cried.

“Oh, honey, I am so sorry,” Maggie said, tightening her grip. Kara didn’t answer her, and Maggie didn’t try to force the issue. She just stood there, holding Kara until Kara had cried herself out.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

“Nothing to be sorry for,” Maggie said. “Come on. Let’s get you out of here for the day.”

“I can’t,” Kara said. “I’ve got a ton of paperwork-”

“Which Konex or Nimda can do,” Maggie said.

“And Supergirl-”

“Has put out three fires, cleared a wreck on the freeway, and stopped a high-speed chase. Byara can cover the city for a few hours. Hell, J’onn can wear the skirt for a bit, if you really think Supergirl needs to be seen,” Maggie said.

“We’re seeding the birthing matrixes today,” Kara said.

“Which Fendra can handle without you,” Maggie said.

“I have my therapist’s appointment at three,” Kara said.

“Okay, that you’re not skipping,” Maggie said. “But friends don’t let friends wallow. Especially not in Melissa Etheridge. So today, you’re playing hooky.”

“Ms. Grant,” Kaldur’ahm said.

Cat looked up from the inventory of LexTel assets she was reviewing to see him standing in the door of her office, an uncertain look on his face.

“Yes, Jacob?” she asked.

“Agent Sawyer texted me. She wanted to let you know that Ms. Danvers is out of the office for the remainder of the day on personal business,” he said.

“Thank you,” Cat said. “Salad for lunch. I don’t care what kind, as long as it has a cheeseburger on it.”

“Of course, Ms. Grant,” Kaldur’ahm said.

She watched him turn and head for the elevator as she looked back down at her computer screen without really seeing the documents she’d been reviewing. She sat, for almost a minute, arguing with herself before giving up and picking up her phone and tapping a contact labeled ‘Kleenex’, then hitting the text button to send a message to her new robot butler.

Cat: Where is Kara?

Kleenex: I’m sorry, Ms. Grant. I don’t have that information.
Cat: Well, check with that computer that does all her work, and find out.

Kleenex: One moment.

Kleenex: Ms. Danvers is currently in route to /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/.

Cat: Let me know when she arrives.

Kleenex: Yes, Ms. Grant.

Cat sat her phone down long enough to shut down her computer, then picked it up and headed to the bar. She poured herself a bit of scotch, even if noon was a little early for it, and headed for the balcony. It wasn’t hard to guess why Kara had left early. Part of her felt guilty that she hadn’t gone upstairs to check on her, but she was all too aware of the danger there. If Kara really was in love with her, the way Sara believed, she needed to be careful, because Sara was right.

Cat was definitely in love with Kara.

She had been since that damned interview. Oh, she’d definitely been nursing a crush before that. She was honest enough to admit that. The girl was… beautiful seemed an inadequate word. Brilliant, as well. Strong in ways Cat was only just beginning to understand. More than that, she simply refused to be cowed by anything Cat did. Fiercely protective. Kind, wonderful in every way.

God, she needed to stop before she made herself nauseous. It was kind of pathetic how smitten she was.

The truth was, Kara scared Cat. Oh, she knew Kara would never hurt her. Knew that Kara cared enough to protect her even when she should be prioritizing other things. She even knew that Kara was attracted to her. The girl was about as subtle as the 1812 Overture. But what frightened Cat was the idea that, after everything Kara had been through, Cat might be the thing that would destroy her. Cat knew herself far too well. Something which had taken years of therapy, and more work than most people could imagine. She wasn’t sure she had it in her to put that much work into another relationship.

God, she wanted to try.

She had promised herself she’d keep her hands off Kara. Swore it before the Gala, which seemed a lifetime ago, even though it had only been three and a half weeks. She was self-aware enough to know that her resolve had more cracks in it than an egg shipped UPS with extra fragile stickers, but however cracked, it had held. It had held *because* she loved Kara, and one of the most important lessons she’d learned from raising Carter was how to love selflessly. How to put the wellbeing of the person you loved first.

She had been sure - so very, very sure - that keeping her hands to herself was what was best for Kara. Right up until that morning. Right up until Sara, who Cat hated to admit knew Kara better than she did, told Cat that telling Kara the truth was the best way forward.

She downed her scotch and sat the tumbler on the table before reaching for her phone. She needed to talk to someone, to get another perspective on this, and there was only one person she could think of. She found the contact, and hit the send button, raising the phone to her ear.

“Hey, Cat,” Lois said, and Cat found herself smiling wistfully, remembering a time when her heart had beaten a little faster at the sound of that voice.

“Hey, Lois,” Cat said.

“No,” Cat said. “I’m just tired.”

“Cat?” Lois asked, this time with genuine concern in her voice.

“Do you ever think about it, Lois? That day. Do you ever wonder what would have happened if you’d given me the message?” Cat asked.

“I try not to,” Lois said, and Cat could hear the regret in her voice. “I know I’ve apologized before-“

“I forgave you a long time ago,” Cat said. “I’m just wondering what it must be like, to have the chance to go back and live your life over again.”

“You’re thinking about Kara,” Lois said. “Is she okay?”

“No,” Cat said. “I don’t think she is. Sara showed up.”

“She’s alive?” Lois asked.

“It’s the Sara from this time,” Cat said, “but she’s like Kara. She has her future memories, somehow.”

“And Kara isn’t happy about it?” Lois asked.

“She can’t stay,” Cat said. “She can’t stay, and Kara can’t go with her for pretty much the exact same reasons.”

“Oh,” Lois said. “Poor Kara.”

“Sara came to see me before she left,” Cat said.

“I can’t imagine that was a pleasant conversation,” Lois said.

“Not particularly, no,” Cat replied.

“Was she all ‘stay away from my woman or else’?” Lois asked.

Cat sighed. “Am I that obvious?”

“Yes,” Lois said. “But honestly, if you weren’t, the part where Kara straight up told Kal she’s in love with you was kind of hard to miss. At least, it is if you speak Kryptonian.”

Cat stood there for a moment, in complete shock as the scene in the hospital waiting room played itself out again in her head. The words Kara had said so firmly and so boldly ringing in her ears.

“That’s what she said?” Cat asked.

“What she said literally translates as ‘She makes me see light,’ ” Lois explained. “The sentiment doesn’t translate particularly well into English. It’s a reference to an epic from Kryptonian history called The Courtship of Erok and Milia. Their story is considered one of the most romantic stories in all of Kryptonian history. Two clans at war. The chieftain’s son is captured, and while being held prisoner, he falls for the opposing chieftain’s daughter. When Erok’s father El ransomed him, Erok begged Milia’s father Zod to be allowed to stay and marry his daughter. It’s been a while since I read it, but I believe the original line is something like, ‘Until she came into my life, I existed only in darkness. Milia makes me see the light Father Rao has gifted us. She is the reason I know what joy
“It sounds very melodramatic and overdone,” Cat said, though it was more of a reflex than anything else, because she felt completely overwhelmed by what she’d just heard.

“Oh, please,” Lois said, “we both know you keep a stash of Harlequin novels in your desk drawer.”

“They’re on my phone these days,” Cat said.

“Well, it’s good to know I didn’t fuck that up,” Lois said. “Though I suppose the four marriages should have told me you were still a romantic.”

“Tell anyone, and I’ll demote you to traffic,” Cat said.

“Nice try, but I don’t work for… MOTHERFUCKER!”

Cat laughed at the absolute horror she heard in Lois’ voice.

“I hate you,” Lois said.

“I assure you, the feeling is mutual,” Cat replied, unable to keep the amusement out of her voice.

“Nah,” Lois said. “You love me. I don’t deserve it, but you do.”

Cat sighed. “It’s been more than twenty years, Lois. I think you can let go of the guilt at this point.”

“Not sure I’ll ever be to that point, Cat, but we’ve wandered off the topic. You said Sara came to visit.”

“She did,” Cat said.

“Was is the ‘hands off my woman’ speech?” Lois asked.

“More like the ‘take my wife, please’ speech,” Cat said. “She told me she didn’t want Kara to be alone, and she seemed to think I’m the best choice to keep her company.”

“Wow,” Lois said. “A blessing from the ex. Someday, you’re going to have to tell me how you do it.”

“Lois,” Cat said in an exasperated tone, “focus.”

“Right,” Lois said. “So, Kara loves you. You love Kara. Kara’s ex is on board with it. Clark is *way* too scared of you to say anything even if he doesn’t approve, which he does, by the way. I’m not seeing the problem, Cat.”

“What about the part where I’m a terrible person who destroys every relationship I have because I’m selfish, cruel, and don’t know how to be anything other than a prickly, defensive bitch?” Cat asked.

“Cat, that’s complete bullshit,” Lois said. “Your problem has always been that you want to see the best in people. You want to believe in people. Hell, you believed in me, and I stabbed you in the back over a fucking story. You believed four men when they said they loved you. Pretty much everyone you ever loved has failed you, except for Carter. Kara might be the first person you’ve ever loved besides Carter who is actually worthy of being loved by you. She’s also probably the first person you’ve ever loved who can love you the way you deserve to be loved. Don’t let fear take that away from you, Cat. She loves you, and if she’s anything like Clark, that isn’t something you want to miss out on.”
Cat didn’t answer right away. She just stood there for a moment, absorbing the words, and remembering a time when Lois had been something more than a friend. She wondered, for a moment, if there was some other universe out there where they had been lovers, where the longing looks and the teasing flirtation had become something more, instead of ending in hurt and betrayal. A universe where Lois’ career wasn’t built on a story that she’s stolen because she’d answered the phone on Cat’s desk while Cat was in the bathroom. A universe where Lois’ ambition hadn’t destroyed them.

She’s been so careful, since then. So hesitant to really open herself up to anyone the way she had Lois. She’d gone through four marriages without ever really trusting, and knew, despite what Lois might say, that she’d been every bit as responsible for the collapse of two of those marriages as her husbands had.

Kara hadn’t given a damn about her defenses. She’d come into Cat’s life like a whirlwind, and she’d flown right over every obstacle Cat put in her way, until Cat couldn’t - and didn’t - want to imagine her life without Kara.

Which was really all the answer she needed.

“Thank you, Lois,” Cat said.

“Take care of our girl, Cat,” Lois said. “She’s going to need it.”

“I will,” Cat said, then she disconnected the call.

Normally, there wasn’t a great deal of ceremony involved in the seeding of a birthing matrix. Kryptonians were, by and large, a practical people, and viewed the conception of a child through a practical lens. After all, it was a far less involved process than it had once been. The simple extraction of a bit of genetic material for the seed, a few moments for analysis, and the selection of traits from those available. None of the random chance associated with children conceived in the grip of a passionate embrace. More surety of health and benefit to House and Society.

Fendra watched as each of the prospective parents stepped up to the taking station to have their blood drawn, and then moved on to one of the selection terminals, until finally, it was her turn. She set her hand on the taking station, face stoic as always when the needle pierced her skin, drawing a small drop of blood before the regenerator closed the wound. A moment of pain, a drop of blood, the creation of new life. A new generation of Kryptonians.

Fendra stepped over to the selection station, and the menu was waiting for her. It was a different menu than the standard selection menu. Back on Krypton, both parents would give blood, and thus, the second parent would already be filled in. Here, the menu was changed, showing only the available traits from her own genome.

She made her selections quickly. She knew her best traits. She chose a daughter, and selected for intelligence, for physical endurance, for analytical ability, and good reflexes. On her traits alone, she could build a formidable child, but she also knew that Krypton would need something that she herself would never be able to provide. Fendra knew herself, and while she was gifted in many respects, she herself lacked the vital spark that separated a capable individual from a gifted leader, and both of the leaders the Kryptonians had left were far, far too exposed in their current situation, so Fendra cheated. When she was presented with the randomized list of compatible mates from the genetic archive, she touched the small override button in the corner, and entered the Council Security Code that allowed her to bypass all lockouts, and she pulled up a specific gene sequence from the archive.
She stared at the name for a moment, stopped by the briefest moment of doubt. What she was about to do was unthinkable by the standards of her people. If it were to be discovered, she might very well find herself in a stasis pod alongside Jindah Kol-Rozz. The hesitation was momentary, however, because one thing Kryptonians believed deeply was that the good of society, of the Kryptonian people, outweighed the good of any one individual.

She locked in her choice, and a gene sequence appeared alongside a genealogy, and what she saw made her pause for a second time, because it didn’t match her expectations, though she had to admit, the difference made several things fall into place for her. Things she never quite understood. And though she knew that, from a scientific standpoint, it should make no difference at all, it made her even more sure of the path she had chosen. She began the selection process carefully, choosing the traits her people had learned long ago made the best leaders. Intelligence, compassion, mental agility, mental and emotional resilience. The child would have physical strength and endurance in abundance, but those were almost afterthoughts.

The child would be like her other mother. A genius, a leader, and above all else, a survivor.

The rules Kara had put in place would hide what she’d done. Then, in twenty or so of this planet’s years and the girl would have established herself and be on her way. A leader for her people, without the scars or baggage that came with what the rest of them had been through.

Fendra entered the child’s name into the system. Karsta Kann, Daughter of Fendra of the House of Kann and Kara of the House of El. She touched the commit button, then watched as the last of the birthing matrixes was seeded and carried away to the incubation niche and hoped, someday, Rao might forgive her for what she’d just done.

“Astra, do you have a preference for lunch?” Lena asked.

“As long as the food is plentiful, anything will do,” Astra said. “Kryptonians require roughly ten thousand calories a day to keep up with our accelerated metabolism.”

“Do you eat meat?” Lena asked.

“Yes,” Astra said.

“Eve, do you know any restaurants in the area that have good vegetarian options?” Lena asked.

“Ms. Danvers provided a list,” Eve said. “She recommended starting with Athens Greek Kitchen.”

“Okay,” Lena said. “I’ll trust your judgement, but please keep in mind I’m a vegetarian.”

“Of course,” Eve said. “Astra, is there anything in particular you would like?”

Astra thought about it for a moment. “My niece introduced me to something called pizza,” she said. “I found it agreeable, as long as it does not have pineapple on it.”

“I think I can manage that,” Eva said.

Astra nodded and turned back to the plans she was reviewing.

“Thank you, Eve,” Lena said.

“Okay,” Eve said. “I’ll be back as quick as I can.” She turned and left the lab, leaving Astra alone with Lena. The room was silent for a short time, until Lena broke the silence.
“Have I done something wrong?” Lena asked.

Astra looked up from the screen she was studying. “I don’t understand the question,” she said.

“How have I offended you in some way?” Lena asked. There was a hesitance in her voice, and to Astra’s surprise, a small bit of fear in the other woman’s eyes. “I didn’t have much time to review Kryptonian customs. The website Kara has up does have a primer on Kryptonian manners, but I only had a few minutes to skim over it, and I’m afraid I’ve missed something.”

Astra frowned. “Why would you think you’ve offended me?”

“You seem distant,” Lena said. “Reserved.”

“Ah,” Astra said. She was a little surprised that Lena was so concerned by the idea that she’d somehow offended her, but it was clear where the misunderstanding came from. “You think because I’m not as talkative as my niece, that I dislike you for some reason.”

Lena gave her a slightly sheepish look. “Yes,” she said, and Astra noted a slight blush in the woman’s cheeks.

“I assure you, this is not the case,” Astra said. “Kara has always been a more social creature than I am. She takes after her father’s House, in that way. The Els were known for their congeniality. Kara’s father, more so than most. Zor was a gifted geneticist and talented engineer, but his greatest value to the Science Guild was always as a broker of peace. He had a gift for soothing tempers and easing a situation, just by being in the room. Honestly, it seemed almost impossible to dislike the man. He had enemies, of course. One could not wield the power he did without being hated by someone, but even there, he had a talent for turning enemies into allies and dear friends. A trait my niece seems to have also acquired.

“I’m afraid I’m more like my sister. The House of Ze is known for endurance, loyalty, honor, and sense of duty, but neither I, nor my sister were known for being lively guests at social gatherings.”

Lena seemed to relax a bit before Astra’s eyes. Her posture, while still excellent, because less rigid, and the smile she’d noticed during their first meeting at CatCo returned to her face.

“That’s a relief,” Lena said.

“May I ask you something?”

Lena nodded. “Of course.”

“Your House has stood in opposition to the House of El for a number of years,” Astra said. “Why have you chosen to align yourself with my niece?”

Lena stared at her for a moment, and Astra could see shock on her face. Perhaps a bit of anger, too.

“Well, that was more direct than I expected,” Lena said, warmth gone from her tone.

“I’ve offended you,” Astra said.

“Yes,” Lena replied.

“It was not my intent,” Astra said. “My niece has lived among your people. The rest of us have not. I seek only to understand. A dispute such as the one between your family and the House of El would typically be resolved by marriage on Krypton. Had my niece reached her thirty-seventh /ahmzeht/
before our world was destroyed, she would have wed a child of the House of Zod to settle a dispute that began within her grandfather’s day. During our first meeting, I thought it was my niece’s intent to court you in order to settle the disagreement between your Houses, but it’s become clear since then that her attentions are directed elsewhere.”

Astra wasn’t sure, but she thought she saw a shadow of disappointment on Lena’s face at that news, but it passed so quickly, she couldn’t be sure.

Lena leaned back in her chair. “Did you have adoption on Krypton?” she asked.

“Yes,” Astra said. “It wasn’t common among the Great Houses. Most were so large that if a pair of parents were killed, there would be hundreds of other bonded couples to take charge of any surviving children. Among the lesser Houses and the rankless, it was common. There were no unplanned births on Krypton, at least among Kryptonians, but like any other world, people died in accidents, in wars, from disease. All societies find themselves with surplus children, and there was often great benefit to a family in accepting older children, rather than raising a child from birth.”

“I was adopted,” Lena said. “I was four years old when my mother died. I never knew my father. Most people think that the Luthors were horrible people. Especially Lex. But Lionel took me in when I would have gone into the foster care system, and Lex… Whatever happened to him later, whatever drove him mad, Lex loved me once. He took care of me, protected me, and made me feel loved.

“The world thinks the Luthors are all monsters, but to a four-year-old little girl who was scared and alone, they were my saviors. Lionel is dead, Lillian has always been a monster, Lex is beyond redemption, and the world is waiting for me to turn into a monster. I want to prove them wrong. All I have left of the home I once had is my name, and I want to redeem it. To make it stand for something other than madness, fear and greed. I want people to hear the name Luthor and think of someone who made the world a better place. Who helped people.

“Your niece gave me a chance to do that. To wash away my family’s sins.”

“You want to redeem your House,” Astra said with a small nod. “A worthwhile goal.”

A wide grin spread across Lena’s face. “And it doesn’t hurt that we are going to make a LOT of money.”

Astra found herself smiling in turn. “That, too, is a worthwhile goal.”

“What about you?” Lena said. “How did you end up here?”

“This is my penance,” Astra said. “I made mistakes. Terrible ones. Not out of fear or greed, but out of desperation. I knew Krypton was dying. I tried to warn the council, but no one would listen. So, I took matters into my own hands. I found what I believed was a solution. It was horrible, but I believed it would save the lives of thirty-billion people, not that I truly cared. If I am honest, I did it all to save Kara.

“In the end, it wouldn’t have mattered. Krypton was too far gone. I didn’t know that, but it doesn’t make it any less true. Then, when we washed up here, and I saw the damage your people were doing to their own world, I tried to repeat my mistakes. Kara stopped me. Showed me another way.

“So, this is how I’m to make amends for the things I’ve done. This is how I’m to save your world, when I couldn’t save my own. By giving your world enough knowledge to save itself.”

“A worthwhile goal,” Lena said, smiling.
“Yes,” Astra said. “I certainly hope so.”

“Well, we should get back to it,” Lena said. “Now, with regards to the casing, we don’t have a ready supply of depleted promethium here on earth, but if I’m reading the stress tolerances correctly, there is an alloy which should…”

Linda Lee sat in the reception area of Dr. Claire Foster’s office, waiting for her 3:00 PM appointment. Next to her sat another young woman with non-descript, vaguely Asian features who could have easily been Linda’s sister, had anyone asked. The receptionist was the only other woman in the waiting area.

Kara wasn’t particularly comfortable with this part of the plan. The thought of J’onn using his powers on someone for her benefit was unsettling in a number of ways but given what had happened at the DEO the day before, it was necessary. Kara needed psychiatric help. There was absolutely no doubt about that. However, security was critical, which meant that J’onn was going to meet Dr. Foster for just a moment, and make sure she wasn’t Cadmus, as well as placing a simple telepathic compulsion in her mind that would prevent her from ever violating Doctor/Patient confidentiality.

Kara looked up as the door opened, and a sharply-dressed woman stepped out into the reception area. She was about Cat’s height, dark skin, with closely cropped back, natural hair. She reminded Kara a bit of Samira Wiley.

“Linda Lee?” the woman asked.

“Yes,” Kara said, standing up. “Dr. Foster?”

The woman smiled. “That’s me,” she said. “Right this-”

The woman and the receptionist both froze for a moment, like someone had hit the pause button on a video, and then, at the end of a ten count, started speaking again as if nothing had happened.

“-way,” she finished.

Kara turned back to J’onn, where he sat wearing someone else’s face. “I’ll see you later,” she said. J’onn just nodded, and Kara turned to follow Dr. Foster back into her office.

The office was small, but comfortable. Two couches faced each other across a coffee table. The lights were low; the room wasn’t completely dark, but the bulbs were obviously on a dimmer turned down low. One wall was a soft blue color, while the other was covered with bookshelves which held books, toys, and a few plants. The coffee table between the two couches was covered with an assortment of fidget toys including a couple of Rubik’s Cubes.

Kar picked up the five by five cube as she sat down.

“I admit, you’re not who I was expecting,” Dr. Foster said as she closed the door.

Kara looked up from the cube and smiled at the doctor as she took a seat across from her.

“Lamron,” Kara said, and the illusion holding the image of Linda Lee in place vanished, leaving Kara sitting there. “Better?”

“I did not know you could do that,” Dr. Foster said. “But it does explain a lot.”

“It’s a skill I picked up from a friend,” Kara said.
“Not an ability native to your species?” Dr. Foster asked.

Kara shook her head and let her eyes drop back down to the cube, sighing in frustration as she realized she’d already solved it. She dropped it back on the table.

“No,” she said. “Just something I learned. I figured it wouldn’t be a good idea for National City to know they’ve got a mentally unstable superhero on their hands.”

“You think you’re mentally unstable?” Dr. Foster asked.

“Post Traumatic Stress Disorder accompanied by flashbacks and occasional bouts of suicidal ideation. Fits of depression, bouts of intense anger, panic attacks,” Kara said.

“From what I know of your history, I can’t say I’m entirely surprised,” Dr. Foster said.

Kara looked up at her and gave her a weak smile. “That’s the thing. My history is a lot more complicated than what I’ve disclosed publicly. I know I need help, Doctor. That’s why I’m here. I’d gone years without a panic attack or a flashback, but I’ve had one of each within the last week. My concern is that when I tell you the truth about my past, you’re going to think I’m delusional.”

“Supergirl—”

“/kahrah, zor, ehl/” she said. “But you can call me Kara.”

“Kara,” Dr. Foster said. “That’s a lovely name.”

“/kahrah/ was the goddess of beauty. There was a constellation in the sky above my world named for her. I was born when the constellation was directly overhead, and my /uzheiu/… my grandmother Nimda insisted I carry the name,” Kara said.

“It sounds like there’s a story there,” Dr. Foster said.

“Lots of stories,” Kara said. “/uzheiu/ Nimda drove my mother crazy, but she loved my aunt Astra. Both of them were trouble makers.”

“Kara, why are you afraid I’ll think you’re delusional?” Dr. Foster asked.

Kara leaned back into the sofa, and stared at Dr. Foster for a moment, taking a deep breath. “It involves time travel, alternate universes, and a war between gods,” she said.

There was silence in the room for a moment, and then it was Dr. Foster’s turn to take a deep breath. “I have an alien who can fly sitting on my couch, and I’ve cleared the entire afternoon for us,” she said. “Why don’t you start at the beginning.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “This all started twenty-thousand years ago…”

Jeremiah sat on the couch in his and Eliza’s apartment, staring at the black screen on the TV in front of him as he tried desperately to absorb the sheer magnitude of what he’d just heard.

“Are you okay?” Eliza asked.

He shook his head. “No,” he said. “I don’t think I am.”

“I know it’s a lot to take in,” Eliza said.
“A lot to take in?” Jeremiah said, turning to look at her. “I lost ten years. I didn’t get to see my daughter grow up. One minute, I thought I was dying in the jungle, and the next, my daughter, who’s now twenty-seven years old, is standing over me. Today, I find out she’s gay and she’s dating a cop, and my other daughter has been avoiding me like the plague because she’s from a future where Lex Luthor’s mother turned me into some sort of kryptonite-powered flying Terminator, and I killed you and tried to kill Alex, and Kara had to kill me to stop me, oh, and aliens are going to wipe out seventy-five percent of the population of the planet in a couple of years, not that it really matters, because a god is going to conquer the entire universe.”

“Jeremiah—”

“What?” he snapped.

“You need to calm down,” Eliza said.

“Calm down?” he asked. “Are you serious?”

“Yes,” Eliza said. “I know you’re upset, but I don’t want Kara to hear you.”

“Kara? You’re worried about Kara?” he demanded.

“Yes!” Eliza shot back. “Aren’t you?”

“I’m sorry, I’m a little more worried about missing ten years of my life! About not getting to watch my daughter grow up!” he yelled.

“You think that’s her fault?” Eliza asked.

“No,” he said. “I think it’s yours.”

“I see,” Eliza said.

“I told you taking her in was dangerous,” he said. “I told you. Clark attracted trouble like a god-damned magnet, and we had a daughter—”

“Kara is my daughter!” Eliza snapped. “This isn’t her fault! None of it! She was a little girl. She’d just lost her entire world. She was alone. She was scared. Clark couldn’t take care of her. He could barely take care of himself. The Kents couldn’t take her in. Jonathan had just had a heart attack. She needed a family.”

“Well, she got one,” Jeremiah said. “It just cost me mine.”

“Is that what you think happened?” Eliza asked.

“Isn’t it?” Jeremiah asked. “My little girl is gone. She’s been replaced by a woman who’s a total stranger. You barely even look at me. Kara can’t stand to be in the same room as me—”

“She feels guilty,” Eliza said.

“She should,” Jeremiah said. “If she’d just followed the rules—”

“She was a child! Children break rules. They sneak out. They eat candy until they get sick. They skip school. They go surfing when they’re supposed to be doing their homework.”

“Alex never did!” Jeremiah said.
“How the hell would you know?” Eliza asked. “You weren’t there. Even before the DEO, you weren’t there. How many nights a week did you work late? How many Sundays did you spend in the lab? I’m the one who had to check every morning to make sure her homework was done. I packed the lunches. I enforced the rules. I taught her to read and count and add and subtract. I cleaned up the mess when she blew up her room with her chemistry set. I’m the one who bandaged every skinned knee. I’m the one who nursed her through every fever. You were the hero. Daddy came home on Saturday to treat his little girl like a princess.

“And you know what? I didn’t care. I loved Alex. I loved being her mother. I loved taking care of her, watching her grow up. And God help me, I even loved you, when you were there. But then you were gone. I raised them without you for ten years.”

“And who’s fault was that?” Jeremiah asked.

“YOURS!” Eliza screamed. “It was your fault. How many times did I beg you to call Clark? How many times? We could have told him what happened. Told him the DEO was blackmailing us. You think he couldn’t have dealt with it?”

“I didn’t-”

“Oh, don’t bother,” Eliza said. “I told you over and over again that he was just my friend, my student, and you were still jealous of a boy fifteen years younger than you. You still thought he was going to fly in and steal me away. So, you had to be the big man. You had to protect your family.

“Kara didn’t do this to us. You did. You and your God-damned pride. And then, after she saves your life, you have the audacity to blame her.”

Eliza shook her head and let out a frustrated sigh. “You want to know why I have a hard time looking at you? It’s because you were gone for ten years, and I hated you for every single day of them. You left me alone. You damn near destroyed Alex, and Kara has blamed herself every day you’ve been gone.”

“Now, you can blame Kara all you want, and I can’t stop you, but don’t you ever breathe a word of it to *my* girls,” she said.

She turned and headed for the door, grabbing her coat off the rack. “I’m going down to my lab. You stay here, and you figure out how you’re going to deal with this. Just don’t do anything stupid like go outside. You have no god-damned clue what it cost Kara to save your life. Don’t get yourself killed again because you had to pout.”

“Anything?” J’onn asked.

Susan shook her head as she stared at the monitor in front of her. “Something,” she said. “I’ve run the footage from five different satellites. They didn’t jump, they didn’t land, they didn’t fly. It’s like they just vanished right out of the helicopter. Because that’s exactly what they did.”

“What?” J’onn asked.

“Look at this,” Susan said as she entered a couple of quick commands into the system and pulled up one of the satellite feeds showing the front of the helicopter. There wasn’t a clear view inside, but what happened next was plain as day. A bright flash from inside the copter. “After that, there were no adjustments or course corrections. The Blackhawk flew in a straight line for another forty miles, right into the side of that mountain where Kara found it.”
“God damn it,” J’onn said. “Cadmus has a transmat system.”

“No, sir, they don’t,” Susan said.

“What?” J’onn asked, turning from the screen to look at her.

“Kara gave us access to the transmat system for the day,” Susan said. “Not ‘us’, as in you, me, Alex, Maggie and Lucy, but ‘us’ as in the DEO. I had Nimda pull the logs. A transmat request came in from the DEO roughly five seconds before the flash, and Nimda locked onto a beacon, and transmatted six people to a different location.”

“Do we know where?” J’onn asked.

“Yeah,” Susan said. “I already ran it down. Satellite blind spot. I sent a couple of the drones to check it out. There were two abandoned SUV’s, and evidence of a third. Lane and the others were long gone.”

“Damn it!” J’onn said. “Okay, from now on, any of Kara’s technology the DEO has access to gets locked down to you, me, Maggie, Alex and Lucy.”

“Even the uniforms?” Susan said.

“No,” J’onn said, “but I want the slaver rifles and pistols inventoried and moved to the special ordnance locker with the Kryptonite. And inventory the Kryptonite too. This is the second traitor we’ve found in our ranks, and I’m not going to assume it’s the last.”

“That’s a scary thought,” Susan said. “What are we going to do?”

“I’m going to go call the President, and get permission to read everyone’s mind,” J’onn said.

“And if she says no?” Susan said.

“Then I’m going to read everyone’s mind anyway, and lie about it,” J’onn said.

“Good plan,” Susan said.

“That’s everything,” Jax said as he walked onto the bridge. “All the Dwarf Star Alloy is off the ship, and all the crates Kolex had for us are loaded.”

“Good,” Sara said. “The sooner we’re out of here, the better.”

“Need I remind you, Ms. Lance, that we haven’t completed our original mission?” Rip asked.

“You could,” Sara said, “but I’ve known what the aberration was since the moment I woke up after the time quake.”

“What?” Ray and Jax both asked.

“Ms. Lance?” Stein asked.

“Look, here’s the deal,” Sara said as she looked at the rest of the Waverider’s crew. “Before Kara disrupted the timeline on Earth, I didn’t have the war suit I’ve been wearing since day one on the Waverider, and because I didn’t, Snart died destroying the Oculus. Without Kara’s help, it took months for Barry to defeat Zoom and for Oliver to defeat Damien Darhk. Before it was over, my sister and Barry’s father were dead. Barry went back in time to stop Thawne from killing his mother,
which altered the timeline, and as a result, a lot of bad stuff happened. Thawne made a play for the Spear of Destiny. Barry created a time remnant of himself that went insane and tried to murder Iris, Barry generally fucked up the entire timeline so badly it never got put entirely right, and Damien Darhk managed to nuke Havenrock. So, I’m putting it to a vote. Anyone here who wants to correct the timeline, which would kill Snart, my sister, and Barry’s father, not to mention the tens of thousands of people Darhk vaporized, raise your hand.”

She stood there watching as everyone stared back at her looking completely horrified.

“Right, that’s a unanimous vote,” Sara said. “So, Rip, where’s the Spear of Destiny?”

“Are you going to stay up there all night?” Cat asked in a whisper, and Kara felt a small smile tug at the corner of her lips. She relaxed, just enough to stop the almost effortless push against gravity, and let herself fall, turning when she heard the small gasp Cat let out and adding just a hint of push to give herself control, and send her towards the Solarium.

Her eyes found Cat standing on her balcony, wrapping in a heavy robe. A little more focus and the walls of Cat’s apartment melted away. Carter was in bed, reading something on his Kindle. Krypto lay at the foot of the bed, reading one of Carter’s graphic novels.

Two floors below that, Alex and Maggie were-.

Kara slammed her eyes shut and muttered a curse in Kryptonian. She did not need to see that.

“See something you that didn’t agree with you?” Cat asked.

Kara opened her eyes, looking down at Cat, wondering how she knew. Cat, seeming to read her mind, held up her hand and wiggled her fingers, showing off the ring. Kara laughed and shook her head, flipping end over end to put her feet back under her as she came down onto the balcony.

“You really should know better than to spy on people,” Cat said.

“I wasn’t spying,” Kara said. “I just wanted to make sure everyone was okay.”

“And ended up with an eyeful,” Cat said. “Not your foster parents, I hope.”

“My sister and Maggie,” Kara said.

“Oh,” Cat said. “So, still traumatizing, but not likely to scar you for life.”

“Something like that,” Kara said.

“Is the view up there really that interesting?” Cat asked.

“Would you like to see it?” Kara asked.

“Maybe once you teach me to fly,” Cat said.

“Afraid I’ll drop you?” Kara teased.

“Afraid you won’t,” Cat said. “If someone attacked us up there, you’d get yourself killed trying to protect me.”

“Cat-“
“No,” Cat said, shaking her head. “You are too important.”

Kara let out a weary sigh. “I know it’s selfish, but if I could have anything in the universe right now, I would ask to be unimportant. To be able to live for myself, just for one day.”

“Maybe you should,” Cat said.

“What?”

“Take a day off,” Cat said. “Take a few days off.”

“I can’t,” Kara said.

“Why not?” Cat asked. “I can run CatCo without you, Kara. I know it’s shocking, but I did manage it for over two decades before you came along. Sam, Lena and I have the mergers well in hand. The LuthorCorp, TychoTech and Lord Technologies Boards all folded like cheap suits once the warrants were issued for Lillian, Simon and Max. Walter Steele can’t hand over control of Queen Consolidated fast enough. Galaxy Communications is putting up a fight, but there’s not a lot they can do to stop us. Lena and your aunt have started working on the new power supplies, the DEO and every other law enforcement agency in the country is searching for Cadmus, and Fendra can take care of zhyrghahs im shahrrehth/.”

Kara smiled at Cat. “Your Kryptonian pronunciation is better than Kal’s,” she said.

“I should hope so,” Cat said, “but you’re trying to distract me.” She reached out and took Kara’s right hand in both of hers. “Kara, the woman you’ve been in love with, who you were living with for years, walked out of your life today.”

“You heard about Sara leaving?” Kara asked, but somehow, she wasn’t surprised. Cat always seemed to know the important things.

“She came to see me,” Cat said.

Kara felt fear settle in her stomach like a lead weight. “What did she say?” she asked, afraid she already knew the answer.

“That you spend all your energy taking care of everyone else, but you always forget to take care of yourself.” Cat stepped closer. “She asked me to take care of you.”

“You don’t have to-”

“I want to,” Cat said. “You are a miracle, Kara Zor-El. You have made my life better, every day single day I’ve known you.”

Kara stared down at Cat, at a loss for what to say, and was completely taken by surprise when, a moment later, Cat reached up and wiped a tear off her face.

“Take a day, Kara,” Cat said. “Hell, take the rest of the week. The world will still be here when you get back. I promise.”

“Okay,” Kara said, giving a small nod. “Okay. I think I can do that.”

“It’s the middle of the night, Max,” Lillian said as she strode into the lab. “What’s so important that it couldn’t wait?”
Max and Sam Lane both turned around as Lillian approached.

“Charming as ever, Lillian” Max said, with a smarmy smile on his face that made Lillian regret ever recruiting the man. “I would have waited until morning, but I knew you’d want to see this right away.”

Max moved to the side, revealing a video feed from the cell where the Kryptonian prisoner was being held. As Lillian watched, the thing on the screen slammed himself against the Nth Metal bars again and again with such violence it was frightening. He’d obviously been at it for a while, because he’d torn great, bleeding gashes in his skin. Gashes which weren’t healing.

“He burned his powers out about ten minutes ago,” Max said. “He’s just been beating himself against the bars ever since.”

“What happened to him?” Lillian asked.

“I exposed him to the Red Kryptonite,” Max said.

“That did this?” Lillian asked, the annoyance in her tone replaced with something akin to delight.

“It’s even better than it sounds,” Max said. “We only exposed him for two minutes. The effect doesn’t wear off, like it does with the green Kryptonite.”

“How does it work, exactly?” Lillian asked.

“From what I can tell, it suppresses the portions of their brain responsible for self-restraint. At the same time, it seems to stimulate their equivalent of the adrenal gland, along with a few others. In layman’s terms, it brings every negative thought and emotion they have to the surface and removes their ability to keep themselves from acting on those emotions,” Max said.

“How quickly does it take effect?” Lillian asked, turning to Max.

“It would depend on the dosage,” Max said. “But this is almost certainly the end result for even the smallest exposure.”

Lillian looked back at the screen, a smile slowly spreading across her face. “Can you cure it?” she asked.

“It will take a few hours, but I can build a device to counter the effects,” Max said. “But why?”

“Because,” Lillian said, “after Supergirl goes on a rampage through the city, I want her precious DEO to confirm there is absolutely nothing wrong with her.”

“How do you plan on getting around her anti-Kryptonite shield?” Lane asked.

“Oh, easy,” Lillian said. “She eats like a pig at a trough. We’ll just have Hamilton slip a very small amount of it into her food. Tune the dosage so the actual Kryptonite has time to pass through her body before it starts having any real effect. We’ll give Hamilton the cure, so she can administer it when they bring her in. Assuming they *can* bring her in.”

“How soon do you want to do this?” Max asked.

“Miranda has a rally scheduled next month. If we can time it right, we might just be able to get Supergirl to attack her in the middle of her speech,” Lillian said.

“That might be a little hard on the Senator,” Max said.
“Omelets and eggs, Max,” Lillian said. “Keep working on your other project, though. Supergirl has been able to anticipate us at every turn. I don’t know how she could possibly see this coming, but I want a fallback plan, just in case.”

“What about Simon’s little science project?” Max asked.

“He says he should be ready for field tests by the end of the month,” Lillian said.

“So, we’ll have three major avenues of attack ready to go around the same time,” Lane said.

“Exactly,” Lillian said.

Nia looked around as she stepped into the foyer of the apartment. She wasn’t sure where she was, or why she was there, but she felt a sense of weight to the place. Like it was important. Like the fate of the whole world hinged on this place.

She heard a sound. It was muffled and indistinct, but she felt drawn towards it. She walked further into the apartment. It was beautifully decorated, with burnt orange walls, tan carpet, and sleek, modern furniture with sand colored upholstery and bronze trim. The sound came again, clearer this time. The sound of a baby crying. She followed the cries down a hall, past an open door that led to an art studio that smelled of oils and paint thinner, before coming to another open door that led to a nursery.

She stepped inside and couldn’t stop herself from smiling at the cheerfulness of the room. The walls and ceiling were painted a bright sky blue, with lovingly rendered clouds covering the ceiling and upper edges of the wall. One corner was dominated by a yellow sun with a smiling face looking down at the center of the room. The lower half of the walls were covered in brilliant sunflowers, each one unique, and all of which seemed to spring up from the green carpet. The furniture in the room was all stained white, and all of it looked hand made. Two heavy duty rocking chairs with strange symbols carved into the wood. A changing table. A bookshelf filled with baby toys and a Supergirl teddy bear occupying a place of pride. In the center of the room, a mobile hung from the ceiling with a colorful rainbow of dragons handing from the arms above a beautifully carved crib covered with more of the strange symbols.

The sound of the crying came from the crib, and Nia went over too it and looked inside. The crib was empty except for a dull gray blanket. Nia frowned at the blanket. It seemed out of place in the cheerful, colorful room. She reached out and picked it up and dull gray dust slid off of it, revealing a silky soft red blanket.

Nia looked up at the sound of laughter. It came again, calling out to her, and she followed it, carrying the blanket with her. The sound led her back to the living room and out onto a rooftop. The roof was covered with grass, and a line of coconut trees ran along the edge.

A boy with curly hair and a girl with a long ponytail ran across the grass, chasing a white dog with a red collar and a golden tag.

The scene might have been idyllic, if it weren’t for the red sky and the woman floating above them. She had long, dark hair and pail skin. Her face was covered by a black mask, a menacing mix of curves and angels. She wore a black cape, and a black suit like the kind favored by most of the Kryptonians. There was even a symbol on the chest.

The symbol looked like Supergirl’s from a distance, but as Nia approached, she realized it was different. The same diamond shaped boarder but the S was missing, replaced by a skull, its mouth
open, as if it were screaming.

Nia’s eyes started to water, and she nearly choked on the smell of smoke. She looked over the side and saw the whole city burning.

Nia woke up without any of the panic that had accompanied her first dream. This one felt different somehow. Bigger, more important, but distance. Less like something that was happening right now and more like some sort of far off future.

The problem was, unlike the first dream, she had no idea what this one meant.

She glanced over at the clock and saw that it was just past two thirty in the morning, which meant she could still get some more sleep before she had to be at work, so she rolled over and closed her eyes, deciding the dream was a problem for another day.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope

ahmzeht
A Kryptonian Year. Roughly 180 Earth Days.

,kahrah,zor,ehl,
Kara Zor-El

uzheiu
Grandmother
Chapter Summary

Kara takes a vacation and goes to therapy. Alex and Maggie work a case. James comes to a decision about being Guardian. Siobhan gets her first big story. Leslie makes a decision about her future. Susan recruits someone into the DEO. Eliza and Jeremiah reach a turning point. Astra spends some time with Kara. Lena has a chat with Lillian, and the Bat Family lends a hand.

Chapter Notes

There are quite a few references to Kryptonian units of time in this chapter. The guide to Kryptonian time keeping for Future Shock is here. You can also just mouse over the Kryptonian and it will give you the translation.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wednesday, December 9, 2015

Maggie closed her eyes and moaned softly as she felt Alex’s thumbs dig into her shoulders.

“God, if I’d known you gave such good back rubs, I would have asked you out months ago,” Maggie said.

“It’s probably good you didn’t,” Alex said. “I don’t even want to think about how bad the gay panic would have been if Kara hadn’t been there to talk me down.”

“You’d have gotten through it. But don’t think a little deep tissue is going to get you off the hook for all felonious sins,” Maggie said, gesturing to the stack of files in front of her.

“Well, I probably shouldn’t be doing this at work anyway,” Alex said.

“Stop, and I *will* shoot you,” Maggie said. She smiled when she felt Alex press a kiss to the top of her head.

“So bossy,” Alex said. “Faster, harder, don’t stop…”

“Funny, I remember you sounding a lot like that last night,” Maggie said, grinning.

“I regret nothing,” Alex said.

“You better not,” Maggie said. “I-“

She was cut off when her phone started playing ‘Take This Job and Shove It’.

“Damn,” Maggie said. She picked up her phone and accepted the call. “Sawyer.”
“Cavanaugh here,” came the reply. “We got one of yours. Orange Blossom and twenty-third. I’d hurry. The paramedics don’t know what to do for the guy, and if he doesn’t get help soon, we’re going to need a body bag.”

“Shit,” Maggie said. “We’re on our way.”

She hung up as she came to her feet. “You ready to try flying in town?” she asked.

“Yeah,” Alex said as she fell in behind Maggie. “What’s up?”

“Assault and battery. Alien vic in bad shape. Science division picked it up, but the paramedics don’t know what to do.”

“Let’s go,” Alex said.

“Holy shit!” someone screamed as Maggie and Alex dropped out of the sky.

Alex headed straight towards the paramedics who were working on the alien, while Maggie headed for Cavanaugh.

“Hey, Seamus,” she said. “What have we got?”

Cavanaugh stared at her for a minute, looking her up and down, taking in the war suit she was wearing.

“What the hell, Sawyer? Are you one of the freaks too?”

“Jesus Christ, have a little fucking respect,” Maggie said. “Guy’s bleeding out on the street and you’re calling him a freak.” She shook her head. “Second, my new job gives me better toys than you. Suck it up and tell me what the fuck happened.”

“Right. Shit. Sorry,” Cavanaugh said. “We think it was a couple of Planetary Hygiene Action Network types. Guy was loading a uHaul. His girlfriend said they’d gotten an apartment over in Little Krypton.”

“Did the girlfriend see it?” Maggie asked.

“Out the window,” Cavanaugh said.

“She call the cops?” Maggie asked.

“No,” he said. “A black and white saw the fight and came in to break it up. Didn’t realize it was one of yours until he saw the blue blood.”

“Sawyer,” Alex called, “I need to transport.”

Maggie turned to face Alex. “I got this,” she said.

Alex waved the paramedics back, then reached up and touched her ear bud, saying something Maggie couldn’t make out without turning on the super hearing. Alex and the victim vanished in a flash of light, and Maggie turned back to Cavanaugh.

“Take me to see the girlfriend,” Maggie said. “Once we’re done here, I’ll talk to the Kryptonians about getting a few medical attendants assigned to paramedic duty and tied into the 911 network.”
“That’d be good,” Cavanaugh said. “I mean, I don’t want them dying because we can’t help them.”

Maggie nodded. “I wish everyone felt that way.”

“You wanted to see me, Ms. Vale?” Siobhan asked.

“Yes. Have a seat,” Vicki said, pointing at one of the chairs across from her desk.

Siobhan dropped into the chair, wondering if she’d somehow managed to so something wrong before she’d even been given her first assignment.

“Kara tells me you’re an extremely talented writer,” Vicki said. “She said your work for your college paper was well executed and surprisingly insightful.”

“She’s read my work?” Siobhan asked.

“Apparently,” Vicki said. “Her exact words, when she told me she was transferring you to me as a stringer were, ‘she’s got talent, drive, ambition, and the morals of a shark that hasn’t eaten in a weak and smells blood in the water’. I will say this for Ms. Danvers. When she decides to dislike someone, she does her homework. She pointed out the article you did about the Campus Chapter of the Young Republicans as an example of your questionable moral judgement.”

“That was a good piece!” Siobhan said.

“It was well written, but Ms. Smythe, you outed the sister of the club vice President as a trans woman while she was still closeted and financially dependent on her parents. It was irresponsible and sensationalistic,” Vicki said.

“It was the truth!”

“Yes, it was,” Vicki said, “but it wasn’t your truth to share, and it wasn’t the public’s business. Truth is dangerous, to the guilty, and the innocent. Sometimes, in order to do our jobs, in order to report the news, we have no choice but to hurt the innocent. However, Ms. Smythe, the job of the journalist is not *just* to report the truth, it’s to distinguish between what is news, and what is information. You failed to do that.”

Vicki tossed a thick folder full of papers onto her desk. “Don’t make the same mistake again.”

“What’s this?” Siobhan asked.

“Your first assignment,” Vicki said. “A bunch of anti-alien extremists jumped an alien as he was loading his truck to move to Little Krypton. Show me what you’ve got.”

J’onn was sitting behind the table in the interrogation room when Alex and Maggie walked in.

“You wanted to see us, sir?” Alex asked.

“I do,” J’onn said. “Both of you, have a seat.”

“Okay,” Alex said, dropping down into the chair on the left while Maggie took the one on the right. “What’s going on? Because I gotta say, this feels a little bit like an interrogation.”

“That’s because it is,” J’onn said. “I’ve just received permission from President Marsdin to proceed with telepathic verification of all DEO personnel.”
“And we’re first?” Maggie asked.

“No,” J’onn said. “Agent Vasquez was first. Her story about what happened at the desert facility checked out. You’re second and third. Not because I think I’ll find anything, but because the legality here is already dubious, so there can’t be any suggestion of bias.”

“Okay,” Maggie said. “I get it.”

“Alex,” J’onn asked.

“Fine,” Alex said, “but I want it on the record that I wasn’t thinking about any of what I’m thinking about until you told me you were going to read my mind, so whatever you see in there is your own fault.”

“Lucy?” Kara asked, a little confused as she stared at the monitor. She couldn’t think of any reason for Lucy to be standing outside her door holding a grocery bag. She flipped the locks and opened the door.

“Hey,” Lucy said.

“Hey, Lucy,” Kara replied.

“I’m not sure if you’re really in the mood for company, but word got around about Sara leaving,” she said.

“Who talked?” Kara asked, a little exasperated.

“Kara, you were listening to breakup playlists and going through two pints of Ben and Jerry’s an hour in front of four DEO agents,” Lucy said. “No one spilled any details, but it wasn’t hard to figure out.”

Kara felt herself blush a little. “Sorry,” she said. “I might be just the tiniest bit defensive.”

“No, really?” Lucy said. “Now, are you going to invite me in, or am I going to have to cook you dinner in the hallway?”

“Oh,” Kara said, moving out of her way. “Sorry.”

Lucy shook her head. “You’re losing your touch, Danvers,” she said as she walked into the apartment. “I’ll forgive you though, but only because you’re cute.”

Kara closed the door and turned to follow Lucy towards the kitchen. “Um, Lucy, I’m not sure—”

“Relax,” Lucy said, “I’m not here for what’s left of your virtue. I’m no one’s rebound girl. Not after James.”

“Oh,” Kara said. “Yeah. I forgot.”

“Which is fair,” Lucy said as she sat the bag of groceries down. “I mean, the girlfriend coming back from the dead, the shooting, my dad’s little prison break. Which is why I brought this.” She reached into the bag and pulled out a bottle of something that glowed a bright orange.

“Tamaranian Rum,” Lucy announced proudly. “M’gann said it was a decent substitute for the Earth stuff flavor-wise, and it will actually get *you* drunk.”
Kara laughed and reached for the bottle. “I didn’t know you knew M’gann,” Kara said.

“We’ve talked a few times since the attack on Darla’s,” Lucy said. “I’ve been helping deal with a lot of legal issues that the aliens are running into now that they’re coming out into the open. Things like getting them legit ID’s. She’s good people.”

Kara smiled. “She is,” she said. “She really, really is.”

“Now,” Lucy said, “I am going to make you dinner, and then we are going to get completely sauced, and spend the night doing drunk girl shit.”

“That sounds like a plan,” Kara said.

Okay, but like, I don’t get it,” Kara said. “Why did you date James for so long?”

“I loved him,” Lucy said.

“Yeah, but why?” Kara said. “He’s not even that good a kisser, and the sex was over in like, ten minutes.”

“Hey, ten minutes is actually pretty good,” Lucy said.

Kara blew a raspberry. “You’re kidding, right?”

“No,” Lucy said.

“Sara and I once did thirty minutes in a closet,” Kara said.

“Really?” Lucy asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Would have been longer, but the stupid Secret Service agents caught us.”

“Secret service agents?” Lucy asked. “Where was the closet?”

“The Lincoln Bedroom,” Kara said. “I’m not allowed to visit the White House on Earth fifteen anymore.”

“I don’t want to badmouth James-” Kara said.

“Why not?” Lucy asked.

“Because he’s my friend,” Kara said. “But he’s also a whiny, punk-ass bitch…”

“TRUTH!” Lucy shouted.

“…who should just admit he’s in love with my cousin.”

“Amen!”

“On dragons?” Lucy said. “How the fuck do you play soccer on dragons? Do the dragons kick the ball?”

“No,” Kara said. “You have these long mallets you use to hit the ball.”
“Oh,” Lucy said. “Sounds more like polo than soccer.”

“Huh… Maybe you’re right,” Kara said.

“You know who’s got a nice ass?” Lucy asked.

“Cat,” Kara said. “I could just sit for hours and stare at it.”

“I was going to say Maggie,” Lucy said.

“She’s taken,” Kara said.

“Doesn’t mean I can’t dream of being the filling in that sandwich,” Lucy said.

“Gross!”

“What? You and Sara never had a threesome?” Lucy asked.

“Well…”

“KARA DANVERS YOU HAVE BEEN HOLDING OUT ON ME!” Lucy shouted. “Now dish!”

“Okay, but you gotta admit, Wonder Woman is gorgeous,” Lucy said.

“Not denying it,” Kara said. “I was really tempted when she asked me out-“

“YOU TURNED DOWN WONDER WOMAN? KARA DANVERS, WHAT KIND OF LESBIAN ARE YOU?”

“She reminds me of my sister,” Kara said defensively.

“Hmmm… Yeah, I could see that. I mean, I would definitely let either of them raw me,” Lucy said.

“Oh, COME ON!” Kara shouted.

“Okay, aside from Cat and me, who’d be your top pick?”

“Honestly?” Kara asked.

“No, lie to me,” Lucy said.

“Fine,” Kara said. “Susan.”

“Vasquez?” Lucy asked. “Really?”

“Oh, God yes,” Kara said. “Have you seen those arms?”

“You’ve got a point,” Lucy said.

“Oh, please,” Kara scoffed. “You’re telling me you haven’t had at least one day dream about her bending you over the console in the command center and making you beg for it?”

“HA! Supergirl’s a bottom!” Lucy yelled with more mirth than the moment really deserved.
“No, Supergirl’s a top,” Kara said. “But Kara likes getting her hair pulled by tiny little butches who strap at work.”

“Shit! She does?” Lucy asked.

“She did when I started there,” Kara said. “She stopped when she dumped her girlfriend, but she started again last week.”

“She’s dating someone!” Lucy said.

“Nah,” Kara said dismissively. “J’onn hasn’t hired Cameron Chase yet.”

“So,” Lucy said, waving her hands around as if to paint a picture, “I’m standing there in the bar, waiting for M’gann to run my credit card and watching Alex line up her shot while Maggie stares at her ass like it’s a steak and Maggie hasn’t eaten in a week, and I ask her, ‘What’s going on in that head of yours, Sawyer?’ and M’gann, without missing a beat, just says ‘Gay sex, mostly.’”

“Do you think you could convince your aunt to wear her hair up in a bun?” Lucy asked.

“Why?” Kara asked.

“No reason,” Lucy said. “It’s certainly not because I want her to put on a suit and glasses and spank me for returning my library books late.”

“Ewww! GROSS!” Kara said. “What is it with women and my aunt? First Zatanna and now you.”

“And Maggie and Susan were both staring at her ass the other day,” Lucy said.

“WHY?”

“She’s really hot,” Lucy said.

“No, she isn’t!” Kara said.

Lucy let out a small sigh. “I bet her strap game is amazing.”

Kara grabbed a pillow and slapped Lucy in the face with it.

“Okay, if you had to pick someone from CatCo,” Lucy asked.

“Cat,” Kara said. “Why is that even a question?”

Lucy hugged and rolled her eyes. “If you had to pick someone from CatCo OTHER than Cat?”

“Vicki,” Kara said.

“God, you’ve got a thing for femmes, don’t you?” Lucy asked.

“She types a hundred and seventy words a minute, and is still using one of the old IBM PC keyboards,” Kara said.

“You’re turned on by typing speed?” Lucy asked.

“Think about it for a minute,” Kara said. “Fingers that can move that fast on a mechanical switch
“I’ve always wanted a tattoo,” Lucy said.

“Why didn’t you get one?” Kara asked.

“My dad would have flipped his shit,” Lucy said.

“Your dad is an asshole,” Kara said.

“No shit,” Lucy said.

“We should go get you a tattoo!” Kara announced.

“Tattoo shops won’t do it when you’re drunk,” Lucy said.

“That’s discrimination!” Kara said.

“I know,” Lucy said. “Maybe some time when I’m sober, I’ll get up the nerve.”

“Fuck that!” Kara said. “Konex, can you do tattoos?”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex responded.

“Problem solved!” Kara shouted.

“Awesome!” Lucy said. “What should I get?”

“This hurts,” Lucy complained.

“I know,” Kara said. “I used to have a big one on my back.”

“You did?” Lucy asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Sara liked to trace it with her tongue.”

“You should have it put back on!” Lucy said.

“Good idea!” Kara said. “Konex, have Kolex come to the apartment! And send another tattoo bench and some red sun lamps!”

“Sanctuary has a swimming pool?” Lucy asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“But it’s in the middle of the ocean,” Lucy said. “Why do you need a swimming pool?”

“Fewer sharks,” Kara said.

“But you’re Supergirl,” Lucy said.

“Good point,” Lucy said. “We should go skinny dipping!”

“You didn’t tell me you have butt dimples,” Lucy said.

“What?” Kara asked.

“Dimples, on your back. Above your butt,” Lucy said.

“Oh, yeah,” Kara said. “You never asked.”

“They’re cute!” Lucy said.

“Sara liked to lick them,” Kara said.

“Like, randomly?” Lucy asked.

“No, just when she was about to…”

“Come on, just once!” Lucy said.

“I’m not the best flyer when I’m drunk,” Kara said.

“But I’ve never been,” Lucy said.

“This is a bad idea,” Kara said.

“You sound sober,” Lucy said. “Let me get you another daiquiri.”

“That’s definitely a bad idea,” Kara said.

“Does that mean you don’t want one?” Lucy asked.

“Gimme!” Kara said as she made grabby hands.

“This is so much fun!” Lucy yelled as Kara took them through another turn. “Is that a cruise ship?”

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“We should do a flyby!” Lucy squealed.

“We’re naked,” Kara said.

“Flyby! Flyby! Flyby!” Lucy chanted.

Thursday, December 10, 2015

“Oh, god,” Lucy groaned. “What time is it?”

“A little before eight,” Kara said without opening her eyes.

“SHIT!” Lucy said, sitting up much too fast. She winced at the light coming in through the window.

“Oh, God. I’m going to die.”
“No, you’re not,” Kara said.

“You’re not hung over at all, are you?” Lucy asked.

“Nope,” Kara said smugly.

“I hate you,” Lucy said.

“Wait until you find out I have the day off,” Kara said.

“I’m going to murder you in your sleep,” Lucy said.

“You’ll have all day to try,” Kara replied.

“Why’d we sleep on the floor again?” Lucy asked.

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “I was drunk. Something about beds leading to temptation. It didn’t make any sense considering what we were doing at the time.”

“Kara?”

“Yes?”

“When did I get my nipples pierced?”

“I’m not sure,” Kara said. “Some time after we buzzed the cruise ship, but before the Ramen shop in Tokyo. You complained about them hurting the whole time we were eating.”

“You know, maybe we got a little too drunk,” Lucy said.

“We’re fine,” Kara said. “We didn’t even get past second base.”

“I’m not sure if I should be relieved or disappointed,” Lucy said.

“Look at it this way. At least my sister won’t kill you when you tell her you got me drunk and then married me,” Kara said.

“Married?” Lucy squeaked.

“Yeah. You don’t remember proposing?” Kara asked.

Lucy’s eyes went wide. “SHIT!” she shouted. Then her eyes narrowed, and she glared at Kara as another memory came back to her. “I can’t believe you said you couldn’t marry me because ‘Then you wouldn’t be allowed to climb Cat like a tree’.”

“I know you Lane women are the jealous type,” Kara said.

“You could at least have had the decency to take your hand off my ass,” Lucy said.

“I don’t remember you complaining at the time,” Kara said.

She was completely blindsided by the couch cushion Lucy hit her with.

 Damn, Lane. What rock did you crawl out from under?” Maggie asked as she sat down across from Lucy at the conference table they were working at.
“Don’t ask,” Lucy said.

“Too late,” Maggie said. “Spill.”

Lucy looked up from the cup of coffee she was hunkered over. “I got a bottle from M’gann and took it over to Kara’s last night.”

Maggie snorted. “Oh, shit!” she managed between laughs. “You got Kara drunk?”

“Not so loud,” Lucy said. She took a sip of her coffee. “And it’s more like we got each other drunk.”

“Oh, lord,” Maggie said. “How much damage is there?”

“There’s no damage,” Lucy replied just a little too quickly.

“What did you do, Lane?” Maggie asked.

Lucy looked up at her, blushing a little. “We may have gone flying.”

“And?”

“Buzzed a cruise ship?” Lucy said, the blush getting deeper.

“And?”

“We might have gotten tattoos.”

“What was that?” Maggie asked.

Lucy sighed. “We might have gotten tattoos,” she said.

“Oh, God,” Maggie said. “Please tell me the two of you didn’t get your names tattooed on each other.”

Lucy shrugged. “I don’t know,” she said. “Kara wouldn’t tell me what the design was, and by the time it was done, I was a LOT drunker than when we started.”

“So, you got a tattoo, but don’t have any idea what it is?” Maggie asked.

“Yes?”

“Where is it?” Maggie asked.

“On my back,” Lucy said.

Maggie reached for her phone.

“What are you doing?” Lucy squeaked.

“Telling Alex to come up here,” Maggie said.

“Why?” Lucy asked.

“Because I can’t read Kryptonian.”

“Wow,” Alex said as she stared at Lucy’s back.
“Yeah,” Maggie said.

“Guys, what is it?” Lucy asked in a tone of voice so whiny a ten-year-old would have been embarrassed for her.

“It’s gorgeous,” Maggie said.

Alex took out her phone. “Cross your arms over your chest, Lucy.”

Lucy crossed her arms, and when Alex snapped a picture.

“Here,” she said, holding out her phone. “Have a look.”

Lucy turned around, using one arm to cover her chest as she took the phone from Alex and looked at the picture. “Oh, wow,” she said. “That’s beautiful.”

“It’s the Firefalls,” Alex said. “Done in watercolor. Kara used to paint them all the time when we were teenagers. She—”

Maggie’s phone rang, ‘Take this Job and Shove It’ filling the room. She pulled it out and accepted the call while Lucy scrambled back into her bra and shirt.

“Sawyer here.”

“We’ve got another one,” Cavanaugh said. “Same MO. A group of PHAN thugs jumped an alien in the street.”

“We’re on our way,” Maggie said.

“Ms. Grant.”

Cat looked up from the layouts she was working on to see Winn standing in the door of her office, holding a cup from Noonan’s.

“Yes?” she asked.

He stepped into the office and sat the cup in front of her.

“I know Kara always brings you an extra latté when you’re doing layouts. I figured since she wasn’t here…”

“Thank you,” she said, more than a little touched by the thoughtfulness of the gesture. She picked up the latté and took a sip. It wasn’t as hot as when Kara brought it, but it wasn’t nearly as cold as she expected. “And only lukewarm”

Winn actually smiled.

“Now, run along and play with your dolls.”

“They’re action figures,” he said.

Siobhan watched quietly from the sidelines as the women worked the scene. She recognized them all from the President’s press conference. Lucy Lane, assistant director of the DEO. Alex Danvers, the DEO field commander, and Maggie Sawyer, the DEO Local Law Enforcement Liaison. What she
didn’t recognize was what they were wearing. Lane was in the standard black DEO Polo shirt, with a DEO badge clipped to her belt, but Danvers and Sawyer were wearing something that looking like slightly padded versions of the suits the Kryptonians wore, sans caps. The iconography was different, too. They both wore the DEO emblem on the upper left part of their chest, while Sawyer wore Supergirl’s S, rendered in black and gray, on the upper right, and Danvers wore a different Kryptonian Symbol. One Siobhan hadn’t seen before. It was the standard diamond shape, but with a large circle in the middle. Two lines ran down from the inner top of the circle, and another line from the left side of the diamond, through the circle, before turning ninety-degrees and running down to the bottom of the circle. There were two dots above the circle, one over each line, and a third dot over the bend in the horizontal line.

She lifted her phone and snapped a quick picture of the symbol. She was about to lower the phone when she saw a blur of motion and turned to see a determined looking black woman moving towards the police barricade. Almost on reflex, she snapped a picture of the woman, then reached into her pocket and pulled out her directional microphone, plugged it into her phone, then brought up the video app and started recording. Right on time, too.

A cop stepped into the woman’s way, trying to stop her, but she walked right through him. She didn’t move him, or go around him, she went through him, like she was a ghost. There were a few alarmed noises, and more than one cop drew their gun, but Sawyer looked up and shouted them down immediately, telling them to put their guns away as she walked over to the woman.

“Hey, M’gann,” Sawyer said.

“Where is she?” M’gann demanded.

“She’s not here,” Sawyer said.

“Why the hell not?” M’gann asked.

“Because this is our job,” Sawyer said.

“When has that ever stopped her?”

Sawyer let out a frustrated sigh and reached up, putting a hand on M’gann’s arm and leading her a bit to the side. “Look, between the missile, the fight with Henshaw and Corben, and the attack at CatCo, plus a couple of other things that have happened that haven’t been splashed across the front page of the news, she’s taken a lot of hits the last couple of weeks. She’s a little punch drunk. Give her a couple of days, and she’ll be back out here.”

“We don’t have a couple of days,” M’gann said. “This shit is happening now, and she promised us protection.”

“And that’s why WE are out here!” Sawyer said. “And you know who that is.” Sawyer pointed her thumb over her shoulder at Danvers. “We’re working it, M’gann.”

“You know this shit has been going on for years,” M’gann said. “She was supposed to stop it.”

“Look, I know this is bad, but if she comes out here in the state she’s in, she’s gonna get herself killed. They’ve already come a lot closer than anyone knows.”

“It’s that bad?” M’gann asked.

“Yeah,” Sawyer said. “She’s in a bad way, okay. Not physically, but you know how bad it can get for some of the refugees. The shit they’ve seen.”
M’gann nodded her head. “I didn’t realize…”

“We haven’t told her,” Sawyer said. “If she knew about any of this shit, she’d be out here, ripping the city apart, looking for the people who did this.”

“Damn it, Maggie…”

“I know,” Sawyer said, “but let the DEO work this.”

“The DEO CAUSED this,” M’gann said. “This shit has been going on for years, and we couldn’t do shit about it, because if we went to the cops, the DEO would be all over us.”

“Yeah,” Sawyer said, “I know. But she fixed it. Got the DEO off your backs. It’s out in the light of day now, and we’re gonna find the cockroaches, and when we do, we’re going to step on the little fuckers.”

Siobhan looked around, wondering how she’d lost sight of M’gann. She’d followed the woman almost twenty blocks, only for her to disappear within sight of Little Krypton.

She considered heading into the newly built section of town on her own, and seeing if she could pick up the trail, but she wasn’t sure how welcome humans were there, and wasn’t entirely sure she wanted to risk it, but she wanted this story, because this was bigger than a random hate crime. It was-

The hand closed around her throat, and her feet kicked helplessly as she was lifted into the air.

“Who are you?” the green woman asked, in an oddly resonant voice.

“I’m a reporter!” she said. “I work for CatCo!”

“Oh,” the green woman said, lowering Siobhan down onto her feet. “You’re one of hers.” The green woman let go, and melted into the black woman, M’gann, from the crime scene. “What do you want?”

“I want to ask you about the attacks,” she said.

The woman snorted and turned away, walking towards Little Krypton.

“Aliens are disappearing!” Siobhan said, and M’gann stopped. “For months. And no one has done anything.”

M’gann turned around, looking at her.

“Please,” Siobhan said. “I want to help.”

“Fine,” M’gann said. “Come with me.”

“So, Lucy visited you last night?” Dr. Foster asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said as she picked up one of the puzzle boxes off the coffee table. “Just showed up out of the blue.”

“How did that make you feel?” Dr. Foster asked.

“Honestly?” Kara asked. “I felt a little guilty.”
“Why?”

“Because I’ve been ignoring her,” Kara said.

“Intentionally?”

Kara shook her head. “No.”

“But you had other things going on,” Dr. Foster said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I mean, after I had the flashback, I found out she’d dumped James, and I thought it would be a good idea to take her out. But I just ditched everyone the moment I saw Sara.”

“Was Lucy angry about that?”

“No,” Kara said. “She was really understanding.”

“Then why do you feel guilty?”

“Because I let her down!” Kara said. “I should have been there when she was hurting.”

“Kara, I want to propose a hypothetical here. Would that be okay?”

“Yeah,” Kara said, tossing the now solved puzzle down on the table.

“Suppose in the old timeline, a year after the Black Racer, you were out at a club with Iris.”

“Okay,” Kara said.

“Now, suppose a younger version of Barry walked into the club where the two of you were. Would you blame Iris for leaving you to spend the night with Barry?”

“Of course not!” Kara said.

Dr. Foster didn’t reply. She just sat there, waiting as it sank in.

“Oh,” Kara said.

Dr. Foster gave her a warm, gentle smile.

“You have to stop holding yourself to standards you would never hold other people to,” Dr. Foster said.

“But I have to,” Kara said. “I have to be better!”

“Why?”

“Because I wasn’t before,” Kara said. “I wasn’t, and everyone died. I let everyone die.”

“No,” Dr. Foster said. “From what you told me, you fought with everything you had. You did everything you could, and yes, people died, but not because of you.”

Kara shook her head. “No,” she said. “No, that can’t be right. Because if I did everything I could, then what’s to stop it from happening again? What can I do this time that I wasn’t able to do before?”

“You can prepare,” Dr. Foster said. “Isn’t that why you’re here? To give yourself time to prepare, so that when the problems come, you have a bigger lever to move them with?”
“What if it’s not enough?” Kara asked.

“Then you find people to help,” Dr. Foster said.

“Astra,” Lena said.

Astra looked up from the metallurgical analysis she was reading. “Yes?”

“Day’s over,” Lena said.

Astra looked over at the chronometer on the wall, surprised to see that it did, in fact indicate that it was some few minutes past the official end of the work day.

“I had not realized,” she said.

“It’s okay,” Lena said. “I get lost in my work sometimes as well.”

Astra leaned back in the chair, looking at Lena. “I confess, I’d forgotten how much I enjoy simple research,” she said.

“Really?” Lena asked. “I thought you were a soldier.”

Astra shrugged. “The House of Ze were descended from the War Queens. We are as renowned as soldiers as the House of Zod were. My mother was from the House of Ul, which produced many of the most famous law makers in Kryptonian history. There were really only ever two options for my sister and I. I chose the Military Guild, because I did not believe Alura would have survived it. She was not weak, by any means, but she was more reserved than I, so when the time came for the choosing, I went to the Military Guild, so she would be free to choose the Lawmaker’s Guild. If not for her, or if she had been more gifted in the martial forms, I might have defied tradition. My maternal grandmother was of House Ur. Scientists almost as revered as the Els. I would very much have liked to have followed her path and chosen the Science Guild.”

“If you had chosen the Science Guild, would she really have had to choose the Military Guild?” Lena asked.

“By law, every child is free to choose whatever guild will accept them,” Astra said. “So, in theory, she could have chosen Law. Practice, however, very often differs from theory. It would have been tantamount to a renunciation of House for both daughters of the Head of House to choose something other than the Military Guild.”

“That’s awful,” Lena said.

Astra shrugged. “There are many things about Krypton I do not miss. I admit, it was a relief to abdicate my role as leader of my people to Kara. I don’t know if she meant it as a punishment, assigning me here, but if she did, I hope she never finds out how much of a relief it is.”

“I don’t think she would do that,” Lena said. “Would she?”

“I don’t think she would,” Astra said, “but we’ve both been through so much since we parted on Krypton, and truth told, I’ve spent more time with you than I have with her.”

“I’m sorry,” Lena said.

“There’s no need to be,” Astra said. “I understand. She has obligations that go beyond counting. To the city, to our people, to the enterprises she runs, to the House which adopted her. She has tried to
spend time with me, but the demands on her are great, and I have no wish to be a burden.”

Lena reached over, and covered Astra’s hand with her own. “Family isn’t a burden,” Lena said.

“Even yours?” Astra asked.

Lena smiled and rolled her eyes. “Family *shouldn’t be* a burden,” Lena said. “Mine is a special case.”

“I might be a special case as well,” Astra said. “My crimes are less bloody than your brothers, but no less horrific for being so. And like your brother, I was driven to those crimes out of the belief that I was doing what was best. Some days, I wonder if Kara’s love for me has blinded her, and I should be in a cell alongside my husband.”

“There’s a difference between you and my brother,” Lena said.

“What difference would that be?” Astra asked.

“When someone offered you a better way, you took it,” Lena said. “My brother never would have accepted any plan but his own.”

Lillian, Max and General Lane all looked at the monstrosity in the tank in front of them while Tycho stood there, proud as a peacock in mating season.

“It’s finished!” he programed.

“I thought the goal was to get monsters off the streets,” Max said. “Not grow them in a fish tank.”

Tycho rolled his eyes. “You have no vision, Max. That’s always been your problem.”

“My vision is just fine,” Max said, “but I don’t see how an overgrown Jell-O mold is going to make the world a safer place.”

“That’s because you don’t understand what you’re seeing. The Amalgam, the organism in front of you, is a Chimera. The body is a genetic gestalt of dozens of different species. It’s fast, resilient, can regenerate any injuries almost instantly, and is stronger than the Kryptonians,” Tycho said.

“It doesn’t have a skeleton,” Lane observed. “Or muscles, or eyes, or ears…”

“It doesn’t need them,” Tycho said. “The bio-gel is a variable-property biological matrix. It can form and dissolve bones at will. The entire bio-mass is a sensory organ, perceiving sight, sound, smell, touch, taste and magnetic fields, giving it far higher bandwidth than it would have with specialized sensory organs. But the Amalgam itself is not the point. It’s nothing more than a test vehicle. The point is that the brain embedded within the bio-gel is seeded with the nanites from project Brain. If I give it a command, it will obey any order I give. If I put on the control helmet, I will be able to take over the Amalgam’s body and control it as if it were my own. And if it works…”

“We’ll be able to seed anyone we want with the nanites,” Lillian said.

“Exactly,” Tycho said. “Slip a few into the President’s coffee, and the great champion of Alien Amnesty will have a sudden change of heart. Slip a little in Cat Grant’s coffee, and the next time she takes Supergirl to bed, she can slip a Kryptonite knife between the Girl of Steel’s ribs.”

“Excuse me,” one of the guards said, causing all four of them to turn towards the man. “Watcher 7 just brought in Dr. Hamilton. She’s asking to see you, Ms. Luthor.”
“Take her to my office,” Lillian said. “Do not let her see anything.”

“Of course,” the guard said.

Lillian turned back to the other three. “Let’s go see what the good doctor wants, shall we?”

“I don’t think you understand,” Dr. Hamilton said. “The Martian is reading everyone’s mind. He’s going to find out.”

“I understand completely Dr. Hamilton,” Lillian said. “I simply don’t know what you expect us to do about it.”

“I expect you to protect me!” Hamilton said. “I’ve done everything you asked. Provided you with tissue samples from every alien who’s gone through the place, including the Martian.”

“Yes, you did,” Lillian said. “And we are very grateful for your assistance. Unfortunately, I’m afraid there really is nothing to be done about your situation. We won’t be ready to move against the DEO until the middle of January. If you can’t be in place when we do, I’m not sure you’re much use to us.”

“WHAT?” Hamilton shouted.

“Now, Lillian,” Tycho said, “let’s not be hasty.”

“You have an idea?” Lillian asked.

“Yes,” Tycho said. “Nothing that will stop the good Doctor from being exposed, unfortunately, but if she’s willing to make the most of the remainder of her time at the DEO, I do have people who could set her up with a new life somewhere she’d be safe.”

Lillian turned to Hamilton. “Well, Doctor?”

Hamilton glared at her. “I don’t suppose I have a choice, do I?”

“No,” Lillian said. “Not really. Tycho, see to it.”

“Of course,” Tycho said. “Right this way, Doctor.”

Friday, December 11, 2015

Fendra frowned as she stared at the report. The seeding had only been three Earth days ago, and what she saw on her screen was not possible. Development rates for Kryptonian children were well understood. Gestation took two /ahmzehto/. Three hundred and sixty Earth days.

Were she carrying biologically, she might assume what she was seeing was the result of the yellow sunlight, but the embryo, her daughter, was safely ensconced in the Genesis Chamber. The only light there was the relatively low energy solid-state lamps. Very advanced versions of what the humans called LED’s.

Fendra pulled the child’s genetic profile and paged past the simplified overlay used for the gene selection process, and looked directly at the child’s genome, and her eyes went wide at what she saw.
The splicing was done with a very deft hand and hidden very carefully. The modifications were tucked down deep in unmonitored sections of the chromosomes; modifications that the gene-readers would ignore as junk DNA.

The question was, where did the modifications come from?

She pulled the genomes of the other children, and as expected, there was nothing. Fourteen of the children were perfectly normal. Only her daughter exhibited the abnormality.

She entered the override and pulled Kara’s record from the genetic archive and spread it out, looking at it over time. The original sample, recording at Kara’s own seeding showed normal junk strands, as did her once per /lorakh/ samplings, right up until…

There!

The first set of changes showed up in a sample taken four /ahmzehto/ before the destruction of Krypton. That would have been about an /ahmzeht/ after Jor-El discovered the instability in the core. More changes each /lorakh/. Hidden carefully. Expertly done. Someone who knew Krypton was dying. Someone who was a gifted bioengineer. Someone who had access to Kara.

The answer as obvious as it was horrifying.

What in the name of Rao had Zor-El done to his daughter?

And more importantly, at least to Fendra, what did it mean for her daughter?

“This is the third assault in as many days,” J’onn said.

“I know, sir,” Maggie said as the DEO forensics teams combed the area. “At this rate, it’s only a matter of time before someone dies.”

“We can’t let it get to that point,” J’onn said.

“I know,” Maggie said. “I’m working every angle I’ve got.”

“Does Kara know yet?” J’onn asked.

“No,” Maggie said. “After Sara left, Cat convinced her to take a few days off. Not sure how she managed it, but right now, I’m really glad she did.”

“You and me both,” J’onn said. “I don’t even want to think about what would happen if she decides the DEO can’t protect the aliens in National City.”

“Given what happened after the CatCo shooting, I think we can be pretty god-damned sure shit would get ugly, fast,” Maggie said.

“Can you think of any way we could track these guys down?” J’onn asked.

“I am doing everything I legally can right now,” Maggie said.

J’onn stared at her for a moment, and Maggie thought very hard about what she wasn’t saying.

“You know, I think I need to make a phone call,” J’onn said. “Can you and Agent Danvers finish processing the scene?”
“Yes sir,” Maggie said.

“Director J’onzz,” Bruce said. “How can I help?”

“Are we on a secure line?” J’onn asked.

“Yes,” Bruce said.

“Have you heard the news about the alien assaults in National City?” J’onn asked.

“Yes,” Bruce said. “What there is of it. I’m surprised it hasn’t made it into the papers.”

“We’re working hard to keep that from happening,” J’onn said. “But it’s only a matter of time, and when it does…”

“You expect a dramatic reaction,” Bruce said.

“Yes,” J’onn said.

“What do you need?” Bruce said.

“A target,” J’onn said.

“So, an investigator,” Bruce said. “Do you need a hitter, too?”

“No,” J’onn said. “We’ve got plenty of heavy hitters. I just need to know where to point them.”

“Dick is already in town helping with Olsen’s rehab after the shooting. He’s good, but not as good as Sawyer. I’ll send Tim out before sunset. He’s my best investigator. Between the two of them, they’ll find your target.”

“Thank you,” J’onn said.

“So, are you thinking of taking up a new career as a painter?” Susan asked.

Leslie looked up from the plate she’d been staring at listlessly for the past ten minutes, with a serious ‘what the fuck’ look on her face.

“I don’t really think ketchup on stoneware is a very permanent medium, and I’d think a brush would work better than a French Fry, but honestly, Kara’s the artsy one, so I could be wrong,” Susan said.

“Asshole,” Leslie said, but she couldn’t really keep the grin off her face, which was pretty much what Susan intended. Though Susan kind of wanted to kick herself, because she was thinking things about that grin she had no business thinking.

Oh, she’d definitely revised her initial assessment of ‘straight girl’ where Leslie Willis was concerned, but honestly, a couple more and ‘hot blonde who’s hopelessly smitten with Cat Grant’ would qualify for its own number on the fucking Kinsey scale.

“Seriously, what’s up?” Susan asked.

“It’s stupid,” Leslie said, looking off into the far corner of the diner where they were having lunch to avoid meeting Susan’s gaze.
“I babysit a surly Martian, a Kryptonian with the temperament of a Rottweiler, and Alex Motherfucking Danvers professionally. I’m pretty sure that whatever it is, I’ve cleaned up stupider things before breakfast most mornings.”

Leslie laughed, the grin turning into a full-blown smile for a moment before she shook her head.

“I miss the DEO,” she said. “Which is fucking stupid, because I have an apartment that’s bigger than a house and comes with its own damn butler. And I have enough money to live for a couple of years without having to work. Especially since Kara won’t take any rent. And Kara was right, because of course she was. Sirius, and Cox Communications have both offered me a job. A cable channel even offered me my own show.”

“You’re not interested in any of that?” Susan asked.

“No,” Leslie said. “It feels like going backwards, and I don’t like who I was. I mean, I did… But getting murdered kind of changes your perspective.”

“So, come back to the DEO,” Susan said.

“What?” Leslie asked.

“We’re recruiting,” Susan said.


“Field agents,” Susan said. “Leslie, you took down a Kryptonian-level threat without flinching.”

“And threw up two seconds later,” Leslie said.

“Yeah,” Susan said. “You did better than I did the first time I went up against an alien.”

“I thought you took down some kind of monster,” Leslie said.

“A Bolovaxian,” Susan said. “Shot him through the eye. Killed him dead.”

“See,” Leslie said. “You’re a freaking hero.”

“Leslie, I pissed myself,” Susan said. “I literally peed my pants when that thing charged me.”

“No shit?”

“No, no shit,” Susan said. “Bolovaxians stand eight feet tall and look like someone shaved a pig and stood it on its hind legs. I didn’t stand there because I was brave. I stood there because I was too scared to move. People at the DEO think I’m this huge bad ass with brass balls, but I’m not. I took this job because I was scared. Because I knew if I didn’t get back up on the biggest, meanest horse I could find as soon as I could, I’d never set foot out my front door again.”

Susan leaned forward, smiling as she reached out and took Leslie’s hand. “You get beaten nearly to death, and your first instinct wasn’t to run and hide. Your first instinct was to find the thing that hurt you, and kick the life out of it,” she said. “You’re a fighter. And I think you’d make a hell of an agent.”

“Really?” Leslie asked.

“Really,” Susan said. “Finish your lunch, and we’ll go see the scariest thing the DEO can come up with.”
“What’s that?” Leslie asked.

“Pam from HR,” Susan said. “If you can survive her, anything you run into in the field will be a cake walk.”

J’onn stared at Susan, wondering briefly is she’d completely lost her mind.

“You want me to bring Leslie Willis on as an agent?” he asked.

“Yes sir,” Susan said.

“She’s a shock jock,” J’onn said.

“She took down Henshaw and Indigo,” Susan said. “She’s a serious heavy hitter, and as much as I like and trust Kara, the fact of the matter is, we can’t keep relying on the Kryptonians to be our big guns. Realistically, right now, the DEO only has three heavy hitters. You, Alex and Maggie. That’s not a good situation.”

“What do you mean?” J’onn asked.

“I mean, sooner or later, Kara’s going to go trotting off to Oa to deal with the Guardians, and you and I both know Alex and Maggie are going to go with her when that happens. Which leaves us with you as our only heavy hitter. I mean, assuming you don’t go with her too, because given what they did to your people, I wouldn’t blame you. But someone’s got to hold down National City while that happens. We need to start building a response team composed of metahumans and aliens to deal with metahumans and aliens.”

“You’re right,” J’onn said.

“It happens sometimes,” Susan said.

“You really think she’s up to it?” J’onn asked.

“I think she’s a lot less fucked up than Alex was when you brought her in,” Susan said. “She’s already had her come to Jesus moment.”

“Okay,” J’onn said.

Kara reached up and picked up one of the puzzles off the table. This one was a cube with a labyrinth inside that wrapped around all six faces. The goal to maneuver a ball bearing into position to work a lock which would open a door in the side of the cube.

“Kara?” Dr. Foster said as Kara started turning the cube this way and that.

“Hmmm?”

“What’s wrong?” Dr. Foster asked.

“What makes you think anything is wrong?” Kara asked.

“You’ve been here fifteen minutes, and you haven’t said anything other than hello,” Dr. Foster said.

Kara frowned as the ball bearing rolled into place and the lock popped open. She closed it and shook up the puzzle, then dropped it back on the table.
“You need better puzzles,” she said, leaning back against the back of the couch.

“I’m afraid if I get anything more complicated, it will open a gateway to hell,” Dr. Foster said.

“I hate that movie,” Kara said.

“I’m honestly surprised you’ve seen it,” Dr. Foster said.

“Alex likes horror movies,” Kara said. “She also liked torturing me by making me watch them with her.”

“Siblings can be mean sometimes,” Dr. Foster said.

“I should thank her,” Kara said. “Compared to some of the things I saw during the war, those movies are light comedies.”

“Do you want to talk about that?” Dr. Foster asked.

“No really,” Kara said.

Silence filled the room, and minutes seemed to drag by like hours, until Kara let her head fall back onto the back of the couch.

“Am I broken?” she asked.

“I don’t think so,” Dr. Foster said. “I think you’re hurting. I don’t think it would be possible to have seen even a small part of what you have and not be hurting. The question is, do you think you’re broken?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Why?” Dr. Foster asked.

“Because sometimes, I wish I was back there,” Kara said, lifting her head up to look at Dr. Foster.

“Back in the war?”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I mean, how fucked up is that? I have my family back. I have my friends back. I have all these things I used to dream of and long for, and I have the chance to keep them this time, but…” she stopped, squeezing her eyes and mouth shut as tears spilled down her cheeks.

She tried to speak, but she couldn’t find her voice. Not the first time, or the second, or even the third.

“Sometimes, I just want to go back,” she finally managed to choke out on the fourth try.

“Why do you think that is?”

She wrapped her arms around herself, squeezing tightly as she hunkered down, drawing into herself and leaning forward, looking down at the floor.

“I felt safer there,” she said. “How could I feel safer there?”

“It’s not uncommon,” Dr. Foster said.

Kara looked up at her. “What?”

“I deal with a lot of soldiers, and one of the common themes is that they don’t feel safe at home,” Dr.
Foster said. “When they’re deployed, they spend all their time in groups. They eat together, they sleep together, they practically shit, shower and shave together. They sleep in defensive positions with people they trust on watch. Then they come home, and there’s no unit. No concrete barricades protecting your barracks. No carefully-laid fighting positions in case you’re attacked in the night. None of the things you did to make you feel safe out there.”

“What do I do?” Kara asked.

“What made you feel safe during the war?” Dr. Foster asked.


“So, people, places,” Dr. Foster said.

“Yes.”

“What people make you feel safe here?” Dr. Foster asked.


“What places make you feel safe?” Dr. Foster asked.


“Not anymore?” Dr. Foster asked.

“When I go back there now, I just see blood. I see the people I let die.”

“Is that what made you afraid?”

“Well, that, and the attempts on my life, and Henshaw trying to murder Leslie, oh, and the imminent end of the world.”

“Kara,” Dr. Foster said in a sterner tone than she’d ever used before. “What made you afraid *today*.”

“A boomtube,” Kara said.

“What?” Dr. Foster asked.

“A boomtube. It’s kind of like a wormhole, but not. I’d have to teach you math that hasn’t been invented on Earth yet to explain the difference.”

“But it’s a way to travel?” Dr. Foster asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “Darkseid’s forces used them.”

“And you saw one today?”

“Heard,” Kara said. “They make a sound. It’s distinctive. A sort of low, bass-filled boom. Sara used to say it sounded like the gates of hell slamming against the walls as they were thrown open. And there’s this high-pitched whine like the souls of the damned screaming for mercy.”

“You heard this today?”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Cyborg has tech from Apokolips and from New Genesis built into him. He can
open Boomtubes. He doesn’t do it often, but he came to National City today. Boomtubed in. And I heard it. And I was out of bed, in my war suit, and half way across town before I realized who it was.”

“So, you heard a noise you’d come to associate with the enemy, and you had a combat response.”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Kara, that’s what we call a trigger,” Dr. Foster said. “It’s a natural adaptive behavior mechanism. It’s no different than a soldier who dives for cover when he hears a firecracker go off.”

“I hate it,” Kara said. “I hate that I’m never going to have a normal life. I hate that this is my future.”

“What do you have?” Dick asked, looking at the map laid out on the table in front of Tim.

“An educated guess,” Tim said. “I looked over everything Sawyer has on the attacks, and she’s got their base narrowed down to a general area, which gave me a good place to start. From there, I did a little bit of hacking and narrowed it down further. I’m reasonably sure this is our target.”

“Do I even want to know how you figured it out?” Dick asked.

“I pulled traffic cam footage between the locations of the attacks and the area Sawyer thinks they are operating out of for two hours after each attack and tracked any group of three or more people. Once I identified the paths of each suspect group, I hacked any security cameras along their route and pulled images for facial recognition, then cross-checked against military and police backgrounds, since that’s where PHAN likes to recruit. Once I had a few suspects, I hacked into city records and pulled deeds for everything in the area and came across a match.”

“This poster child for birth control is named Todd McMatthews,” Tim said, pulling up a picture of a man in military fatigues. “Fired from three police forces in six years for brutality complaints. Ties to several hate groups. Notice the tattoos. ‘88’ on the neck. ‘Fourteen Words’ on the inside of the right arm.”

“So, white supremacist who liked to beat on black suspects?”

“Black, Hispanic, Queer, Indian, Asian, and now, apparently, Alien,” Tim said.

“You sure he’s one of our guys?” Dick asked.

“He worked for LuthorCorp Security for two years before Lex went to jail,” Tim said. “I’ll bet you two weeks of Damian duty that he’s one of our guys.”

“That’s a sucker bet,” Dick said.

“I’ll bet you three weeks they confess,” Tim said.

“Nah,” Dick said. “Three weeks says they lawyer up.”

“You’re on,” Tim said. “Sundown is in an hour. Suit up, and we’ll go have a look.”

“Mind if I bring James along?”

Tim shrugged. “If he fucks up, you owe me a month.”

“Fine,” Dick said.
“Hey, Astra,” Kara said as she stepped forward and wrapped her arms around her aunt, squeezing her tightly.

“Hello, Little One,” Astra said, hugging Kara in return.

“Come in,” Kara said as she let go.

“Thank you,” Astra said as she stepped into the apartment.

“Dinner’s still in the oven. Should be about twenty minutes,” Kara said as she led them into the apartment. She went over to the refrigerator and took out a bottle of grape soda for herself, and a bottle of orange for Astra. She passed the bottle to her Aunt as she headed into the living area and dropped down onto the couch. Astra took the seat next to her. “I honestly didn’t expect you to be on time.”

“Why not?”

“You’re working with Lena,” Kara said. “That woman has never left work on time in her whole life.”

“I instructed Nimda to remind me,” Astra said. “I’m surprised you didn’t invite Lena to dine with us.”

“I wanted you to myself,” Kara said. “We haven’t had a chance to spend time together since before Thanksgiving.”

“It does seem like a long time,” Astra said. “Thought I remember being away on campaign for longer stretches.”

“Which I always hated,” Kara said.

“Something I remember well,” Astra said. “You would always get upset when I had to leave.”

“I got upset when anyone left,” Kara said. “Some things never change.”

Astra reached on, resting a hand gently on Kara’s shoulder. “I was sorry to hear that Sara left,” she said.

“She made the right choice,” Kara said. “Duty first.”

“Sometimes, I question the wisdom of that belief, when it brings so much pain with it,” Astra said. “I admit, I felt a great relief when you chose the Science Guild over the Military Guild. I had hoped that meant you would not face such moments.”

“Well, I had to go and become a General anyway,” Kara said.

“Yes,” Astra said, “and I could not be prouder if you were my own daughter.”

“I don’t know why,” Kara said. “All I seemed to do was lose.”

“There’s no shame in defeat when you are outnumbered and outgunned,” Astra said. “But you still found a way. You turned defeat into a chance for victory. That is not something many Generals can accomplish.”

“It doesn’t feel that way,” Kara said. “Ever since the Amnesty announcement, it feels like every step
“That’s not what I see,” Astra said. “Your enemies are vicious and cunning, but they are desperate. You took their most carefully-planned strike and turned it into a victory, and now you count the Willis woman among your allies. The missile was an act of desperation and rage. You’d destroyed their plans and left yourself in a stronger position than when they attacked you. All of their actions have been reactive, trying to distract you and weaken you as they jockey for position, and each time they attack you, they suffer for it. The attack on Leslie was a public relations nightmare for them. It destroyed the credibility of one of their pet politicians. The fight with Corben and Henshaw took two of their heavy assets off the board. The incident at City Hall exposed several of their allies and allowed you to secure a stronghold while sacrificing far less capital than it would otherwise have cost you. The attack on CatCo exposed them and robbed them of their support within the government, as well as valuable allies. Even the escape cost them. It robbed them of access to the DEO, and your Vasquez killed several of their number and prevented them from destroying one of your strongholds.”

“You make it sound like I’m out there, kicking their asses on a daily basis,” Kara said.

“Not these last few days, but even a successful General needs her rest,” Astra said.

“Maybe,” Kara said. “I need the time, but I feel like I’m letting everyone down by taking it.”

“I feel like I am neglecting my duty by not hunting for Non,” Astra said. “Should I leave the task you set me to do so?”

“That’s different,” Kara said. “You’re doing something important.”

“As are you, Little One,” Astra said. “No one can lead an army if they are too exhausted to stand.”

“That didn’t stop me from kicking Kal’s ass,” Kara said.

Astra threw her head back and laughed. “No, it didn’t,” she said. “But I would not see you make a habit of that.” She reached out, taking Kara’s hand in her own. “Little One, the weight you carry would break a lesser person. Don’t be ashamed of needing respite. Especially so soon after suffering another loss.”

Kara frowned and looked down at the bottle in her hand. “Mom would be ashamed of me. She would tell me that wallowing in grief over something as frivolous as the loss of a lover was the worst kind of self-indulgence.”

“She would,” Astra said, “but she would be wrong. Your mother and father were dear friends, but they weren’t like Lara and Jor-El. Theirs was no romance. I think your mother died without ever knowing what it meant to love someone the way you loved your Sara.”

Kara stared into the half-empty bottle she held, trying to decide how she felt about that. She always knew her mother and father had been a political match. Jor-El and Lara Lor-Van were a good match politically, but it was hardly any secret that they were a love match. That Jor had gone to his father and begged to be matched with Lara. There were jokes going back dozens of generations about the Els being ruled by their passions and not their reason. But her father and her mother had a nice, respectable arrangement. An idea Kara found herself hating, suddenly. Something about the idea that they’d both died without ever having been in love felt wrong.

She looked up at Astra. “What about you?” Kara said. “Did you ever have anyone?”

Astra shook her head. “No,” she said. “Non and I were a political convenience. A way for my father
to dispose of an inconvenient twin to the daughter he was actually proud of, and a way for a prominent family among the rankless to further their fortunes. We were never close. I can barely think of a point when I would call him friend, and I certainly never took him to my bed.” She gave a small shudder. “He took lovers. Indigo, until she was arrested, then a woman from House Ek. A member of the Artisan Guild. I believe you met her, once. Lyonn Ek.”

“More than once,” Kara said. “She hated me.”

Astra frowned. “Why?”

“I beat her son in class standing when I took sculpting,” Kara said. “She took it as an insult.”

Astra smiled. “That doesn’t surprise me. She was always a pompous woman. I could never understand her fascination with Non.”

“Humans call it ‘slumming’,” Kara said.

Astra’s eyes widening, and then she doubled over in laughter. “Oh, yes,” she said. “If I understand the implication, that is it exactly.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara said once Astra’s laughter had died away.

“What for?” Astra asked.

“That you never got to fall in love,” Kara said.

Astra shrugged. “I hardly consider it a loss. I never cared for the company of men,” she said.

Kara stared at her for a moment, and it took every ounce of control she’d developed over the last fifteen years to keep her eyes from bugging out, and she damn near swallowed her tongue to keep from screaming, because she could see the exact look Sara would have on her face if she were in the room. The head tilt, the duck lips, the way Sara would give Astra a speculative once over with her eyes.

She lasted ten seconds before she fell off the couch laughing, and the startled look on Astra’s face didn’t help at all.

“How can you see in that thing?” Dick asked, and James smiled.

“The front half of the helmet is transparent from the inside,” James said.

“Really?” Tim asked.

“No,” James said, “it’s some sort of display screen, but the pixel density is about a hundred times higher than the human eye can perceive. Benefits of a tech base fifteen thousand years more advanced than us.”

Tim sighed. “And Bruce just had to go and piss her off.”

“Apparently not too bad,” Dick said. “She did give us the fabric extruder, the Batbot, and the transmat system.”

“Yeah, but I could have had a freaking helmet,” Tim said.

“You could have had a helmet before,” Dick said.
“Yeah,” Tim said, “and be like Jason. Spend all my time bitching about how hard it is to see out of.”

“But it looks so cool.”

Dick, Tim and James all jumped at the unexpected voice, and James had to grab Tim to keep from going over the edge.

“Damn it, Jason!” Dick growled.

Jason just shook his head as he and Artemis knelt down on the roof next to them.

“Jumpy lot, aren’t they?” Artemis said.

“Well, not everyone can be as awesome as I am,” Jason said.

“This from the guy who one spent a month checking his hairline in every mirror he came across because Damian made a crack about him going bald,” Tim said.

“Dude, not funny,” Jason said.

“No, it was funny,” Dick said. “The YouTube compilation video has ten million hits.”

“Tell me why I haven’t murdered you in your sleep yet?” Jason asked.

“You love me,” Dick said. “Everybody loves me.”

“No,” Artemis said. “You do have a lovely ass, and I enjoy staring at it. But that’s lust. Not love.”

The sounds of James and Tim trying, and failing, to stifle their laughter filled the rooftop.

“Quiet,” Artemis said. “Our target approaches.”

Everyone on the roof turned to look down at the street below.

“Is that…?” James asked.

“Yeah. I think it is,” Dick said.

Jason stood up. “Let’s go,” he said.

“No,” Dick said, reaching over to still Jason’s movement. “This is strictly recon.”

“They may kill him while we’re up here doing recon,” Jason said.

Dick stared down at the scene unfolding before him, and James could feel the weight of the moment. Feel the decision unfolding.

“Red Hood, Artemis, circle around, see if you can get a view inside. Red Robin, see if you can find any digital points of entry. Guardian, call J’onzz, tell him we have a location and need a strike team here in under ten minutes if he wants to be able to make a case,” Dick said.

As it happened, J’onzz, Alex and Maggie dropped out of the sky four minutes later, with each of them carrying two fully kitted-out members of a DEO strike team by the drag handles on the back of their tac vests. They deposited their passengers at the back of the roof, and walked over to where Dick, Tim and James were sitting.
“What have we got?” J’onn asked.

“Four guys pulled up in that white cargo van about four minutes ago. They opened the door and dragged what looked to be an unconscious alien of some sort out of the van, and carried him into the building,” Dick said.

J’onn looked over at Maggie. “Good enough?”

“Civilian witnesses reporting a crime in progress,” Maggie said. “It will float in court.”

“Then let’s go,” J’onn said.

Alex was the first one in. With the powered war suit she was wearing, her boot did a better job of taking down the door than any battering ram would, so she kicked it in and went barreling into the room using the speed the suit gave her. She was across the room in an eye blink, with Maggie and J’onn right behind her, but there were more than five people in the room.

A lot more.

By the time she reached the first perp, she wanted to kill him with her bare hands. The sight of dozens of aliens, old, young, women, children, big, small, all locked in cages, all beaten and battered, drove a spike of fury through her, and it was all she could do to stop herself from punching the monster in front of her with the full Kryptonian strength the suit gave her.

Years of training and discipline stopped her, and instead, she grabbed him, picked him up, and slammed him to the ground face down, planting her knee in his back as she pulled his arms together and cuffed him.

Maggie took the second perp down, and Alex could see it on her face too. The anger, the barely controlled rage.

The next two fell to J’onn. Alex took five and Maggie took six and seven before Alex slammed into eight.

By the time the strike team stepped into the room, it was over. Eleven humans were down and cuffed with zip ties, and Alex finally had a chance to take a good look around, and once she did, she reached up and tapped the earbud.

“Nimda, I need medical drones at my location. Mass casualty event. Multiple species. Drones should document as they treat,” she said.

“Understood, Lady Danvers,” Nimda said. “Units inbound in thirty seconds.”

“So, how have you been?” Kara asked as Konex sat their plates on the table.

“Well,” Astra said. “The work is progressing quickly.”

“I know,” Kara said. “You and Lena are both probably putting in too many hours.”

“How can we invest too much time in preventing the ecological collapse of this world?” Astra asked.

“I don’t know, but I’m sure the two of you will find a way,” Kara said with a grin. “Really, how has it been? Are you enjoying the work?”
“I am,” Astra said. “It feels good to be in a lab again.”

“I’m glad,” Kara said as she twisted the top off her soda. “I remember you telling me how much you enjoyed the lab. You never said it, but I was always sure you wished you had chosen the Science Guild.”

“You were always more observant than even I gave you credit for,” Astra said.

“Don’t give me too much credit,” Kara said. “It took a long time before I realized why you did it.”

“I loved your mother. Whatever came later, I never regretted making the choice to protect her.”

Kara sighed. “Sometimes I wish you had chosen differently,” she said. “I wonder if you might have spotted the problem before it was too late.”

“I might have, or I might not, but one thing that would be different. You would not be here. That’s too high a price to pay, even for Krypton.”

“I’m not sure how fair it is to weigh my life against thirty-billion souls.”

“And how many lives will you save, if your campaign is successful?” Astra asked.

“More than thirty-billion,” Kara said. “I hate thinking about it like that.”

“I didn’t mean to take the conversation in such an unpleasant direction,” Astra said.

“My fault as much as yours,” Kara said. She took a sip of her soda. “How are you getting along with Lena?”

“Well,” Astra said. “I admit to being surprised about that. When Fendra briefed me on the Luthors, I had my doubts about your decision to embrace her as an ally, though I didn’t have the advantage of your foresight at the time.”

“Lena’s good people,” Kara said. “A bit of a drama queen, but that just gives you two something in common.” Astra glared at her, and Kara just smiled and shrugged. “Do I have to remind you of the Sky Palace incident?”

“Alura completely overreacted to that!” Astra said.

“I was eighteen /ahmzehto/ old,” Kara said.

“Which is why I didn’t take you to the sublevels,” Astra said.

“Well, I shudder to think what Mom would say if she found out I once spent an entire Earth week on Pheramon,” Kara said.

“I suspect she would have died out of sheer horror at the very thought,” Astra said. “Then she would go to the temple and repent her hypocrisy, while praying you never found out she and your father once spent two /bythzehto/ there themselves.”

“Really?” Kara asked, a grin creeping across her face.

“Yes,” Astra said. “It was ten /ahmzehto/ before you were seeded.”

Kara tried to picture it. Ten /ahmzehto/ would be about five years, which meant her parents would have been about twenty-five Earth years old when they went.
“It’s hard to imagine,” Kara said.

“She was young. Still an Advocate, and still years away from becoming the stoic Adjudicator.”

“It must have been nice,” Kara said. “To be that age, and not have a care in the universe.”

“I would not know,” Astra said. “I spent an /ahmzeht/ chasing Czarnian mercenaries through the Palantium cluster around that time.”

“Oh, I *hate* Czarnians,” Kara said. “I fought this one named Lobo-”

Astra let out a hiss at the sound of the name.

“And I can see you’ve met him,” Kara said.

“More than once,” Astra said. “Last time I saw him, I left him hanging from a tree with that chain around his neck.”

“I dropped him into a neutron star,” Kara said. “No idea if it killed him.”

“One can hope,” Astra said. “Though I take it this was the other timeline?”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Which means I may have to fight him again.”


“Oh, please don’t remind me.”

“I remember it took Non…” Astra stopped, a look of distress on her face.

Kara reached over, resting a hand on her shoulder. “I’m sorry.”

“I should be out searching for him,” Astra said.

“No,” Kara said.

“He’s my husband,” Astra said. “That comes with certain responsibilities.”

“We’ll find him,” Kara said. “I know I haven’t been much use to anybody the last few days-”

“You’ve been resting,” Astra said. “Everyone understands that.”

“Really?” Kara asked.

“No,” Astra said.

“Well, that was a lot more honest than I expected,” Kara said.

“You’ve been a General. You should know by now that no matter how much you give, no matter how hard you push or what you sacrifice, it will never be enough to satisfy everyone. When you lay broken and bleeding on the field of battle, your life leaking out of you, they will demand you use your last breath to tell them why you didn’t do more, give more,” Astra said.

“Ain’t that the truth,” Kara said with a sigh. “Are you happy? I mean, really happy?”

Astra looked at her. “I’m happier than I have a right to be,” she said. “I wish I could take the burden you carry for you. I was so happy when I heard you’d chosen the Science Guild, and not the Military
Guild. I know you showed aptitude, but I never wanted you to be a soldier.”

“Well, when has the universe ever given us what we want?” Kara asked.

“The day I received your message,” Astra said. “The day you activated the beacon. Every single day I get to see you. I never wanted you to be a soldier, Little One, but you are alive, and for that, I am forever grateful.”

Kara reached across the table, covering one of Astra’s hands with her own. “I give thanks to Rao every day that I got a chance to save you, and then I thank him for making you listen when I spoke.”

“I wish I had listened better in the other timeline,” Astra said. “I might have spared you a great deal of suffering.”

“Maybe,” Kara said, “but you’re here, now, and that’s more than I thought possible for the longest time, so however we got here, I’m grateful we did.”

J’onn stood outside the building in his human form, taking long, slow breaths, trying to settle his nerves. It was the wrong night for it. The chill night air reminded him of summer on Mars, and the sight of people in cages hit a little too close to home.

“How bad is it in there?” James asked.

J’onn opened his eyes and looked over at Olsen.

Afterwards, J’onn would never be sure what made him do it. He didn’t plan it. He never consciously made the decision, but the words came out of his mouth, nonetheless.

“Do you have your camera, Mr. Olsen?” J’onn asked.

Saturday, December 12, 2015

Lena took a deep breath as she stepped off the elevator, not entirely sure what she was thinking. It was barely eleven on a Saturday, and for the first time in ages, she found herself with an entire day that wasn’t scheduled to the second. Part of that was a miscalculation on her part. She’d expected moving into the apartment to take most of the day and unpacking to drag on for weeks. She had not counted on having a dozen robots and a teleporter on hand. The robot butler Kara had given her had the whole thing taken care of in less than forty-five minutes from the time the truck had arrived with her things.

Which is how Lena found herself with hours of nothing to do.

Her first thought had been simply to call her car service and go to work, but then she decided to just take a day and get to know National City a bit. She’d been in town before, but she hadn’t had much time to find anything other than what Jesse had recommended, and despite the excitement of the last few weeks, she felt up for a bit of an adventure.

She walked out of the front door of the Solarium towards the car, feeling the telltale shiver as she passed through the force field that surrounded the building, which reminded her, again, that Kara had been frustratingly vague on how exactly the field worked. Her driver opened the door and she slid into the car, frowning slightly as she noticed it was a different model than the one she normally rode in, and wondering if it was because it was the weekend.
The driver, also not her usual, circled the car quickly and climbed into the driver’s seat.

“Where to, ma’am?” he asked.

“Café Sunflower,” she said, giving the name of a restaurant she’d found on a vegetarian foodie blog she’d been following since arriving in town.

“Yes ma’am,” the driver said, and they pulled away from the Solarium and headed towards town.

Lena reached into her purse and took out her phone and started searching for something to do after lunch. She looked up five minutes later when the car pulled to a stop. Before she could react at all, the rear driver’s side door opened, and Lillian slid into the car next to her.

“Hello, Lena,” Lillian said.

“Really?” Lena asked, more than a little disbelief in her voice. “In broad daylight?”

“You sound surprised,” Lillian said as the car started moving again.

“Not really,” Lena said. “I’m just surprised it took you this long to resort to murder.”

“Oh, don’t be so dramatic,” Lillian said. “I just want to talk. If I wanted to murder you, I’d hire a professional. Only the best for my daughter.”

“I was talking about the people you killed at CatCo last week. Or are you so busy trying to wipe out innocent people that you’ve already forgotten the ones you actually managed to kill?”

“Collateral damage. A pity they didn’t get the real target. There might be a lot less pro-alien propaganda on the airwaves.”

Lena looked down at her phone, hitting the home button, and paging through her apps. “I know you have a rather tenuous relationship with the entire concept of truth, mother, but when someone reports facts, it’s not called propaganda.” Lena touched the screen, opening the app she’d been searching for, watching as it brought up a huge red button on her screen.

“Come now, we both know facts aren’t nearly so important as the spin put on them,” Lillian said.

Lena looked up at Lillian. “Please tell me you didn’t kill my regular driver to arrange this little chat.”

“Of course not,” Lillian said, sounding genuinely insulted. “Why kill someone when bribery is so much less messy? Fifty thousand dollars to the dispatcher and they called us instead of sending a car for you. Really, you must find a better service.”

“What do you want, mother?” Lena asked.

“I’d like to know what it is you’re doing with Kara Danvers,” Lillian asked.

“I don’t know what you mean,” Lena said.

“Oh, come now. I’m not an idiot, Lena. You fly all the way to National City to keep her from buying LuthorCorp out from under you, but after one meeting, suddenly the buyout has your full support. You’re in business with her, you moved into her building this morning.” Lillian gave her a sour look. “I know you get ideas in your head sometimes, like with that Arias woman, but Kara Danvers is not who you think she is.”

“Mother, I know exactly who Kara Danvers is, and so far, I find her company infinitely preferable to
“Did you know she’s sleeping with Cat Grant?” Lillian asked.

Lena laughed. “You seriously think I did all of this to get in a pretty girl’s pants? Really? Besides, didn’t you send your assassins because you thought Supergirl was sleeping with Cat?”

“Oh, Lena, my poor, naïve child. Kara Danvers *is* Supergirl,” Lillian said.

The only thing that kept Lena flinching at that declaration was years of experience hiding her thoughts and emotions from Lillian. This time, she decided to do it by throwing it back in Lillian’s face. She opened her mouth and laughed.

“Is that what you think?” Lena asked. “That Supergirl is Kara Danvers?” She shook her head. “Mother, you’ve been drinking too much of whatever Lex was drinking before his little mass homicide spree. I’ve been in the room with Supergirl *and* Kara. Kara’s definitely bankrolling Supergirl. There’s no doubt about that. But I sat across a table from Kara Danvers while Supergirl introduced me to her Aunt. The one with the stripe in her hair.”

“And tell me, Lena, where was her shape-shifting friend during this little get together?” Lillian asked.

Lena gave a small frown, as if she hadn’t considered that before.

“See,” Lillian said. “She’s lying to you. Using you, to get at everything our family has built. Trying to turn you against your own brother and mother.”

“Well, she won’t have to try very hard,” Lena said. “You’ve already done most of the work for her.”

Lillian let out a big, dramatic sigh. “You know, I had hoped you would be reasonable about this. I suppose I should have known that you would act like a spoiled child.”

“You still haven’t told me what *this* is,” Lena said.

“I wanted your help,” Lillian said. “Access to all that wonderful Kryptonian technology she’s going to start peddling.”

Lena shook her head. “You really expected me to what? Just walk you in the front door? Give you my username and password?”

“I expected you to be loyal to the family that took you in, or at least to your own species,” Lillian said. “But, if you have to do this the hard way, that can be arranged.”

“Mmm… I don’t think it can,” Lena said, then pressed the button on her phone’s screen. The car filled with a brilliant white light, and when it disappeared, Lena was sitting on the sofa in her new living room.

Lena let out an annoyed sigh. “I was really looking forward to lunch, too.”

She barely had time to say it before there was a pounding on her front door. She frowned as she stood up, wondering who was there. She walked over to the door and checked the security monitor to see Kara’s face staring into the camera.

She unlocked the door, and barely had it open before she was engulfed in a hug that damn near broke her back.

“Owww!”
“Sorry,” Kara said, letting her go, and stepping back, still holding her by the shoulders. “Are you okay? What happened? Are you hurt? Do you need medical attention? Where’s your attendant?”

Lena opened her mouth to respond, but it was just about that moment she noticed what Kara was wearing, or more precisely, what she wasn’t wearing. Kara was standing in front of her in a pair of low cut boy shorts and a paint-streaked white tank top that was so thin Lena could practically see through it, and whatever she was going to say was lost as she swallowed hard.

“Lena? What’s wrong?”

“Clothes,” she managed to sputter as all of her blood rushed to the last place she wanted it going right at that moment.

“What?” Kara asked, a little confused.

Lena looked down, and Kara followed her gaze.

“Oh!” she said, letting go of Lena and slapping the cuff on her right wrist with her left hand. A few seconds later, she was wearing one of her Supergirl outfits. A long-sleeved blue body suit with red knee boots, but no cape. “Sorry,” she said, blushing the most adorable shade of red. “I was painting when the alarm sounded.”


“Yeah,” Kara said, looking her over again. “Are you okay?”

“I saw my mother, which is never a good thing, but your panic button worked just like you said, so no harm done,” Lea said. “But I do have some bad news.”

“What?” Kara asked.

“She knows you’re Supergirl,” Lena said. “I tried to throw her off. I told her I’d seen Kara Danvers and Supergirl in the same room, but now she just thinks you got your shape-shifting friend to play a trick on me.”

“Oh,” Kara said. “That isn’t really a surprise.”

“It’s not?” Lena asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Cadmus was a government project researching aliens, and Sam Lane was in charge of army intelligence. Both of them had access to the full National Security Briefing on me.”

“Oh. I hadn’t thought of that,” Lena said.

“Thank you, though,” Kara said. “For trying to protect my identity. I appreciate it.”

“It was nothing,” Lena said.

“Where did you run into her?” Kara asked.

“She bribed the car service. When I called for a car to take me to lunch, they called her instead, so one of her… henchmen picked me up.” Lena said. “And how weird is it that my mother actually has henchmen?”

Kara sighed. “Damn,” she said. “Cat uses that same service.”
“Might be time for a change,” Lena said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Maybe an attendant’s brain wired into a car.” She chewed on her lip for a moment before she looked at Lena again.

“Where were you going, anyway?”

“Lunch,” Lena said. “There’s this restaurant called Café Sunflower I wanted to try.”

“I love that place!” Kara said. “Give me a few minutes to go clean up, and I’ll take you.”

“You have a car?” Lena asked.

“No,” Kara said, “but I do have a motorcycle.” She turned and looked deeper into the apartment. “Attendant.”

The robot Kara had given her came floating into few. “Yes, Lady Kara?”

“Lena will need some new clothes. Pattern MC-004, in the traditional black. Pattern TS-002 in white. Pattern BB-006 in black. Add appropriate accessories and a bike helmet,” Kara said. She turned back to Lena. “Get changed. I’ll be right back.”

Kara knew she’d made a tactical error the moment Lena opened the door. It wasn’t that she hadn’t been aware of the fact that Lena was a beautiful woman, that was something she’d known since the first time she’d met her almost a decade and a half earlier. It was that she wasn’t quite prepared for the sight of Lena in a motorcycle jacket, leather pants, biker boots and a white t-shirt, and for a moment, her brain shorted out, because she was very, very gay.

“Wow!” Kara said. “I knew you’d look good in that, because you look good in anything, but you look really, really good in that.”

Okay, she needed to calm down. She could do this. She could. If she spent years on the Waverider with Harley prancing around in painted-on leather pants… and that wasn’t helping because that had ended with Harley in bed with her and Sara more than once, and the way Lena was blushing was *not* helping.

“Thank you,” Lena said. “You don’t look so bad yourself.”

She had this. She did. She could totally manage to keep herself in check. After all, she’d managed to carry a wet, naked, wiggling Lucy Lane half way to Hawaii and back when she was very drunk and could smell how horny the other woman was, and aside from a few sloppy kisses and a little mutual groping, she’s been a perfect gentleman.

Yeah, this was not going to end well.

“Come on,” Kara said. “Let’s get you some food.”

“Any luck tracking down Lillian?” Alex asked.

“No,” Susan said. “Bitch has our satellite schedule down. The car disappears into an area with no traffic cams five minutes before a gap in the satellite coverage. When the gap closes fifteen minutes later, the car is abandoned and on fire in a culvert.”

“Fuck,” Alex said. “Any chance of tracking the cars that exited the traffic cam dead zone?”
“There aren’t any,” Susan said. “The area’s down by the docks, and the only thing I’ve got on camera leaving the area during that time is a bunch of trucks hauling shipping containers.”

“So, Lillian either went out on the water, or in a container,” Alex said.

“Or she took one of the back roads that doesn’t have any camera coverage,” Susan said.

“Keep trying,” Alex said. “I’m going to talk to Nimda and see if we can get any better surveillance options.”

The ride to Café Sunflower was torture. It wasn’t that Kara didn’t understand what was going on. Lena was ridiculously attractive, and Kara knew herself well enough to know that her typical response to emotional distress was a greater need for physical comfort and affection. The thing was, a few drunken gropes with Lucy, who knew exactly what was going on and who was in a very similar spot herself, wasn’t going to destroy a friendship. Kara knew Lucy was perfectly capable of processing ‘casual’, because Kara remembered Lucy having a couple of casual relationships after James in the other timeline. She knew that Lucy and Vasquez had slept together a hand full of times before Cameron had transferred in from the FBI in the wake of Cadmus, and she’d had a thing with Winn right up until Indigo had killed him.

Pinning Lena against the nearest wall and making her beg would send entirely the wrong message though. Lena didn’t do casual any more than Kara did. Less than Kara did, in fact, because Kara had tried casual. She’d just caught a bad case of feelings, and it had turned into a six-plus year relationship that ended in broken hearts and universes between them.

Right. She could do this.

“Come on,” Kara said, her mouth going a little dry as she watched Lena climb off the bike.

“Lead the way,” Lena said, smiling just a little.

Kara returned the smile as she led them into the restaurant, which was almost as much of a punch in the gut as Lena’s outfit, but for an entirely different reason. Lena had loved Café Sunflower, and they’d had lunch there almost every week. Kara hadn’t been able to set foot in the place after Lena had died. Walking back in there with Lena was unsettling. Unsettling she was better at hiding though, so she just smiled at the hostess.

“Two, please,” she said.

“Right this way,” the hostess said, leading them in to the restaurant.

“How about that booth over there?” Kara asked, pointing at what had been Lena’s favorite place to sit.

“Sure,” the hostess said, showing them to the table and setting down menus. “Or special today is a Portobello Parmigiana sub, served with a side of Spaghetti Bolognese and garlic bread.”

“Ooo… That sounds good,” Kara said. “Can we have a minute to look at the menu, though?”

“Of course,” she said. “Jennifer will be your server today. She’ll be right over.”

Kara turned back to Lena. “The Bolognese sauce is made with textured vegetable protein,” she said. “It’s really good. Everything on the menu here is vegetarian, and they have good selection of non-
dairy cheeses if you want to go vegan.”

Lena smiled. “How did you know I’m a vegetarian?” she asked.

Kara grinned. “A girl has to have some secrets,” she said.

“Really,” Lena said.

“You should try the Eggplant Lasagna,” Kara said. “Just avoid the carrot soup.”

Lena gave her a questioning look, but Kara dodged by looking down at her menu and pretending not to notice, because there was no way she could explain away that particular incident, largely because in the other timeline Lena never explained to her why she’d ended up on the receiving end of a spit take the one time Lena had tried the soup.

They sat in silence for a few minutes before Jennifer arrived at their table. “Hey, ladies. My name is Jennifer. I’ll be your server today. Are ready to order?”

Kara looked up at Lena who gave her a small nod.

“I’ll start with two orders of potstickers and an order of the stuffed mushrooms, then have the grilled portobello Caesar and the special,” Kara said.

“Our salads are dinner salads, ma’am,” Jennifer said.

“I know,” Kara said. “Big appetite.”

“Okay,” Jennifer said, turning to Lena. “And for you, ma’am?”

“The artichoke and spinach dip to start, and the Eggplant Lasagna for the entrée.”

“Anything to drink?”

“Grape soda,” Kara said.

“Sparkling water,” Lena said.

“Okay, I’ll get this in right away. Did you want the salad to come out with your appetizers, ma’am?”

“Yes, please,” Kara said.

“I’m surprised,” Lena said once the waitress was gone. “After the way you ate during the meeting, I didn’t think you knew what a vegetable was.”

Kara shrugged, and felt her face heat just a bit. “I had a friend once who used to drag me all over the place trying to find healthy food I would actually eat,” she said. “She tried her best, but it didn’t stick. I was a junk food addict, even before I came here.”

“Really?” Lena asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Some time I’ll take you down to /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ and you can try Kryptonian food. You’ll see where my passion for dim sum comes from.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Lena said. “If we can avoid potential kidnappers, anyway.”

“Did your mother happen to tell you what she was after?” Kara said.
“Access to the Kryptonian tech archive,” Lena said.

Kara shook her head. “Why is it people hate us, but want our stuff?”

“People are greedy,” Lena said. “My mother more than most.”

“You know, let’s change the topic,” Kara said. “Tell me something about you.”

“What do you want to know?”

“When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?”

“Oh, no…” Lena said. “That’s way too embarrassing.”

“I’ll tell you mine, if you tell me yours,” Kara said.

Lena narrowed her eyes a little. “You first,” she said.

“So untrusting,” Kara said. “But fine. I wanted to be a dragon trainer.”

“A dragon trainer?” Lena asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “It’s not as silly as it sounds. There’s this game called Garata. It’s kind of like soccer, or maybe polo, but the players ride dragons.”

“Like, real dragons?”

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“That breathe fire?” Lena asked.

“It’s more like aerosolized napalm,” Kara said.

“That’s worse,” Lena said.

“Your turn,” Kara said.

“Well, now my desire to be an astronaut doesn’t seem so silly,” Lena said.

James sat at the light table laying out the photos he’d taken, quietly shaking with rage. By the time the DEO had finished, they’d freed almost fifty aliens from cells. It was clear, from what he could see in the pictures, that there had been more, and that they would never know for certain what had happened to them, but James thought he had a pretty good idea.

He wished he didn’t.

This was something he wished he didn’t understand, but you didn’t grow up a black man in America without understanding it a little too well. Blind hatred for what was different. Fear, disgust, loathing. The assumption of evil, based on nothing more than appearance.

Bigotry, in its ugliest, most basic form. The impulse to lash out and destroy that which was other.

Murder, done under the color of authority. The Planetary Action Hygiene Network might be the hand that was doing it, but there was no doubt Cadmus had given the order, and there was no doubt the place they raided had been in operation longer than a couple of weeks, which meant, on some level, the government was behind it.
He understood, as soon as he saw the cages, why J’onn had stepped outside. Understood why J’onn had wanted him to take the pictures. People needed to see, needed to understand. This would never stop happening unless people learned what was being done in their name and were made to understand the cost.

He wondered, sometimes, if even that would be enough.

“These are good, James,” Cat said.

He jumped slightly, surprised by the sound of a voice. He looked up to see Cat staring down at one of the already finished layouts.

“Thanks,” he said.

“You know, I’ve been thinking a lot about our heroes lately,” Cat said. “Yours and mine.”

“I wouldn’t call Clark mine,” James said.

“Well, Lois’s and mine, then,” Cat said, an unapologetic smirk on her face. “You know the difference between them? Why I would rather have Supergirl here than Superman?”

James sat back, looking at Cat. “I don’t,” he said. “I mean, I get that you and Kara are friends, but you were never that impressed with Superman to begin with.”

“There are a lot of reasons for that. Small, selfish ones. But our girl… She’s something different. Clark shows up to scenes like this, breaks open cages, tends the wounded, rushes people to hospitals. That’s good. The world needs people to do those things. But it’s a reaction. Clark is always waiting for something to happen. When it does, he’s there to help, to make it easier, to make it hurt less, but he’s treating the symptoms, not the disease.

“That’s what makes Kara different,” Cat said. “She’s trying to stop things like this before they happen. She’s trying to change the world by changing the people in it.”

Cat looked up at him as she sat the layout down. “There are a lot of ways to be a hero, James.” She nodded to the crate in the corner. “Clark’s way,” she tapped her finger on the layout she’d just sat down, “or Kara’s way.”

She turned away and started for the door, calling out over her shoulder, “Time to decide which one you want to be.”

J’onn walked through the Medical Halls in the City of Hope, taking it all in as he approached the area where the victims from the PHAN raid were being treated. It was different than he expected. From what he’d seen at Sanctuary, he’d expected lots of bright white and soft gray. Instead, there were a lot of earth tones, like the whole building was sculpted from red, brown and tan clays. It lent the whole place a soft, homey feel, much like some of his favorite places on Mars.

He wasn’t sure if that was intentional, or if Kara simply found the color palette as comforting as he did. Maybe he should ask. As much as he knew about Kara, and as much as he was growing to like her, there was still a gap between them. One he found himself wanting to close.

He stopped dead when he saw her. The White Martian. The one Kara trusted. The one she claimed was different.

Every instinct in him told him to attack. To kill her.
“Easy, friend,” she said, speaking softly to an older man, a Korugarian who looked to be well into old age. One of the victims of the PHAN operation. She had one hand on the small of his back, and another cradling his arm as she helped him down the hall.

“Thank you, child,” the Korugarian said. “It’s good to see you again.”

“And you,” M’gann said. “I’ve missed hearing about your grandchildren.”

The Korugarian laughed. “You humor an old man.”

“I’ve told you a time or two, friend, you’re younger than I am by centuries,” M’gann said.

“I know, but you have such a young and beautiful face,” the Korugarian said.

“You flatter me, and it will get you nowhere. I’ve told you before, I don’t date younger men.” Her tone was light and teasing, and the Korugarian smiled.

“You’ll forgive me for trying,” he said. “A man likes to remember what the attentions of a beautiful woman are like.”

“Of course,” M’gann said. “Though I doubt your wife would be as understanding.”

“My wife?” he asked. “She’s alive?”

“And well,” M’gann said. “We found her just a few minutes after you were taken. She has a scar, but the bullet just grazed her. I sent a friend to let her know you’re here just as soon as I saw the list of prisoners.”

“Thank you!” the Korugarian cries, turning and hugging M’gann. “Thank you so much! J’onn turned away, unable to watch, unable to understand what he’d just seen. Kindness and mercy from a White.

Kara had told him, but despite everything else, he’d never quite believed.

Kara smiled as she climbed into the elevator and headed up to her apartment. Lunch with Lena had proven every bit as much fun as she remembered. Maybe even more so, when there wasn’t so much of herself she had to hide, and somewhere between the description of Lena’s homemade space suit, which had for some reason included a tutu, and the argument over what was the best Backstreet Boys song ever, which was obviously I Want It That Way and not Don’t Go Breaking My Heart, Kara’s hormones had settled down and she’d been able to just enjoy herself.

She wondered if, maybe, she could try the casual thing again. She’d stayed away from Lucy because of James, but if Lucy and James weren’t going to be a thing in this universe, it might be worth a try. Lucy was fun, and beautiful, and smart, and funny, and was into piercings so maybe a tongue stud because she’d really, really enjoyed those.

She stopped herself, because she knew she was lying to herself. Lucy wasn’t any better an option than Lena. She might have been closer to Lena in the old timeline, but a lot of that was that as good friends as she and Lucy had eventually become, James always hung between them. That wasn’t an issue in this world, and if Kara started something with Lucy, she’d catch feelings, the same way she did with Sara.

She’d never, once in her life, ever been able to love someone just a little. She wasn’t wired that way.
When she loved someone, she was all in. Which meant that Lucy would quickly turn into the same problem as Cat. Someone she cared about too much to survive losing.

And she would lose them. Cat, Lena, Lucy… Anyone she loved. She’d either lose them when they realized what being with her would mean, or she’d lose them to time, circumstance, and fate.

It was funny, really. During the war, of all the things she was called on all the worlds, the one name that stuck with her, the one everyone seemed to know, had been ‘The Survivor’. Darkseid himself had given her the name, mockingly. But there were some things she knew she wouldn’t survive. Not because there was any physical danger, but simply because she would choose not to.

When it came to grief, even she had her limits.

Eliza sat on the couch, trying her best to read the book she’d been looking forward to all week, but thoroughly distracted by the way Jeremiah was pacing around the room and waiting for the moment she was sure was coming.

“Why do I have to stay here?” Jeremiah asked.

Eliza closed her book and looked up at him. “We’ve been through this, Jeremiah. First, legally, you’re still dead. Second, in the last two and a half weeks, people have tried to kill five members of this family.”

Jeremiah looked mulish, like he wanted to argue about whether or not Maggie, Cat, Carter and James counted as family.

Eliza sat the book down on the end table. “She’s trying to protect you,” she said.

“She can’t even stand to be in the same room with me,” he shot back.

“Because she feels guilty!” Eliza said. “She feels like she let you down. Like it’s her fault, what they did to you in that other timeline.”

“God, this is ridiculous,” Jeremiah said. “Someone puts a magic lasso around her, and everyone just accepts that she’s actually from the future.”

“You think she’s lying?” Eliza asked.

“How the hell would I know?” Jeremiah shouted.

Eliza shook her head and walked over to the end table where her purse sat and fished out her phone.

“What are you doing?” Jeremiah asked.

“I’m proving to you that she’s telling the truth,” she said, as she hit the call button. She lifted the phone to her ear, and a voice answered in a soft, musical accent.

“Hello, Eliza,” Diana said.

“Do you have some free time right now?” Eliza asked.

“Of course,” Diana said. “What can I do for you?”

“I need you to demonstrate the lasso to Jeremiah,” Eliza said. “We showed him the recording of Kara from that night, but he’s still got doubts.”
“Give me a moment to change,” Diana said. “Shall I transmat directly to your location?”

“Please,” Eliza said.

“See you in a moment,” Diana said, and ended the call. Eliza dropped her phone into her purse.

“You have Wonder Woman on speed dial?” Jeremiah asked, more than a little shocked.

Eliza shrugged and crossed her arms. Less than a minute later, there was a flash in the foyer.

“Eliza, may I enter?” Diana asked.

“Of course. Come in,” Eliza said.

Diana walked in and crossed the living room, going straight to Eliza and wrapping her in a hug. “How are you?” she asked. She stepped back. “Still so beautiful. It’s easy to see where Alex gets it.”

Eliza smiled and rolled her eyes. She turned slightly. “This is Jeremiah,” she said.

Diana turned to him, still smiling. “A pleasure,” she said. “You must be so proud. Your daughters are both amazing women. Fierce, strong, and best of all, kind and noble of heart. I would be proud to call either of them sister.”

“Uh… Thank you,” Jeremiah stammered.

“Now, a test,” Diana said. “To prove the power of the Golden Perfect. Hold out your arm.”

Jeremiah cautiously raised his arm, and Diana wrapped the rope carefully around his arm, tight enough to activate the magic, but loosely enough to be comfortable.

“We will start with a simple test, and if you require more proof, we will move on to more complicated things,” Diana said. “I will ask you your name. You will try to say Athena.”

“Okay,” Jeremiah said.

“What is your name,” Diana asked, holding the rope loosely in her hand.

“Jeremiah Ezekiel Danvers,” he said.

“See,” Diana said. “The Golden Perfect compels the truth in all cases. Do you still desire more proof?”

“Yes,” Jeremiah said.

“Why do you doubt Kara’s tale?” Diana asked.

“Because I don’t want it to be true,” Jeremiah said. “Because I don’t want any of this to be true. Because if all this is true, I missed seeing my baby girl grow up, and my wife looks at me like I’m a stranger and all because of a girl I didn’t even want to adopt.”

“Enough!” Eliza said. She stepped forward to untie the lasso, but Diana beat her to it, giving a gentle pull that made the rope unwrap itself from Jeremiah’s arm and coil into a loop around Diana’s hand. She hung it on her belt.

“I’m sorry,” Diana said, though Eliza noted the apology was only directed towards her. “The Golden Perfect compels the truth, and sometimes, that is an ugly thing. I will leave you to tend your family
matters in private.”

She turned to Jeremiah. “I hope the truth will bring peace and make you a better person.”

She turned and headed out into the foyer, and a moment later, there was a flash of light, and she was gone, leaving only the truth in her wake.

“Hey, sweetie,” Eliza said as she sat down on the deck chair next to Kara.

Kara looked up at Eliza and smiled contentedly as she woke up. They were on the thirtieth floor of the Solarium, next to the massive swimming pool, and Kara had been napping in the sunlight the overhead holographic generators were projecting down onto her. It wasn’t quite as good as the real thing, but it was on par with the sunbed at the DEO.

“Hey,” she said in a sleepy voice. “What time is it?”

“About five,” Eliza said. “How are you doing?”

“Better,” Kara said. “Taking a few days isn’t a cure all, but it definitely made me feel better.”

“You should do it more often,” Eliza said.

“I used to,” Kara said. “During the war. It was easier. We had a time machine, so when we needed to get away for a bit, we could just pick a universe and pop back in time to before the war and take a few days. Sometimes a few weeks.”

“That’s a relief,” Eliza said. “I worried about what it must have been like, fighting so much.”

“Hard,” Kara said. “Even with the time machine, we always felt a little guilty about taking time away from it.”

“I’m sorry,” Eliza said, reaching out and taking Kara’s hand in hers. “Sweetie, I need to ask you something.”

“Anything,” Kara said, sitting up.

“Do you think Jeremiah would be safe back at the house in Midvale?” Eliza asked.

“Maybe,” Kara said. “I could have the defenses upgraded. I already installed shields and a few defense turrets, but I could add a squad of drones.”

“You installed weapons at the house?” Eliza asked.

Kara shrugged. “I figured it was easier to beg forgiveness than ask permission.”

Eliza smiled and shook her head. “I heard you pulled that same stunt with Maggie’s clothes.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I should have done everyone’s. If I had, James wouldn’t have gotten hurt.”

“That wasn’t your fault,” Eliza said.

“It feels like it,” Kara said. “Like I should have done more. Like I didn’t protect him.”

“Kara, you couldn’t have predicted this,” Eliza said. “Your knowledge of the future isn’t a lot of use at this point because of how far the timeline has deviated. You’re flying blind again, just like the rest
“I know,” Kara said. “And I hate it.”

“It’s life,” Eliza said. “You’ll get used to it again.”

“Why do you want to go back to Midvale?” Kara asked. “I thought you wanted to stay here and help out.”

“Not me,” Eliza said. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“Oh,” Kara said, as everything clicked. “Jeremiah didn’t take it well, did he?”

“He’s just having some trouble adjusting,” Eliza said. “Ten years is a long time.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara said. “I couldn’t find him where he was supposed to be, and it’s the only way I could think to rescue him.”

“Kara, you worked a miracle,” Eliza said. “You gave Alex her father back, and that’s amazing. That’s something no one else could accomplish.”

“I wanted to give you your husband back, too,” Kara said.

“Sweetie, even if he’d come through the long way around, he was gone ten years,” Eliza said. “You and Alex have been out of the house for eight of those, and I’m only fifty-one. Did you think I was living like a nun this whole time?”

“Um,” Kara sputtered, which made Eliza laugh softly and shake her head.

“I never brought it up because there was never anyone serious, and I knew Alex would have a hard time with it,” Eliza said. “I put Jeremiah in the guest room the night we brought him home, and that’s where he stayed.”

“And now he wants to go back to Midvale,” Kara said.

“I think it’s for the best,” Eliza said. “I don’t know what we would tell people, but I think we might need to figure something out. Maybe it would help him adjust if he was in familiar surroundings. I don’t know.”

“I can probably work it out,” Kara said, “but it would be better if he could wait until we dealt with Cadmus.”

“I know,” Eliza said, “but I’m not sure he’ll be willing to wait that long.”

“If it would make the two of you more comfortable, I could give him his own apartment,” Kara said.

“That would help,” Eliza said. “Having something to work on would help, too. At least for me. I want to be here for you girls, but I’m feeling a little useless.”

“You know, there *is* something you could do for me,” Kara said.

“What’s that?” Eliza asked.

“Do you think you could isolate the genes that make Kryptonians susceptible to the various forms of Kryptonite radiation?” Kara asked.
“I could try,” Eliza said.

“I’ll have Nimda forward you all the data we have, and if you need any blood or tissue samples, just ask,” Kara said.

“Okay,” Eliza said. “I’ll get on it.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “I’ll see if I can find something for Jeremiah to do too.”

Eliza gave Kara’s hand a squeeze as she leaned down and kissed Kara on the forehead. “Thank you.”

Eliza walked over to the door, and a smile spread across her face when she looked at the monitor and saw J’onn standing there, looking up at the camera. She opened the door.

“Hello,” she said.

“Hey, Eliza,” J’onn said. “I’m sorry it took so long, but with everything that happened this week, I couldn’t get away from the DEO until now. I left early tonight so I could come by and have that talk with Jeremiah.”

“Oh,” Eliza said. “I’m sorry. I should have… You know, I’m being rude. Please, come inside.” She stepped back, making way for J’onn to come in.

“You’re fine,” J’onn said. “Where’s Jeremiah?”

“He’s not here,” Eliza said.

“He’s not?”

“Please,” Eliza said, gesturing to one of the couches. “Have a seat.”

J’onn sat down, and Eliza took a seat on the other couch. “Jeremiah went to see Kara the night of the earthquake.”

“I’m guessing it didn’t go well?” J’onn said.

“No,” Eliza said. “After everything that had happened, the shooting at CatCo and the break out at the desert facility, Kara just couldn’t deal with it. She gave him the video of the debrief at Sanctuary. He didn’t take it well. He didn’t believe it was true. I called Diana to have her demonstrate the Lasso, and he said some things under its influence that I can’t forgive. Kara moved him into another apartment for now.”

“I’m sorry,” J’onn said. “Maybe if I’d had a chance to talk to him…”

Eliza shook her head. “I don’t think it would have changed anything,” she said. “He never wanted to take Kara in, and now he blames her for losing ten years.”

“If anyone is to blame, it’s me,” J’onn said. “I left him there.”

“No,” Eliza said. “You made a mistake, but that doesn’t make this your fault. You were hurt, scared. You thought you were leaving a body behind. The only one to blame for what happened in that jungle is Hank Henshaw.”

“Still,” J’onn said. “I feel like my mistake cost you your marriage.”
Eliza shook her head. “He was gone for ten years, J’onn. Even if Kara hadn’t plucked him out of time, the idea of he and I getting back together was always more wishful thinking than anything. It’s been ten years, and I haven’t exactly been living like a nun.”

“Oh,” J’onn said. “I didn’t realize you were with someone.”

“I’m not anymore,” Eliza said. “The person I was seeing took a job in Metropolis about a year ago.”

“Ah,” J’onn said, and Eliza could tell he knew exactly who she was talking about.

“Have you been keeping tabs on me?” Eliza asked.

“From a distance,” J’onn said. “I didn’t think you’d want to see Hank Henshaw’s face.”

“Well, you’re right about that. I guess you can see why I wasn’t surprised to find out who Alex was dating.”

J’onn shook his head. “I could have wished for someone who was a bit more of a calming influence,” he said.

“The scary part is, growing up, Alex *was* the calming influence. You should have seen Kara,” Eliza said.

“I did,” J’onn said. “You have no idea how many times I had to cover for her.”

“Well,” Eliza said, “however many it was, I appreciate every one of them. And I’m sure, now that she’s older and wiser, Kara does too.”

“I doubt it,” J’onn said. “Martians don’t get ulcers, but I think she’s trying to see if she can make me the first.”

Eliza laughed. “You have my sympathies. I’m pretty sure that I was single-handedly keeping Tums in business the five years between Kara landing and her leaving for college. After everything I heard the other night, I’m thinking I should buy stock.”

“That might be a good idea,” J’onn said.

“You know, I was just about to have my attendant Jamie start dinner,” Eliza said. “Would you like to stay?”

“I wouldn’t want to be any trouble,” J’onn said.

“No trouble,” Eliza said. “I could honestly do with some company.”

“Well, in that case, I’d love to,” J’onn said.

______________________________________________

“James?” Kara asked.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex said. “He just entered the building and asked the drone in the lobby for your location.”

“Send him to my apartment,” Kara said. She picked up her phone and her towel and stood up.
“Transmat me up there.”

There was a breath flash, and Kara was standing in her living room. She used a burst of super speed
to get dressed, before headed to the foyer, where she waited until she heard a knock. She opened the door to find James standing there.

“Hey,” she said.

“Hey,” he said.

“I didn’t expect to see you today,” Kara said.

“I honestly didn’t expect to be here,” he said. “Can I come in?”

“Oh! Sure,” Kara said, nodding and stepping back.

James bent down and picked up a crate she hadn’t noticed and carried it inside. Kara closed the door and followed him into the apartment. He sat the crate down next to the sofa and took a seat. Kara sat down next to him. He looked over at her, and Kara felt herself getting a little worried, because he wasn’t acting much like the James she knew.

“I should start by apologizing,” he said. “You came to check on me, and I shut you out.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said.

“No,” James said. “It’s not. I acted like what happened was your fault, but it wasn’t.”

“It was, in a way,” Kara said. “I mean, I replaced all of Maggie, Susan and Alex’s clothes with barrier fabric. If I’d done yours too, you wouldn’t have gotten hurt.”

“Or I might have gotten hurt worse,” James said. “When the bullets bounced off my clothes, they might have shot me in the head.”

“James.”

“You saved my life, Kara,” James said. “If you hadn’t been there, I would have died before the paramedics arrived. It took me some time to get that through my head, but it’s true. Which leads me to something else that took a long time to get through my head.”

James turned and picked up the crate and passed it over to Kara. She didn’t need to open it, because she’d recognized it the moment she’d seen it.

“Your Guardian suit?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” James said. “I had a talk with Cat, today. It put a few things in perspective. I want to help people. I want to be someone who matters. For the longest time, I thought that meant being like Clark. Going out and punching the bad guys, being the man on the scene. But you’ve done more with interviews and facebook posts and press events in a few weeks than Clark has managed in fourteen years. Clark’s saved a lot of lives, but you, you’ve changed lives for the better. That’s what I want to do. And Cat reminded me that I can do that better with a camera than with a shield. So, I’m giving this back, because I don’t need it anymore. But thank you, for letting me make that choice for myself.”

Kara took the crate and sat it on the ground, then turned back to James and held out her arms, “Come here, you,” she said, pulling him into a hug.
stabbed him, cost him a decade of time with his daughter. He wasn’t much happier with J’onn, who’d just left him in the jungle. He debated just not answering the door, but he wasn’t sure if that would cause some sort of trouble. Not that he could imagine any way his situation could get much worse, really. His wife had kicked him out, his daughter didn’t have time for him, and then there was Kara. He wasn’t sure how he felt about her, other than angry at what she’d cost him with her refusal to obey simple rules.

He opened the door, not because he wanted to, but because he didn’t feel like he had much of a choice.

“Hello, J’onn,” he said.

“Jeremiah,” J’onn said. “Mind if I come in?”

Jeremiah stepped back and waved him in, watching as he walked into the apartment like he owned the place. Jeremiah shut the door and turned to face J’onn.

“What can I do for you?” he asked.

“I’m actually here to see if I can do anything for you,” J’onn said.

“No,” Jeremiah said. “I have one of those robots to get me anything I want.”

“The attendants are useful,” J’onn said, “but that’s not really what I meant. Eliza said you were having a hard time adjusting.”

“Oh, is that what she said?” Jeremiah asked. “That’s kind of an understatement.”

“I know it must be difficult,” J’onn said. “Ten years is a long time to be gone.”

“Yeah,” Jeremiah said. “Everyone keeps saying that. It’s too bad they couldn’t figure that out before all this happened and just leave me where I was.”

“You’re angry,” J’onn said.

“You think?” Jeremiah asked.

“Look, Jeremiah, I get it,” J’onn said. “You lost a lot of time. Lost the chance to see your daughters grow up. That’s a hard thing, but you saw the video. Kara was trying to help. If she’d left you there, it wouldn’t have ended well for you.”

“Yeah, because it would have been so much harder to patch me up, then put me back, instead of patching me up, then bringing me to the future,” Jeremiah said.

“We had to preserve the timeline,” J’onn said. “With everything that’s coming-”

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“You know what,” Jeremiah said, “just stop. It’s done, and according to everyone, it can’t be fixed, and I’d really like it if people stopped offering me empty platitudes.”

J’onn looked like he wanted to argue, but he seemed to have the good sense to shut up.

“Would you like to come back to work?” J’onn asked.

“Back to the DEO?” Jeremiah asked.

“For now,” J’onn said. “I know it’s not ideal, but Eliza said you were always involved in your work.
I thought maybe having something to do with your time might help make the adjustment easier.”

“You seem to be talking to Eliza a lot,” Jeremiah said.

“We had dinner tonight,” J’onn said.

“You had dinner with my wife?” Jeremiah asked.

“Yes,” J’onn said. “I stopped by to talk to you and she told me what happened, and we ate while we were talking.”

“I think you should leave,” Jeremiah said.

J’onn gave him a confused look. “Did I say something wrong?”

Jeremiah turned around and opened the door. “Why don’t you ask my wife?” he said.

He saw understanding dawn on J’onn’s face. “Jeremiah, it’s not what you’re thinking.”

“Leave,” he said.

J’onn stared at him for a moment, then walked out the door without another word.

“You know you could use the elevator,” Cat said as Kara touched down on the balcony outside Cat’s apartment.

“I could,” Kara said, “but why mess with what works?”

Cat smiled and patted the sofa next to her. “I suppose I can’t argue with that.”

“Oh, I’m sure you could,” Kara said as she sat down next to Cat, “but thank you for letting me have this round.”

Cat took Kara’s hand in her own, lacing their fingers together. “Been enjoying your time off?”

“So far,” Kara said.

“Do anything exciting?” Cat asked.

Kara shrugged. “The usual post breakup things. Got drunk. Got a tattoo. Violated the sovereign air space of Japan so I could get some good Ramen.”

“You got a tattoo?” Cat asked.

Kara shrugged. “Lucy might be a bad influence,” she said.

“Well, she is a Lane.”

“You liked her a lot in the other timeline,” Kara said. She frowned for a moment. “You know, I think she actually had a bit of a crush on you.”

“Now you’re just trying to flatter me,” Cat said.

“If I were trying to flatter you, I’d tell you how much better my life is when you’re in it,” Kara said.

“Of course,” Cat said. “I make everything better, but was there something in particular that brought
“James came to see me tonight,” she said. “He gave back the Guardian suit.”

“That’s good,” Cat said.

“I thought so,” Kara said.

“Why did you give him the suit in the first place?” Cat asked. “You clearly hated the idea of him being Guardian.”

“People should make their own choices,” Kara said. “You can give them information. Point them in the right direction. Help them along when they need it. But taking away someone’s agency is cruel.”

Cat looked over at Kara, studying her as she stared out at the National City skyline. She could see the pain written on Kara’s face, and she lifted Kara’s hand into her lap, covering it with both of her own.

“So many people did that to me. My parents, Kal, Jeremiah and Eliza, J’onn, Alex, James. They did it because they loved me, because they wanted what was best for me, but they never asked what I wanted,” Kara said. “The suit was nothing to me. Spare parts and recycled junk. A few words to one of my attendants to have them run it off. But to him, it was the freedom to choose his own destiny.”

“Is that why you replaced all of Maggie’s clothes?” Cat asked.

“I’m never going to live that down, am I?” Kara asked.

“Probably not,” Cat said.

“It’s not the same,” Kara said. “You let Carter decide if he wants to ride a bike, but if he does, you make sure he wears a helmet, even if he complains about it. You let him make the decision, but you optimize the chances of a positive outcome. Replacing Maggie’s clothes didn’t interfere with her freedom of choice. She chose to be a cop. She chose to get involved with Supergirl. She chose to protect me. She chose to put her life at risk. I just made sure she wore a helmet.”

“How much of my and Carter’s wardrobes are bullet proof?” Cat asked.

“Let’s just say enough, and leave it at that,” Kara said.

“Okay,” Cat said.

“I made sure Adam’s wearing a helmet, too,” Kara said. “I know he’s not in the line of fire right now, but after what happened to James, I didn’t want to take any chances.”

Cat stared at her for a moment, and then she leaned over and pressed a kiss to Kara’s cheek.

“Thank you,” She said. “For protecting my children.”

“Always,” Kara said.

Chapter End Notes
ahmzehto
(Plural of ahmzeht): 1 Kryptonian Year. 180 Earth days

lorakh
A Kryptonian Day. 60 Earth days.

bythzehto
(Plural of bythzeht): 12 Earth Days

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope
Siobhan's Story on the alien kidnapping hits the Tribune.

National City Tribune, Sunday, December 13, 2015 Edition

Inhuman Trafficking

by Siobhan Smythe

This past Wednesday morning, a young couple began loading a uHaul. The young man, named Kaamron, born on a planet some nine-hundred light-years away, fled his home after an invasion by brutal mercenaries pillaging the world for resources. A story not so unfamiliar, even here on Earth. During the months-long trip, he met a young woman named Loovorn, and as young couples do, the two of them fell in love. They arrived on Earth, not their original destination, after the ship they’d fled on suffered an engine failure. Kaamron took work as a dishwasher in a local restaurant, while Loovorn went to work in a garage, souping up engines for local racers.

They were moving out of the run-down apartment they had been renting for years, paying in cash, because they had no bank accounts, no forms of legal ID, and until President Marsdin signed the Alien Amnesty act recently, no legal right to exist anywhere on this planet. With the stroke of a pen, President Marsdin improved their lives, and when they were accepted into the free housing program in Supergirl’s newly established City of Hope, the Girl of Steel gave them a dream of a better future.

They were excited for the possibilities their new life offered. Better paying jobs, a chance to live in the open. All of that came to an end when a white van pulled up to the curb next to the uHaul, and three men jumped out. The men attacked Kaamron before he had a chance to react, beating him severely, until a police officer intervened.

The assailants fled the scene, and the police officer made the decision to wait with the victim for medical assistance to arrive, and even though paramedics were on the scene in less than five minutes, Kaamron still nearly died due to the paramedics’ lack of training on anatomy and medical needs of the various aliens living among us. It wasn’t until DEO Agents Alex Danvers and Maggie Sawyer arrived on scene that the young alien received the medical help he so desperately needed and was quickly transported by Agent Danvers to the Kryptonian Medical Halls in the City of Hope.

That, sadly, is not where our story ends. It is not even where the story begins. The following day, there was a similar attack. This time, a young alien moving on their own. Once again, the police intervened, and this time when they called for medical help, they knew to report that the victim was an alien, and the Medical Halls dispatched Drones and an Attendant to help.

M’gann M’orzz, an alien whose tenure in our fair city predates the birth of most of our grandparents, was spotted speaking with Agent Sawyer at the scene, and in a later interview, she painted a far, far bleaker picture than the anti-alien hate crimes these appeared to be at first glance.

The first disappearance was a little over ten years ago. A young alien, barely past adolescence, not more than fifteen years old in human terms, simply vanished while out walking his dog one night. At
first, it didn’t raise many alarms. Aliens were used to their people disappearing. They were used to the black SUVs of the DEO arriving and taking their kind away. People assumed the boy had been taken by the DEO that night and waited for them to come looking for others.

The SUVs never arrived, but the disappearances continued. Silently, one by one, over the course of ten years, nearly two hundred and fifty aliens vanished into the dark. Never to be seen or heard from again.

Word spread in hushed whispers. Travel in packs. Don’t move alone. Check in at safe locations. Watch for strangers. Sightings happened. White panel vans became more feared even than the terrifying black SUVs. The aliens made themselves harder targets, but the disappearances never stopped. Not until the Amnesty Act. Not until they were free to move in the daytime.

When the Amnesty Act passed, almost in the same breath, Cadmus stepped out into the open. A former government project gone rogue, they tried to murder Supergirl in retaliation for bringing about the passage of the Amnesty Act, as well as getting their government support cut. A few days later, members of PHAN, the so-called Planetary Hygiene Action Network, a hate group founded by Lex Luthor, tried to attack Darla’s Bar, one of the aliens’ meeting places, with rocket-propelled grenades.

After Supergirl stopped the attack and promised to build them a new refuge, community leaders put the word out once again. Stay together, move in the daytime. Watch out for each other.

This new strategy of moving in the daytime hours seemed to make the kidnappers desperate. They tried on three occasions to grab an alien off the street in broad daylight, and three times they were interrupted by the police, but these attacks weren’t linked to the years of disappearances.

Not until Friday evening, when someone called the DEO and reported four men dragging an unconscious alien from a white panel van.

We may never know who that kind soul was, but what followed was a horror story. The DEO raided the building where the men took the alien. They found cages and forty-eight victims. Many who’d gone missing months earlier. They also found evidence that far, far more aliens had passed through the makeshift prison, and their fates are still unknown.

Eleven men were arrested on sight. Men who had no previously known ties to PHAN.

One might expect them to demand lawyers, to plead innocence when faced with the magnitude of their crimes, but not these men. Instead, they shouted their allegiance to PHAN. They boasted, proclaiming proudly that they were clearing the ‘alien infestation’ from our streets. They bragged of giving the aliens over to Cadmus, and of Cadmus’ plans to drive the aliens off Earth.

It would be easy to imagine that is where the story ends. The villains in custody, as many of the victims as possible saved. Evil is defeated, and all is well. But this is not something recent. This is not a story that begins with Cadmus’ break from the government. This is ten years of horrors, perpetrated on the defenseless, who were unable to even cry out for help lest they bring down a different villain on their heads. These crimes might have been committed by the Planetary Action Hygiene Network, but if the confessions are to be believed, they were aided and abetted by Cadmus while it was still a government project, through two different administrations.

So, we must ask ourselves this question. Who knew this was happening, when did they know it, and who will answer for it?

It was just after 7:15 AM when Kara’s phone started blasting out ‘Hail to The Chief’ an a completely
unreasonable volume. She flipped the blanket back and reached over, grabbing her phone and answering it.

"’ello," she muttered, barely half awake.

“What the hell are you playing at?” Olivia demanded.

Kara opened one eye and looked at the clock on her bedside table. “Uhhh… why are you calling me at seven-fifteen on a Sunday morning?”

“Because it’s 10:15 in Washington DC, and that’s where I keep my temper,” Olivia snapped.

“Right. Call me back after you’ve had a cup of calm the fuck down,” Kara said, then took the phone away from her ear and hung it up.

“Konex?” Kara said as her phone started blasting ‘Hail to The Chief’ again.

“Yes, Lady Kara?”

“Why is President Marsdin mad at me?” She swiped to decline the call.

“I believe it might have something to do with the article published a few minutes ago on CatCo’s website.”

“Display,” Kara said.

A hologram displaying the CatCo homepage appearing in front of Kara. She reached up and scrolled down, quickly taking in the article, then tapping through to the gallery of pictures James had taken as her phone began playing ‘Hail to The Chief’ a third time.

“Konex, tell President Marsdin I will call her back when I get out of bed, then get Vicki Vale on the phone.”

Hail to The Chief cut off immediately, and a moment later, Vicki came on the line.

“I was expecting you to call,” Vicki said.

“Is the story accurate?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Vicki said. “Cat and I vetted every word.”

“Did Siobhan follow the rules I laid out?” Kara asked.

“Mostly,” Vicki said. “I assigned her the first attack. She caught a whiff of a bigger story when M’gann showed up at the second crime scene, and followed M’gann to get an interview, but she came to me immediately after the interview was done.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “Tell her I said she did a good job. Then put her on dog weddings and waterskiing parrots for a couple of weeks to make the point about following the damn rules.”

“Done and done, but I will pass along that you said so as well,” Vicki said. “How much heat are we going to take for this?”

“Don’t worry about it,” Kara said. “Get some sleep.”

“Will do,” Vicki said.
Kara hung up and tossed the phone back on the bedside table, then pulled the blanket back over her head.

She’d just closed her eyes when Ray Charles started singing ‘It Ain’t Easy, Being Green’.

She sighed and tossed the blanket aside again.

Kara touched down on the landing deck outside DEO headquarters with her war suit configured into a plain black Kryptonian military-issue jumpsuit with the House of El Coat of Arms embroidered on the upper right chest in black thread. Her makeup was a bit more intense than usual, with winged eyeliner and a darker lipstick, and she was wearing her power. She moved with an arrogance and a purpose, striding down the steps with her back straight and her head held high and a look on her face that absolutely dared anyone to get between her and her destination.

If anyone from the old timeline had seen her, they would have stepped back in fear as memories of Red Kryptonite and maniacal Kryptonians came rushing to the fore. The resemblance was not unintentional, and the harshness of her brutally short haircut only added to the image, which was having exactly the desired effect, as people took one look at her and got out of her way.

“Director,” Kara said, in a voice that was cold and spoke with authority. Alex, Maggie, Lucy, Susan, Leslie and J’onn all turned around, and all of them but Leslie and J’onn blanched at the sight of her. “A word.”

J’onn’s eyes narrowed, but it was Leslie who broke the silence.

“Holy shit, Sunshine,” Leslie said. “whose ass are you looking to kick?”

J’onn closed his eyes and tilted his head, wincing in physical pain at Leslie’s remark. “Upstairs,” he said as he looked at Kara again.

Kara didn’t wait for him, she just turned and headed up the stairs, going to the empty conference room just past the one Lucy and Maggie were still using as a makeshift workspace. She dropped into the seat at the head of the conference table, and waited, smiling slightly at the annoyed glare J’onn gave her as he came into the room. She turned, glancing at the door at the sound of a second pair of footsteps, a little surprised to see Susan following J’onn.

J’onn stopped and turned around to face her. “We’ll be speaking in private, Agent,” J’onn said.

“Like hell,” Susan said. “Both of you are up here waving your dicks around. Someone needs to be the adult in the room. You two idiots hired me for the job, and I was just dumb enough to take it, so suck it up, buttercup.”

She didn’t wait for him to respond. She stepped around him and dropped into the chair to Kara’s left. J’onn, with a long suffering look on his face, dropped into the chair on Kara’s right.

“Would you mind telling me what the hell you were thinking?” J’onn asked.

“You’re really gonna have to narrow it down,” Kara said. “Given how many poor decisions I’ve made in the last two weeks, I’m really not sure what I’m being yelled at for.”

“Why don’t we start with you hanging up on the President of the United States three times?” J’onn said.
Susan looked mildly impressed.

“Well, technically, I only hung up on her once. The second time, I sent the call to voice mail without answering, and the third time I told Konex to let her know I’d call her back once I got out of bed,” Kara said.

“And did you?” J’onn asked.

“No, because my favorite Martian called, and demanded I ‘get my Kryptonian ass to the DEO’.”

“Which took you twenty minutes,” J’onn said.

“It would have taken me less if there’d been a good reason to hurry,” Kara said.

“Are you trying to turn her against us?” J’onn asked.

“No,” Kara said, “but the story was fact checked, by the reporter, by the head of investigative reporting for CatCo World Wide Media, and by Cat Grant herself.”

“That’s not the point,” J’onn said.

“Actually, it is,” Kara said. “Every word of that story is the truth. Olivia Marsdin sat in the Oval Office and let this happen. She sat there for three fucking years and let Cadmus haul people in off the street and butcher them. And they did it right under your nose, and you were too busy hiding behind threats like Fort Rozz to care.”

“Kara!” Susan snapped, and Kara turned towards her. Susan nodded, looking down at the table where Kara’s hand was. “Dial it down a little.”

Kara looked down, realizing she’d driving her fingers through the metal top of the table and twisted the surface into a mangled mess. She let go, and pushed back, taking a deep breath.

“Next time something like this is going on, J’onn, I need you to call me,” she said.

“We were trying to give you time,” J’onn said, all of the heat gone from his voice. “I know what it’s like to lose a wife,” he said. “I can’t imagine it happening twice.”

“I appreciate that. I do,” Kara said. “But I need to be able to trust you, and if you keep me out of the loop on things that are important, I can’t help. I could have headed off this whole situation with Siobhan if I’d known what was going on.”

“She’s got a point,” Susan said. “We can’t exclude her and then blame her when that decision bites us in the ass.”

“You’re right,” J’onn said. “But it probably is time to call the President.”

It ended up being another thirty minutes before the call went through, and when it did, it was on Kara’s video phone on the forty-second floor conference room in the CatCo building, with Cat sitting next to her on the right, holding her hand under the table, and Lena sitting next to her on the left.

“Morning, Olivia,” Cat said.

“Madam President,” Lena said.
“Olivia,” Kara said.

“Morning Cat,” Olivia said. “Miss Luthor.”

“Lena, please,” Lena said.

“Of course, Lena,” Olivia said. “And I suppose you might as well join the club and call me Olivia, since we seem to be casual this morning.”

Lena gave a small laugh. “Thank you, Olivia.”

“Now, it’s always a pleasure to see you, Cat, and it’s a pleasure to finally meet you, Lena, but I need to speak to Kara in private.”

“I don’t think that would be particularly productive,” Kara said. “Unless I’m wrong and this isn’t about the story that CatCo ran this morning.”

“It is,” Olivia said.

“Then I’m really not the one you should be speaking with,” Kara said. “You see, Cat, Lena and I are joint owners of Danvers International now. Lena runs the LCorp division, which is focused on technology and other consumer goods, while Cat runs CatCo World Wide Media, which is currently in the process of absorbing the remnants of LexTel and Galaxy Communications, along with the Media Assets of Lord Technologies, TychoTech and Queen Consolidated.”

“Is that so?” Olivia said.

“It is,” Cat said. “In fact, Kara’s been on medical leave since before the first attack happened on Wednesday. Not only did she not approve the story, she was unaware of the story, or the events behind it until *after* your call this morning.”

“I see,” Olivia said.

“Good,” Cat said. “Then, as you and I have known each other since our freshman year at college, I’m sure you understand that, if a story is factual, newsworthy, and in the public interest, there isn’t much that can keep me from publishing it.”

“Really?” Olivia said, insinuation dripping from her voice.

“Yes,” Cat said.

“You’ve never sat on a story for personal reasons?” Olivia asked.

“I never said that,” Cat said. “I said there ‘isn’t much’, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t lines I won’t cross. Destroying someone’s life by outing them publicly, for example. Especially when there’s no compelling public interest.”

Kara could see the anger boiling away behind Olivia’s face, and wasn’t quite ready to make peace just yet.

“The story was timely, factual and relevant to the public conversation,” Kara said. “Questions like why Cadmus was allowed to operate for so long, why they were allowed to employ the methods they used, who knew what those methods were, and who might still be lending them aid are all important issues.”

“Just spit it out,” Olivia said. “What do you want?”
“I want you to do what you should have done the day you took office and clean your damn house,” Kara said. “I’m sick of cleaning up your shit with my friends’ blood.”

Kara glanced over at Cat, and got just the slightest dip of the head, something barely perceptible, and she turned back to Olivia. “Siobhan Smythe.”

“The reporter who wrote the article?” Olivia asked. “What about her?”

“She stepped in front of Carter. She took two bullets in the chest to save his life,” Kara said. “She’s alive because of Kryptonian medical technology, but that is on you, Olivia. As much as it’s on Lane and Lillian and Tycho and Lord and Harper. You let this go on for three years. A black market in alien refugees. Two hundred and fifty in National City alone, and that’s just the ones we know of, and now, they’re out there, hiding, waiting while they perfect some weapon, and I honestly don’t know if I’m going to be able to stop them this time.

“And that’s on you,” Kara said. “So, clean your damn house.” Before Olivia could say anything, Kara leaned forward and cut the line. When the screen was dark, she leaned back in the chair and let out an exhausted sigh.

“Well,” Lena said, “I never thought scolding the President of the United States would be part of my Sunday morning routine,” Lena said. “You, Kara Danvers, are full of surprises.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Maybe I should have had that cup of calm the fuck down I told her to drink.”

“You told Olivia to have a cup of calm the fuck down?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded a little sheepishly.

Cat smiled as she closed her yes. “I don’t know whether to kiss you or kill you.”

“Kisses please,” Kara said. “Attempts on my life are so last week.”

Lena laughed, but Cat picked up a folder off the table and slapped her in the face with it, and Kara, completely unprepared, flinched backwards, tipping the chair over, which made Lena and Cat both laugh.

Olivia sat for a moment, fuming at the absolute audacity of the little Kryptonian upstart. She’s spent decades moving through human society, blending in, playing the good little hairless primate. She’s swallowed her pride, choked on her own dignity, ignored filthy little monkey men putting their paws on her, all to get where she was, to improve the lot of her people here on Earth. And this child from a race so foolish they blasted themselves out of the stars presumed to tell her how to go about things.

She leaned back in her chair, taking deep, calming breaths, soothing herself before she lost control. She was too close already, could taste her own venom on her tongue. She could deal with this. She was not without resources.

The girl was a nuisance. So far, a useful one, but a nuisance. If she had to be removed, it would have to be done in such a way that the blame could not come back on her or on any human. The girl’s aunt would have to go, as well. She was too attached to the girl. That would leave Fendra of House Kann. The intelligence officer, and by all accounts, a more reasonable sort. A follower. She would be smart enough to understand what had been done, and the warning implicit in it.

But how? Not Superman, of course. The girl was his family, and after the incident in the Fortress, it was clear he wasn’t up to the challenge. The Amazon was unreliable. Give her an order, and she was
equally likely to follow it, or spend the afternoon chasing butterflies around the park and buying children ice cream. The Bat was out. That was too much like tossing nitroglycerine on a dynamite fire. The Cyborg would follow Superman, the Amazon and the Bat right into hell without asking questions, and the Atlantian would laugh in her face.

It would have to be one of the Lanterns, but which one? Jordan, Stewart or Rayner were the most likely to be able to handle the girl, but Jordan and Rayner were almost as unpredictable as she was. Gardner was a buffoon. It would be easy enough to convince him to take the girl down, but Olivia suspected Kara would wipe the floor with him without so much as breaking a sweat. Cruz and Baz weren’t even worth considering. Too new, too inexperienced.

Who was she kidding? The girl brought down Superman without her powers.

It would have to be all six of them. Six Lanterns would do it. Sure, she was a Kryptonian, but she was just *one* Kryptonian.

But how to convince the Lanterns to do it?

Olivia closed her eyes, wishing she knew what the girl’s agenda was. The Alien Amnesty had obviously only been the first step. That much was clear, right from the start. Maybe she was building up to go after whoever destroyed her homeworld. It fit as well as any other theory Olivia had come up with. Of course, Kara had never told her who that was. For all Olivia knew, it might be the Green Lanterns.

She bolted upright in her chair, as the perfect plan formed in her mind. Ask Stewart to carry a message to the Guardians. Tell them Kara was planning to attack them. That she believed they had destroyed Krypton. The Guardians would send the Lanterns after her.

It was perfect. Brilliant.

She sat back, not quite able to smile. It would be a shame, if she had to do it. She liked Kara, when the girl wasn’t causing problems. Of course, if the girl went, Cat would have to go too, which was a bigger shame, if easier to accomplish. She wouldn’t even have to die. Just a few words in the right ears. Adam’s name. A rumor that Cat was sleeping with her assistant. A timely investigation into insider trading. Cat’s reputation would be in tatters, and her empire would crumble.

Maybe the girl wouldn’t push. Maybe. She just needed time. Time for J’onzz to deal with the Cadmus business, and then, a few months down the road, she could take subtle, less direct action. A few whispers in the right ears. Words about super-powered vigilantism. A few sad speeches about the cost to tax payers after one of Superman’s battles. Slow, careful. Shift public opinion, not against aliens, but against superheroes.

A plank in the campaign promising to rein them in.

It would work.

As long as the girl didn’t push.

In the meantime, she could find a few people in Defense and Homeland Security to throw to the wolves.

She reached over and hit the intercom. “Somebody find Nia,” she said. “And schedule a press briefing for this afternoon.”
Intermezzo

Chapter Summary

Kara gets an assistant, J'onn goes to see M'gann, Supergirl makes a Facebook post, Olivia makes plans to visit National City, Eliza gets a visitor, Nia has a dream, and Lucy and Maggie have a talk.

Monday, December 14, 2015

Jason sat at the desk, doing his best to keep a grin off his face. He’d been waiting for a day like this for a long time.

When Kara had first come into the orbit of the Bat clan a little over a year ago, every one of them had spent an enormous amount of time wondering how she always seemed to know what was going on. She’d seemed completely unflappable in the face of things that would have sent most people screaming for the hills. Her revelation at the fortress has clued the entire clan in on how she’d done it, even when they’d taken every precaution against her super powers. But this was going to be completely unexpected.

He was going to be the first one of them to get her composure to crack. He was absolutely sure of it.

The elevator chimed, and he glanced over at Artemis, and she gave him a small nod before turning back to the computer on her desk.

Kara stepped out of the elevator onto the forty-second floor of CatCo with her phone in her hand and began issuing orders.

“Winn, we’ve received requests from the toy makers to do a full action figure line of all of the Kryptonians and other aliens who are members of the First Responder program. I’ve got Nimda preparing summary bios of them, plus working up contracts for profit dispersal to the individuals whose likenesses are used for the toys, but I’d like you to look over the preliminary sketches sent over by the toy designers. I know it’s not in your job description, but since you’re a collector, I think you’d be more likely to spot any potential problem areas.”

“Sure,” Winn said.

“Wilma, I’d like to shoot a video this morning to address Siobhan’s article. Do you think we can get it edited and posted in time to hit the afternoon rush?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Wilma said.

“Good,” Kara responded. “Artemis, call Lena’s secretary, and set up lunch with her and Astra at Kingdom of Heaven on Briarcliff and Ponce De Lyon, then call ahead to the restaurant. Ask to speak with Mrs. Xue and tell her Kara Danvers will be in today for the lunch Buffet.”

“Of course, Ms. Danvers,” Artemis said, with perfect office manners.

“Jason, get on Instacart and restock the ice cream and grape soda in my fridge, and call Nature’s Way Dispensary, and tell them I’ll be in for my monthly edibles order between 1:30 and 2:00 PM.”
Tell them I’d like to double the usual number of chocolates and brownies this time,” Kara said.

Before Jason could answer, Kara disappeared into her office, and Jason looked over at Artemis, who just smiled and shrugged.

“Did she just tell me to call and order her pot brownies?” Jason asked.

“Yes,” Artemis said.

Jason signed and reached for his computer, resigned to the fact that Kara apparently wasn’t going to react to having him and Artemis as her new assistants, and wondering if Tim would believe a word of this.

J’onn walked into Darla’s, taking in the sights and sounds as he looked around. It was cleaner than the original, with walls forged out of Kryptonian programable materials instead of cinderblock and drywall. A little bit more up-scale than before the move, at least from what J’onn had seen during his one brief visit in the wake of the attempted bombing. It was also larger, with six pool tables off to one side and four dart boards, plus a hand full of upright video game consoles and for some odd reason, a coin-operated photo booth.

What he was looking for - who he was looking for - was behind the bar, a rag in one hand cleaning the bar top, and carefully avoiding looking up.

He walked over, fighting with himself every step of the way. He wanted to turn around, to walk away. He didn’t want this moment, but at the same time, he felt like he owed it to himself.

“You going to stand there and stare all day, or are you going to sit down?” she asked.

“Sorry,” J’onn said. He lowered himself onto a bar stool.

“Don’t be,” she said. She finally looked up at him. “If you’re here to kill me, we should take this somewhere else. The drones will break it up, and they’re not gentle.” She flipped the rag up, so it landed draped over her shoulder. “I think the Kryptonians did that on purpose. Most guys who get busted by the drones go out of their way to avoid trouble after.”

“I’m… I’m not here to fight,” J’onn said.

“Well,” she said. “I’m not sure why you’re here then. You know what I am. What could I possibly say to you?”

“I’m not sure why I’m here myself,” J’onn said.

She rolled her eyes. “Well, when you figure it out-“

“Did you really offer to help the Grant boy?” J’onn asked.

“Yeah,” she said. “Yeah, I did.”

“Why?” he asked.

“A child shouldn’t have to live with something like that. Not if he doesn’t want to,” she said.

“That’s it?” he asked.

She sighed. “What do you want me to say?” she asked in a defeated tone.
“You could tell me why,” J’onn said.

Her eyes narrowed. “We’re not talking about the boy anymore, are we?” she asked.

“Kara said that you tried to stop it. Tried to help some of my people escape.”

“How does she even know about that?” she asked.

“That’s not my story to tell,” J’onn said. “Though she’d probably tell you, if you asked. She thinks very highly of you.”

“Oh, yeah,” she said. “I can see why. I’m a traitor, a coward *and* a failure. I’m a great role model for a fucking alien messiah.” She shook her head. “I’m surprised you believed her.”

“I don’t think I did,” he admitted. “Not really.”

“What changed?”

“I saw you at the Medical Halls,” J’onn said. “Saw you helping the prisoners.”

“Your friend’s a real bitch, you know? She just shows up, and expects you to be this person, then she just stands there, believing in you until you hate yourself for even thinking about disappointing her.” She shook her head. “To hell with it.” She reached under the bar and pulled out a couple of bottles.

“Carl,” she called, and a man who was restocking the liquor bottles turned around. She held the bottles out, and he hit them with a puff of freeze breath, chilling them. “Thanks,” she said, then gave J’onn a pointed look and jerked her head to the side.

J’onn stood up and followed as she led the way over to a row of booths up against the wall. She picked the one furthest back, sitting in a dark corner. “Here,” she said, sitting a bottle of an amber colored liquid on the table. “A little taste of home.”

“Is this what I think it is?”

“Yeah,” she said. “ Probably not as good as what you’re used to. I’m not much of a brewer, but I know the basics.”

J’onn popped the top and lifted the bottle, tasting it, and was surprised at how much bite it had.

“Not bad,” he said. “Nice kick.”

“Yeah,” she said. “I don’t have any fire root, so I make an extract of ghost peppers.”

“I use habaneros,” J’onn said before he took another drink.

The two of them sat in silence for a long time, sipping the Martian alcohol. J’onn could feel her discomfort as easily as he could feel his own.

“I really don’t know what to say to you,” M’gann said. “I don’t know how to explain what happened. Some days, I don’t understand it myself. I just… There was a boy. A little boy. So young. He would cry out in his sleep. Beg for his mother. It annoyed the guards, and they decided to kill him. I was new, just out of training. I’d never killed anyone before, and they decided I should do it. So, I took the boy behind the barracks, and I looked at him, and he was so afraid of me. I couldn’t. I looked down at him, and I saw the monster staring back at me. My reflection, in his eyes. I let him go and I went back into the guard shack and I killed the other guards, then I sat a fire and broke open the pens.
“I tried to get them to the ships, but they wouldn’t listen. They were too afraid of me. Some of them ran. Some tried to kill me. But none of them would follow me. Then the patrol ships came, and I ran. I took a ship and I came here, and I hid.”

“You tried to help?” J’onn asked, still not quite believing it.

“I did,” she said. “For all the good it did.”

“Show me,” J’onn said.

“No,” she said. “No. You don’t want to see that.”

“Please,” he said. “I need to. It’s important.”

She shook her head again and picked up her bottle, taking a huge swallow before setting it back down. “I’m sorry,” she said as she reached out, pressing two fingers to his temple. “No one should see this.”

From Facebook

Supergirl Zor-El

Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Today, I have an exciting announcement to make. As a lot of you know, when I came out as a Superhero, I made the decision to partner with CatCo Worldwide Media to license the rights to my likeness, with the express understanding that the money would be held in trust until such time as I designated a charity to receive those funds.

As of this morning, that designation has been made. I am pleased to announce that all of my share of the profits from officially licensed Supergirl merchandise will go to the Beacon of Hope Foundation, a newly organized non-profit organization which is dedicated to the promotion of harmony between humans and aliens living here on Earth, as well as the betterment of Earth.

Towards those ends, the Beacon of Hope Foundation is announcing its first major program today. Using seed money that has been generously donated to us by Danvers International, Beacon of Hope has been working tirelessly to launch the Fresh Start initiative, which will provide free living space in the residential towers of /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/, along with cultural integration, job training and placement assistance for any alien who has a need, as well as any newly arrived aliens on our world who need help getting on their feet.

Additionally, we will be launching the Helping Hand program to provide free and low-cost housing to humans, as well as job training and placement assistance for the disadvantaged.

At present, Fresh Start enrollment is open to any alien who applies, while Helping Hand is currently limited to human residents of National City, but I am incredibly happy to announce that through a partnership with the Wayne Foundation and the Artemis Society, Helping Hand will be expanding to Gotham City and Gateway City in the coming year. As our resources expand, so will the number of cities where we can offer assistance.

It has been my hope, since the day I first put on my cape, that I could show the people of this world that the aliens living among you were not a threat, and could become a valuable, thriving part of your community if we were allowed to live in peace. The Beacon of Hope Foundation is just the first step in realizing that goal, and in time, I hope it will become the embodiment of the words I have chosen
to live by.

Hope, help and compassion for all.

Olivia sat back in her chair in the Oval Office, staring at the computer in front of her. She had to admit, the girl knew how to play to the public. In truth, she was beginning to wonder if a war of words with Kara Danvers might be worse than an outright shooting war.

The girl played the media with such a deft hand, Olivia would almost believe that Cat was writing the posts and videos for her, except Olivia had been reading Cat’s work for the better part of three decades. Cat’s *influence* was undeniable, but the writing was unique enough that Olivia could tell it wasn’t Cat. She could also tell Cat wasn’t doing any editing.

She couldn’t even attack the girl on the one spot where Superheroes were weak, because the girl just didn’t leave collateral damage. During the Reactron fight there hadn’t been so much as a scuffed paint job, she redirected the Henshaw and Metallo fight to an abandoned part of the city, and the CatCo building had been repaired by her damn drones. The worst damage she’d left behind so far was the hole in the roof of Maxwell Lord’s lab, and considering he was the one to plant the bombs and the girl owned the building now, Olivia was under no illusion that she could make any headway there.

A financial assault might work. Go after the girl’s money. There was too much of it for that to be completely clean and legal. The problem there was, if she went after Supergirl’s money, she had no idea how much blowback there would be, and when you started talking about the kind of money the girl had, there was no way there wouldn’t be some kind of blowback.

Maybe it wouldn’t be an issue. She could admit that her pride was stung by the article, that she was angry at being jerked around. The elephant in the room was still the girl’s agenda. She had hinted that she was working to stop something big, something that she felt Olivia would want to help with, but she’d refused to say what it was.

That had to change.

She and Kara needed to sit down and talk, face to face.

She checked her calendar and smiled. Miranda Crane was planning a rally in National City in January. Olivia could put in an appearance in the city at the same time. Steal all of Miranda’s coverage, have a perfect cover for a face to face with Supergirl, and take her son Oscar to the Medical Halls to get his lungs treated.

Yes, January would do nicely.

“Hey,” J’onn said.

Eliza looked up from the screen she was working on and smiled.

“J’onn,” she said. “What brings you here?”

“I had a few minutes free for lunch,” he said. “I remember Alex saying you like Big Belly Burger.” He held up a bag.

“Ratted out by my own daughter,” Eliza said. “Take it into the office. I’ll meet you there after I wash my hands.”
“See you there,” he said.

Eliza stood up and stripped off her gloves, then went over to the sink and scrubbed her hands, then sanitized, smiling the whole time. When she reached the office, she found lunch laid out on her desk. Alex might have mentioned Eliza liked Big Belly Burger, but somehow, she doubted it came casually that she always ordered the Carolina Special, but there it was, a third of a pound of pulled pork swimming in Bar-b-que sauce and topped with fresh coleslaw, all on Texas toast, with a side of southern-style red potato salad and a hunk of sweet yellow cornbread. She noted that J’onn had a fish sandwich, two orders of onion rings, a Big Belly Bacon Double Cheeseburger, and a family size order of wings.

“Looks like your appetite runs along the same lines as Kara’s,” Eliza said.

“It does these days,” J’onn said. “When I wasn’t using my powers, I could get by on about three thousand calories a day. Most people just thought I had a sweet tooth. Now that I spend half my time flying around getting cats out of trees, I’m burning closer to ten.”

“You know, I’ve got to admit, I’m dying to know more about your physiology. Like, how are you able to change form? Is it an enzyme or some other chemical catalyst your body secretes that allows you to reorganize your cellular structure? And how do you adjust for the change in body density? How does your respiratory system process the increased oxygen and nitrogen present in our air?”

J’onn laughed.

“What?” Eliza asked.

“Like mother, like daughter,” J’onn said. “Alex spent days asking me the same sorts of questions when she found out I was a Martian.”

Eliza felt her cheeks heat and she reached for her sandwich, taking a bite and chewing slowly to give herself a bit of time. “I’m sorry,” she said. “I get caught up in my thought processes sometimes.”

“It’s okay,” he said. “I’m sorry I have to disappoint you. I wasn’t a scientist back home. I was actually something like a cop, and I can probably tell you about as much about my biology as Maggie could. Maybe less, since she seems to be really good at picking up the minutia of alien biologies on the fly.”

“Well, I might have to pick Maggie’s brain a bit,” Eliza said. “Most of my work has been theoretical so far.”

“You should probably talk to Kara as well,” J’onn said. “She’s a good field medic for just about any alien you’ll find.”

“Really?” Eliza asked.

“It surprised me too,” J’onn said, “but one day one of the prisoners was rushed into the med bay having some sort of fit. Kara just shoved Hamilton out of the way, picked up a scalpel and went to work. Performed emergency surgery on the prisoner while Hamilton and three other doctors just stood there and watched.”

“You really care about her,” Eliza said.

“I do,” J’onn said. “Alex too. Both of them drive me to distraction sometimes, but it’s almost like having my own daughters back.”
“You had children?” Eliza asked.

“I did,” J’onn said. “K’hym and T’ania. They and their mother, M’yri’ah were the light of my life.”

“They died when the White Martians wiped out your people?” Eliza asked.

J’onn nodded. “Yes,” he said.

“I’m sorry,” Eliza said. “I remember how hard it was when I lost Jeremiah. I couldn’t even imagine what it would have been like if I’d lost the girls too.”

“Thank you,” J’onn said. “But I’m afraid that actually brings me back to the reason I came by today.”

“What do you mean?” Eliza said.

“I went to see Jeremiah Saturday night,” J’onn said.

“I’m guessing it didn’t go well?” Eliza asked.

“That might be an understatement,” J’onn said. “He misinterpreted something I said.”

“What did you say?” Eliza asked.

“I mentioned that you and I had dinner together,” J’onn said.

“And he immediately assumed it was something romantic,” Eliza said. “I swear that man will never change.”

“What do you mean?” J’onn asked.

“I mean, the reason he even had to go to work for the DEO is because he wouldn’t let me call Clark after Henshaw showed up on our doorstep,” Eliza said. “Him throwing a jealous fit over something innocent doesn’t surprise me at all.”

“Still, I meant to help, and I’ve made things worse,” J’onn said.

“Don’t worry about it,” Eliza said. “I promise you, I’m not going to.”

“Okay,” J’onn said.

“If you don’t mind my asking, you mentioned you were a police officer. Was that a family tradition?” Eliza asked.

“Oh, no,” J’onn said. “My father, M’yrrn, was a High Priest of H’ronmeer.”

“Really?” Eliza asked.

“Oh, yes. It was quite the scandal when I decided to become one of the manhunters,” J’onn said. “I remember the argument we had…”

Nia walked through the automatic doors and down a flight of stairs into a cavernous room of glass, steel and concrete. She’d never been here before, but like the square, it was familiar. Like she’d spent countless hours here in another life.

She looked around, taking in the balconies overhead, the massive emblem of a stylized eagle on the
wall with the letters DEO across it. At the far end there was a circular bank of work stations and a massive wall of displays.

A small woman stood in the middle of the workstations, hair cut short, face severe as green lighting danced over her. Another woman approached her. A taller blonde, but there was something odd about her, like she wasn’t quite solid, just energy and potential. Nia glanced up to the balcony on her left and saw two women. Both were small and dark-haired, but that’s where the similarities ended. One was classically, almost painfully beautiful, with her hair in a shoulder-length cut. She was on her knees, and a hole had been torn in her chest. She held her own heart in her hands, in front of her, as if offering it to someone. The other woman was beautiful, but it was a different sort of beauty; her face was more lived in, softer somehow, all smiles and dimples. She was dressed in shining armor with Supergirl’s symbol on the breastplate. A red string came out of her chest, and Nia followed it across to the balcony on her right, where it plunged into a slim auburn-haired woman who wore armor identical to the other woman, except for the symbol on the chest. It was the standard diamond shape as Supergirl’s emblem, but with a large circle in the middle. Two lines ran down from the inner top of the circle, and another line from the left side of the diamond, through the circle, before turning ninety-degrees and running down to the bottom of the circle. There were two dots above the circle, one over each line, and a third dot over the bend in the horizontal line. Next to the auburn-haired woman stood a tall green man in black armor with a red X over the chest.

Nia turned back towards the front of the room as a woman walked into the room. She wore medical scrubs and some kind of mask, with a gold face on the front of her head and a red face on the back. She walked into the center of the room and turned to face Nia. The short-haired woman and the not-quite solid woman turned towards each other. The woman holding her heart and the woman with the dimples looked at each other. Finally, the auburn-haired woman and the green man looked down at the two-faced woman, who lifted up a bomb.

The two-faced woman vanished.

The bomb exploded.

Nia woke up.

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

“Is that it?” Maggie asked, just the slightest bit of disbelief in her voice.

“That’s it,” Lucy said.

“Holy shit,” Maggie said. “I didn’t think we’d ever finish.” She leaned back, smiling at the stack of paperwork on the end of the table. It hadn’t been an easy task, especially given all the interruptions, but at that moment, all but twenty-three of the DEO’s cells were empty. Almost all the prisoners had been released, assigned apartments in the City of Hope’s free housing program, and a lot of them were enrolled in Kara’s Fresh Start program.

“I knew we’d finish,” Lucy said, “I just wasn’t sure we’d get convictions on any of this.”

“Think we will?” Maggie asked.

“It depends on how clever their lawyers are. The evidence we managed to squeak through is enough to put them away, but the whole ‘right to a speedy trial’ thing worries me. If I were defending any of these cases, I’d immediately move for dismissal of all charges with prejudice on the grounds that their detention violates the Speedy Trial Act of 1974.”
“There’s a cheerful thought,” Maggie said.

“Well, maybe next time, we shouldn’t detain people indefinitely at a Government Black Site,” Lucy said.

“From your mouth to God’s ears,” Maggie said.

“You want to go down to Little Krypton and grab a beer at Darla’s to celebrate?” Lucy asked.

“Can’t,” Maggie said, glancing over at the clock to check the time, and seeing it was about twenty before six. “Alex and I have plans.”

“Oh,” Lucy said, and Maggie could hear the disappointment in her voice. “Anything fun?”

“Well, as it turns out, Kara’s private island has a nice, blue water lagoon,” Maggie said. “So, you know, Danvers in a bikini… I’m pretty sure I’m going to enjoy myself.”

“It also has a swimming pool,” Lucy said, “because Kara is afraid of sharks.”

Maggie laughed, not quite able to get the mental image of Kara popping out of the water and running from a shark at super speed out of her head. “Seriously?”

“Yeah,” Lucy said, grinning.

“That doesn’t make any sense,” Maggie said. “They can’t hurt her.”

“That’s what I said,” Lucy replied, and Maggie felt herself starting to smile in response to the grin on Lucy’s face, but then a question popped into her head and she narrowed her eyes, studying Lucy closely.

“How did you come by this information?” Maggie asked.

“Well, Kara and I might have gone swimming after the tattoos,” Lucy said.

“Well, then you should understand why I’m busy tonight,” Maggie said. “After all, you’ve had your own Danvers in a bikini experience.”

“Oh, there weren’t any bikinis,” Lucy said, smugly.

Maggie felt her jaw drop at the exact same moment Lucy’s eyes bugged out and she slapped both hands over her mouth.

“Oh, Lucy, please tell me you and Kara didn’t get drunk and bump uglies,” Maggie said.

Lucy dropped her hands. “No!” she said, shaking her head, and followed it with a much softer, “No. It didn’t get that far.”

Maggie looked at Lucy, who looked absolutely pathetic and completely miserable, and the lecture died on her tongue, as understanding came.

“But it did get far enough for you to want it to go that far,” Maggie said.

“Yeah,” Lucy admitted. “I mean, if I’m honest, I was half way there by Thanksgiving. She’s… It’s pathetic, really. I mean, I know she wasn’t serious, and was just trying to get under James’s skin, and to try and make him actually pay attention to me, but…”
“But it felt real,” Maggie guessed.

“It felt amazing,” Lucy said. “She paid attention to me. She did all these things for me. She trusted me, she kept trying to shore up my relationship with James, even when I was ready to give up. She recommended me for a job at the DEO, even before the shit hit the fan.”

“And you couldn’t help but fall a little bit in love with her,” Maggie said.

“Yeah,” Lucy admitted.

“Lucy,” Maggie said, reaching across the table, and gripping one of Lucy’s hands, “please tell me you get why it would be a really, really bad idea to get involved with Kara.”

“Because she’s just been dumped by the love of her life,” Lucy said. “Because rebound relationships are shit, and never work. Because I’m never good enough for anybody.”

“Okay, stop,” Maggie said. “The first one you can’t help. The second one is Gospel Truth. The third one is complete bullshit.”

Lucy let out a small, bitter laugh. “Tell that to everyone I’ve ever dated,” she said.

“You’ve been dating assholes,” Maggie said, “and unless I miss my guess, men.”

“Yeah, ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ was really more, ‘if you ever get in a man’s way, you better hope we can’t find any evidence you’ve ever been in the same room with a woman,’” Lucy said. “By the time it was repealed, James was already in the picture.”

“I get it,” Maggie said. “Everybody has one of those relationships. The person you’re always going to love, who’s just wrong for you in every way.”

“You too?” Lucy asked.

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “Emily. We were at really different places. She wanted things I wasn’t ready for, and the fighting got really bad, and I did something really stupid, and everybody got hurt.”

“It sucks,” Lucy said.

“Yes, it does,” Maggie said. “But I should warn you, there’s another reason you shouldn’t get involved with Kara.”

“She wants to climb Cat like a tree,” Lucy said.

“Well, as a lesbian, I understand the urge to climb a gorgeous middle-aged woman in a power suit like a tree, so I’m not going to judge,” Maggie said. “But honestly, I think it’s a lot less ‘climb like a tree’ and a lot more ‘put a ring on it’ where Cat’s concerned.”

“Yeah,” Lucy said, “I’d gotten that vibe too.”

“Good,” Maggie said. “Now, the next big question is, are you looking for Ms. Right, or Ms. Right Now, because those are two entirely different things.”

“The former,” Lucy said. “I am done and past done with the bullshit.”

“Are you ready for that?” Maggie asked. “Because you said it yourself. Rebound relationships-”

“Honestly, I think Kara was my rebound,” Lucy said.
“Don’t ever tell her that,” Maggie said.

“No,” Lucy said. “I don’t think I could take the embarrassment.”

Maggie narrowed her eyes. “I’m guessing there was more than tattoos and skinny dipping?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know,” Lucy said.

“Honestly, I’d rather not,” Maggie said. “Kara’s a little too much like a sister.”

“Do you have any other sisters?” Lucy asked.

“Not one I’ve spoken to in fifteen years,” Maggie said.

“Shit,” Lucy said. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Maggie said. “Hey, what about Susan? She’s single, she’s hot…”

“She works for me, so it’s unethical,” Lucy said. “also, I’m interviewing her future wife tomorrow.”

“Um… WHAT?”

“Cameron Chase,” Lucy said. “She’s the FBI Agent who transported Braxton and Lewis. She’s one of about two hundred Agents who’ve put in for transfer. And according to Kara, she and Susan are going to get along really well.”

“Fuck,” Maggie said. “That’s a bitch.”

“Yeah,” Lucy said. “Susan’s got a great-”

Maggie never got to hear the rest of what Lucy was going to say. The explosion that tore through the room cut her off.
Breaking Point

Chapter Summary

In the wake of the DEO bombing, Kara and a few others go after the bomber.

Nia sat at her desk all day waiting for disaster and feeling helpless to stop it. Some of the symbolism of her dream the night before was confusing, but the gist had been clear. Someone was going to bomb the DEO.

She wanted to do something about it. She wanted to stop it. She just didn’t know how.

She’d considered several options. Trying to get a warning to Supergirl via her social media. Calling in a warning to the DEO. Going to the National Security Advisor. Going to the President. None of those were good ideas. They would end up with her getting fired at best, or in an interrogation room or a jail cell at worst.

As much as Nia might like President Marsdin, and as happy as she was about the amnesty, she wasn’t so naive as to think a signature on a piece of paper had magically cured anti-alien bigotry. The fact that she was afraid of Cadmus blowing up the DEO was proof of that. It was a huge step, but it didn’t mean that there was suddenly justice and equality for aliens.

There was also the fact that Nia was a trans woman, and she really didn’t want to come into contact with the criminal justice system. Especially since she was, at the very least, guilty of falsifying a lot of records and lying on her application for her job, which was technically a felony since she held a security clearance.

Add on top of that her mother spending hours on the phone with her the night she’d told her about the first dream telling her over and over again to keep her abilities a secret. Nia understood her mother’s fear. There were people who would pay a fortune for a Naltorian seer, and there were slavers who were always on the lookout for such a rare find.

For all those reasons, Nia had spent the day in a sickening mix of guilt, helplessness and fear. The relief she’d felt when the end of the day came and there had been no bombing had been enough to make her decide to treat herself to a night out. She took the Metro over to 17th street and went to Elanor’s for dinner. She’d just been seated, and was wondering if she could afford the $45 for the aged rib-eye when the alert chime she had set for her boss went off and a sick feeling settled into her stomach. By the time she got her phone out, a dozen more alerts had come in.

She checked the message from her boss first.

Helen: Get your ass back to the White House now. Check the news on the way.

Nia: On the way. Can you have food waiting?

Helen: Yes. Hurry. It’s bad.

Nia didn’t waste time on a reply. She dug in her purse for the emergency cash she kept for moments like this and paid for the untouched glass of water she’d been given by leaving a twenty on the table. Once she was outside, she hailed a cab. She climbed in, told the driver to take her to the White
At fifteen minutes before six this evening, a clap of thunder rolled through the streets of National City as smoke and fire began pouring out of the DEO tower in the heart of downtown. Supergirl and several other Kryptonians, including Flamebird, arrived on scene moments after the explosion, entering the building, presumably to search for survivors. However, the tower collapsed just seven short minutes after the explosion.

Supergirl, Flamebird, Field Commander Alex Danvers and Agent Maggie Sawyer were on scene moving through the wreckage shortly after the collapse but have thus far refused to speak to anyone in the media. A number of Kryptonian drones have cordoned off the area immediately surrounding the wreckage of the DEO tower and have been assisting Agent Sawyer as she coordinates the evacuation of surrounding buildings with NCPD.

At this time, we have no idea as to how severe the loss of life is, but the questions on everyone’s mind right now are the same. How did this happen? Who is responsible? And what, if any connection, does the rogue agency called Cadmus have to do with this tragedy in the very heart of National City?

Kara stood in the still smoldering wreckage of the DEO, shaking with unspent rage. The twelve agents who were on duty in the command center at the time of the attack were dead. Over three hundred other agents, almost the entirety of the National City downtown branch of the DEO, were currently at the Medical Halls being treated for various injuries, including Lucy, Susan and J’onn. On top of that, the downtown facility was gone.

Alex was the only reason the death toll was so low. It took Kara, Astra, Fendra, and Byara less than two minutes to arrive on scene, and by that time, Alex had already called Nimda, and had the AI use the transmat system to evacuate the entire building.

“How did this happen?” Kara asked.

“The flashpoint was the medical lab,” Alex said. “Someone strung a laser tripwire across the door. When J’onn and I walked in, the whole room went. I’m guessing the blast punched through to the organic chemistry lab, and touched off the volatiles, or maybe there was a second bomb. I don’t know.”

“How did they get inside?” Astra asked.

“They had clearance,” Alex said.

“Another traitor?” Kara asked.

“Dr. Hamilton,” Alex said. “She didn’t show up for her telepathic security exam, so J’onn and I went looking for her.”

“Do we know where she is?” Kara asked.
“Yeah,” Alex said. “The bitch ditched her phone, but I don’t think she expected anyone to survive the blast, because she hasn’t cut out her tracker yet.”

“Let’s go get her,” Kara said.

Alex nodded, and turned towards Maggie. “Sawyer, we’re ready.”

Maggie nodded, and shot across the distance in an instant. “Let’s go.”

“Alex has the lead,” Kara said. She turned to Astra. “We need prisoners.”

“I understand, Little One,” Astra said. “We will not kill this woman.”

“It’s not you I’m worried about,” Kara said. “I’m asking you to keep me from killing her.”

Astra gave a small nod. “That, too, I can do.”

Kara turned to Alex. “Call it.”

“On me, V formation,” Alex said, then shot into the sky with Maggie and four angry Kryptonians on her tail.

Olivia walked into the situation room and sat down. No one bothered to stand up. There was no ceremony. People were too busy doing their jobs.

“Report,” she said.

“The DEO tower was bombed from the inside approximately seventeen minutes ago,” Mathison, one of the agents from Homeland Security said. “Field Commander Danvers reports that twelve agents were killed during the initial explosion, but the remainder of DEO personnel are currently in the Medical Halls in The City of Hope. She and Agent Sawyer are the agents in play. Danvers is operating under the assumption that Dr. Hamilton, a DEO medic, is responsible for the bombing. She did not provide details but assures me confidence is high. She, Sawyer, Supergirl, Flamebird, Fendra Kann and Byara Fa-Ul left the sight of the DEO facility roughly two minutes ago in pursuit of Hamilton.

“Where is Director J’onnz?” Olivia asked.

“In the Medical Hall being treated for burns,” Mathison said. “Agent Vasquez and Assistant Director Lane are both in emergency surgery at the moment.”

“What for?” Olivia asked.

“Unclear,” Mathison said.

As such things go, the AI in a Kryptonian drone was centuries beyond what any human programmer working with Earth-built computers could have achieved. Indeed, the mimetic AI which controlled them existed only because of Barry Allen, who, by the time he invented it, had seen thousands of years into the future, and seen more off-world technology than any other human alive. For all that, they were incredibly simple machines. They worked quickly and diligently because that’s what the computer controlling them told them to do. They eased pain because protocols told them to. They did not feel compassion or urgency or purpose. They analyzed, evaluated, decided and executed with the cold, perfect and remorseless logic of a machine.
Six drones worked to remove skin from seventy-three percent of J’onn’s body, maintaining a perfectly sterile environment while they applied a new skin using rapidly-cloned stem cells applied with spray guns. The entire process would take less than forty-seven minutes, but J’onn would need seven hours in a regeneration matrix before he would be whole again.

Five drones sliced open Susan’s neck, taking great care as they detached the crushed spinal cord from her brain stem. They noted with the closest thing to satisfaction they could feel that the tissue regenerator worked flawlessly on her, so while they remained and monitored for the five hours it took to regrow the four inches of her spine and the surrounding bone, as well as reconstruct her pulped vocal cords, there was never any concern about her recovery.

Twelve drones examined Lucy’s injuries, and all came to the same conclusion. Her injuries were fatal, and immediately so without drastic intervention. She had suffered seven hundred and ninety-three fractures. She was effectively crushed from the neck down and would require the replacement of very nearly her entire body. The decision on how to handle her case was immediately escalated to the supervising attendant, which reviewed the case, and found that Lucy was one of a small group of people who’d been classified as ‘by any means necessary’. The attendant transferred responsibility to Nimda directly. Nimda reviewed all relevant data, including the fact that an X-Kryptonite powered war suit was currently being fabricated for Lucy, and a decision was made.

The transmat beam took Lucy from the Medical Halls in the City of Hope and delivered her to the Medical Hall in Sanctuary. Moments later, Kolex, Lucy’s personal attendant Wilma, and ten drones went to work.

“How the hell did this happen?” Lillian growled as she walked into the room.

“We don’t know,” Max said.

Lane turned around, fury written on his face. “If your Network thugs were behind this-”

“They weren’t,” Lillian said. “The remaining cells have strict instructions. No action until we launch in January.”

“Ah!” Tycho said as he walked through the door. “You’re all here! Good!”

Lillian turned towards Tycho, and she knew, instantly, he was behind this.

“What did you do?” she demanded.

“What we agreed on” Tycho said. “I showed Doctor Hamilton how to make the most of her remaining time at the DEO. A little organic explosive I reverse-engineered from a supply found aboard-”

Lillian wasn’t even remotely surprised when Lane punched Tycho in his smug, self-righteous face.

“My daughter was in that building!” Lane roared as he slammed Tycho back against the wall.

“ENOUGH!” Lillian shouted.

To his credit, Lane stopped with the pistol only half-raised.

“That’s enough,” Lillian said.

“You struck me…” Tycho said, glaring at Lane.
“I’ll do more than that,” Lane said. 

“No, you won’t,” Lillian said. “Simon, is your little puppet ready for the field?”

“Yes,” he said.

“Then take Harper, and go fix your mess,” Lillian said. “Kill Hamilton. Kill Supergirl and her friends if you can, but don’t come back if you don’t manage to kill Hamilton.”

“Fine,” Tycho said, reaching up to wipe the blood off his face. He turned and stormed out of the room.

“I’m going to kill that man,” Lane said.

“I’m inclined to let you,” Lillian said. She turned to Max. “Look at his work. Tell me if you can finish it. If you can, we’ll have Harper terminate Tycho as soon as this fiasco is over.”

Max nodded and headed for his lab.

“This is a disaster,” Lane said.

“Agreed,” Lillian said. “I am sorry about Lucy. She chose the wrong side, admittedly, but I know you hoped she would see reason.”

“It’s the fucking aliens,” Sam said. “They’ve taken both of my children from me.”

“I know, Sam. They’ve done the same to me. And I promise you, they will pay for it.”

Cat stood at the doorway to her office, looking out and watching as reporters rushed every which way. Phones were ringing off the hook, and everyone looked like they were panicking. Everyone except Siobhan, who was standing out on the balcony, holding a pair of binoculars and watching the hole where the DEO building used to be.

“What do you think of her?” Cat asked.

“Kara was right,” Vicki said. “She’s got everything it takes, except a conscience.”

“You think we could find her a Cricket for her shoulder?” Cat asked.

“Olsen was my first thought,” Vicki said. “He’s such a boy scout I get three new cavities if I stand next to him in a meeting.”

“Olsen’s an art director,” Cat said.

“Yeah, we both know that won’t last,” Vicki said. “He’s a worse adrenaline junkie than I am.”

“You’re not wrong,” Cat said.

“The problem is, putting her close to Olsen would put her close to your little girlfriend upstairs,” Vicki said. “And even Jiminy Cricket can only do so much.”

“She’s not my girlfriend,” Cat said.

“Yet,” Vicki said.

“Keep it up, Vale,” Cat said.
“She’s got something,” Vicki said, drawing attention back to Siobhan. The binoculars were down and she was typing frantically on her tablet. Cat turned around, looking at the screens behind her desk, watching as her news station ran a split screen. Half showed the now-empty site of the collapsed building. The other half showed a playback of Kara, Maggie, Alex, Astra, Fendra and another Kryptonian taking to the air and shooting off towards the east side of the city.

“It’s happening,” Cat said.

“I’ve got the bullpen,” Vicki said. “You go be Cat Grant.”

“Thank you,” Cat said as she pulled the door closed. She walked over and sat down at her desk, hitting the button that turned the windows to her office into one-way mirrors, and sound-proofed the room.

“Nimda, show me what’s going on,” Cat said, and the space in front of her filled with a hologram of Kara and the others in flight.

Cat reached for her keyboard.

Jeremiah sat on a couch the apartment he’d moved into after the Wonder Woman incident. The one that was supposed to be temporary, until Kara had a chance to make sure the house in Midvale was safe, whatever that meant.

He sat there, staring at the smoldering wreckage of the building that housed the DEO. The building where his daughter worked.

He barely remembered how to breathe. He’d been watching TV, trying to catch up a little on the last ten years, when the episode of That 70’s Show had been interrupted by a special report, and he was taken back to what was for him just four years earlier when he’d watched two other towers fall in the middle of a city. That morning, his wife and daughter had sat next to him on a couch as he watched the nightmare unfold.

Tonight, he was alone, and the nightmare was worse, because his daughter was in the tower when it fell.

A building fell on Alex, and for a span of time that was just minutes but felt longer than the rest of his life combined, he was sure he’d just watched his baby girl die.

Then, by some miracle she appeared out of the rubble, dressed in one of the suits the Kryptonians wore, with an unfamiliar glyph on her chest. He watched as she tossed aside chucks of concrete like they were Styrofoam. Watched as she floated around rubble. Watched as she did things no human should be able to do.

He watched as Kara joined her, and he wanted to scream for Alex to get away from her before she brought down even more death and destruction, but even if he had, she couldn’t hear him. Jeremiah stared at Kara, at the little girl who’d come into their lives, leading fear, danger and ruin like loyal hounds nipping at her heels, and he felt something a little like hate.

Leslie paced back and forth, her rage boiling inside her as she waited for the damn attendant to give her news, to tell her if Susan would be okay. They’d taken her into surgery almost an hour ago, and Leslie has been on edge ever since.

It was better than those first awful moments after the explosion. The blast had thrown them both
against a wall, but Leslie had just transformed into electricity, spreading out over the surface, then recoalescing once the blast wave had passed. She’d panicked almost immediately, dropping down beside Susan as she screamed for help. The damage to the other woman’s neck and head was obvious and terrifying. It had taken Leslie far, far too long to reach down and touch Susan and pull her into the intangible flow of electrons. She’d dove into the wiring and raced across town, through the maze of the National City power grid, into the far cleaner, far easier to travel grid of Little Krypton before materializing in the emergency room of the Medical Hall, depositing Susan on a gurney as she screamed for help.

The attendants have been there immediately, bracing Susan’s neck, locking her in a collar, and whisking her off to an operating room, while promising to let her know how Susan was. It was only a few minutes later that other agents began arriving by transmat, and she began to get an idea of how large the explosion actually was.

Once she understood what had happened, she wanted to hurt something, to smash something. Electricity crackled and arced over her body, and she couldn’t stop it, didn’t want to stop it, longed to unleash it on whoever had done this.

Because they had hurt Susan. Susan who had believed in her. Susan who had let her try to help. Susan who’d offered her a purpose, and who’d trusted her when things went to shit out in the desert. Susan who was absolutely amazing in every way, and god-damn it, she’d sworn to herself she wouldn’t do this again.

Not after Cat.

“Ms. Willis,” An attendant said, and it was all Leslie could do to stop herself from blasting it to pieces.

“What?” Leslie asked.

“You requested an update on the status of Agent Vasquez,” the attendant said.

“Yes,” Leslie said.

“She is still in surgery. However, it’s been determined that she will make a full recovery. There will be no lasting damage.”

Leslie let out a huge sigh of relief and dropped down onto one of the benches, feeling like an enormous weight had been lifted off her chest.

“Thanks, Robbie,” she said.

“That is not my designation,” the attendant said.

“I don’t care,” Leslie said, digging in her pocket for her phone. “How much longer will she be in surgery?”

“Four to five hours,” the attendant said. “A large portion of her spine must be regenerated.”

“Fine,” Leslie said. “Let me know if there’s any change.”

“Of course,” the attendant said.

Leslie unlocked her phone and pulled up a contact labelled ‘Gort’.
“What can I do for you, Ms. Willis?” her attendant asked.

“Find out where Kara is,” she said.

Amelia Hamilton was not a dumb woman. She’d made it through med school, spent six years in the Army, and been recruited into the DEO as her tour came to a close. She’d spent over a decade since working in an extremely dangerous job. If she was dumb, she would be dead.

She did, however, regret listening to Sam Lane when he’d come to her and told her that her country needed her. The same sense of duty and patriotism which had driven her to join the Army in the first place had turned her into a spy, a double agent, working inside the DEO for Project Cadmus. In the long years she’d been there, she’d seen all manner of horror, and seen the Martian handle them with kid gloves, and she’d grown more and more convinced that he was a threat to her country and her world.

Supergirl though, she was another story. If J’onn J’onzz was an enemy in the shadows, waiting to stick the knife in the moment you weren’t looking, Kara Danvers was the preacher, encouraging you to drink the Kool-Aid. Taking them both down felt like a worthy cause. She just expected that the people who recruited her would have her back.

Instead, she’d gotten instructions for how to whip up an insanely powerful explosive using a few organics.

It wasn’t how she’d wanted things to go down. She’d felt guilty, killing so many people who were trying to serve. The guilt was tempered by the fact that none of them seemed to have any problem serving under an alien who’d stolen a good man’s life, but she would have rather it been a stand-up fight. She might have been a Doctor, but she was still a Soldier.

Now, though, she just had to get to the place Tycho had told her about. Once there, she’d have what she needed to get the tracker out of her arm, and with a little luck, everyone would just assume she was vaporized in the blast.

She pulled off the Interstate, and after a couple of turns, ended up on a long, two lane road. She followed it for miles, until it came to a small private airport. She stopped the car in front of the hangar, and got out, popping the trunk and grabbing the bug-out bag she’d prepped for herself, she started towards the hangar. She’d made it about half way there when hell fell from the sky.

“Remember,” Alex said, looking at Kara, “we want prisoners.”

“Right,” Kara said.

“When she hits the halfway point between the hangar and the car, we go. Kara, you take the car. Fendra, the plane, Astra will make the grab. Byara and Maggie will take the tangos in the hangar. I’ll take the SUV.”

Kara just nodded. She touched a control on the bracer, and her war suit reconfigured, shifting into the black military uniform she’d worn for her first visit to Cat after she woke up from the missile strike. Astra, Fendra and Byara followed suit.

Kara saw the expression on Alex’s face change, then Alex looked over at Maggie, who gave her a small nod. Both of them reached for their bracers. The DEO logos on their suits vanished. On Alex’s suit, the Danvers Coat of Arms shifted to the center and grew in size until it was as large as the one on Kara’s chest. The one on Maggie’s did the same, displaying the House of El Coat of Arms.
Kara looked down, her lips frozen in a grim, predatory smile as she watched Hamilton pick up the bag out of her truck and start for the hangar. She felt the warmth behind her eyes growing as she watched, and the instant Hamilton hit the designated mark, Kara’s eyes flicked back to her target, and she let loose with her heat vision. The gas in the car’s tank hit its flash point less than a second later, and the explosion that followed staggered Hamilton, leaving her completely unprepared to be snatched from her feet by Astra.

Fendra, Maggie and Byara dove for their targets, not bothering to let something as trivial as the steel roof of the hangar slow them down as they fell. Fendra disabled her target by the simple expedient of landing on it. Aircraft-grade aluminum was no match for Kryptonian flesh and bone, and the plane was cut neatly in half. Alex hit the SUV that was already on scene, dropping out of the sky and driving her fist down, tearing the engine off its mount and shattering the drive shaft in the process, while Maggie and Byara cuffed the hostiles inside the hangar and dragged them out, dropping them face first on the tarmac, next to the spot where Astra had deposited Hamilton.

The whole thing had taken less them ten seconds.

_________________________________________________________

Hamilton was on her knees on the tarmac, not sure how she got there, and painfully aware of every screaming injury on her body. Whoever had grabbed her had been none too gentle. Her bag had been torn away with a force that dislocated the arm holding it, and she was sure she had at least three broken ribs.

None of that mattered at all when she looked up to see Supergirl standing over her.

It was like looking into the face of death itself. The eyes that glared back at her had none of Kara’s gentleness, humor or compassion, and Hamilton wanted nothing more than to get up and run away as fast as she could.

Then she saw Alex Danvers walking up beside her sister and saw the strange Kryptonian emblem on her chest. It had become a familiar sight over the last few weeks, but what scared the very life out of Hamilton was what wasn’t there. There was no DEO emblem. No badge.

Hamilton looked around, desperately searching for Sawyer. Whenever Danvers was there, Sawyer was never far away. Not since the missile. Sawyer was the level-headed one. Sawyer was the calming influence, and right now, Hamilton hoped to God Sawyer had survived the blast.

There! Her eyes landed on Sawyer, and for a moment, she felt relief. Seeing Sawyer there was like finding Jesus, right up until she glanced down at Sawyer’s chest, and saw that she, too, was missing the DEO emblem, and all hope vanished, as she realized there was a very, very real chance she was about to die.

Kara watched Hamilton’s face. Watched her eyes fill with fear, watched her look over at Alex and shrink away. Watched the desperation and then a moment of hope when she spotted Maggie. She saw the exact moment hope fled, and Hamilton broke.

She stepped forward, and Hamilton flinched, trying to back-pedal, but running into the solid wall of Astra behind her.

“Twelve agents are dead,” Kara said as she loomed over Hamilton. “You murdered them. You tried to murder my sisters, my friends.” She knelt down. “Tell me why I shouldn’t kill you. Tell me why I shouldn’t crush your chest and leave you where you lie for the carrion eaters. Tell me why I shouldn’t let the words go unspoken and leave your soul in shadow for all eternity.”
She reached up, placing her hand flat on Hamilton’s chest, and pushing, just enough for it to light the fractured ribs afire with pain.

“Speak, Amelia of the House Hamilton,” Kara said. “Speak and live another day.”

“It was Tycho!” she screamed. “It was Simon Tycho! He taught me how to make the explosive, so I wouldn’t have to get anything through security. All the ingredients were in the O-chem lab.”

“Where is he?” Kara asked.

“I don’t know,” Hamilton said.

Kara applied a bit more pressure.

“I swear! I swear! I don’t know! There was a drop point! I’d go there, and the courier would put me in a van with a head bag,” Hamilton cried, tears spilling down her face.

“Where,” Kara asked.

“A warehouse in Nations Bay off Rothmeyer and Patterson,” Hamilton said. “There’s a painting of a fish on the side of the building.”

Kara turned towards Maggie. “The cat food place?”

“Sounds like it,” Maggie said.

Kara turned back to Hamilton. “Anything else?”

“No,” she said. “No, I swear!”

Kara pulled her forward, so she wasn’t pressed against Astra anymore, then she let go of Hamilton, and reached down, pulling a small disk from a pouch on her belt and pressing it to Hamilton’s temple.

“The vacuum of space isn’t the way I’d choose to die,” Kara said, “but I’m told it’s a lot faster for humans.”

“What?” Hamilton asked. “No! I answered your-“

The flash of the transmat beam engulfed Hamilton, leaving only an empty space and silence where her screams should be.

Kara turned towards the three men they’d captured inside the hangar and held up three more disks.

“I want to know where Simon Tycho is,” Kara said. “I want to know now. Unless you would like to join the good doctor.”

“Lady, we don’t know shit,” one of them said. “We don’t work for Tycho. We’re freelancers. He calls us sometimes when he needs a job done. That’s all.”

“So, you help him hide his crimes?” Kara asked.

“No!” the man said. “We help people. Tycho buys salvage, right. Well, sometimes the original owners come looking for the salvager. It’s bad for business if you let the people who sell to you get turned into grease spots, so when one of them gets in trouble, we make them vanish. Set them up with a new life. That’s all!”
“So you have no idea where I can find the man I’m looking for?” Kara said.

“No,” the man said. “I don’t know what that lady did. I just got a call from Tycho, saying he had someone who was in trouble and needed a new name. I figured it was one of his suppliers. We don’t know shit about any murders.”

“Well, that’s too bad for you,” Kara said. “Because it means you’re useless to me.”

“No,” the man said, but before he could start begging, Kara slapped disks on all three of the men, then backed away as the transmat took them.

“Where’d you send them?” Alex asked.

“The Medical Halls,” Kara said. “Tagged as criminals injured during capture. The drones will tend any injuries, then transport them to the detention center in the basement of the Citadel.”

“Thank Christ,” Maggie said, her whole body sagging with relief. She slapped Kara on the shoulder. “You are a scary bitch when you want to be.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Scary is easy. Letting them live… That’s going to keep me up at night.” Kara took a deep breath and turned to Alex.

“Warehouse?” she asked.

“Warehouse,” Alex said.

“Call it,” Kara said.

“V formation, Maggie in the lead. Fendra, Byara on flanks. We go in fast, hard and weapons free, but remember, we need prisoners,” Alex said, and everyone gave a nod in response.

“Let’s go.”
Chapter Summary

Kara, Alex, Maggie, Astra, Fendra, Byara and Leslie go after Simon Tycho

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

“Yes?”

“I have Ms. Willis on the line,” Nimda said.

“Leslie, where are you?” Kara asked as they passed over the city limits.

“I’m at the Medical Halls,” Leslie said. “Where the fuck are you?”

“We’re going after Cadmus,” Kara said.

“I want in,” Leslie said.

Kara looked over at Alex. “Leslie wants to help.”

Alex gave a small nod.

“Rothmeyer and Patterson,” Kara said.

“Be right there,” Leslie said.

Kara didn’t answer. She followed Maggie through a turn and the warehouse came into view, with the giant cartoon fish proclaiming how much cats loved Happy Cat.

“It’s lined with lead,” Fendra said.

Kara shifted into X-Ray vision, then took a second to refocus, smiling to herself as the walls peeled away. “We have a dozen hostiles inside,” Kara said. “Tycho, Harper, what’s left of Delta Squad, and a handful of people I don’t recognize.”

“You can see through lead?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “A little trick I picked up on Earth 46. Don’t tell J’onn. It will just upset him.”

“I would be interested in learning this trick,” Fendra said.

“I’ll teach you,” Kara said. “Just not right now.”

“How should we approach?” Maggie asked.

“Drop outside, demand they surrender, then when they attack us, we go in hard and kick everyone’s
“There are six of us, seven once Leslie gets here, and all of us can hit like a brick dropped from orbit. As long as we go in helmets on, I doubt they have anything that can do more than tickle.”

“Let’s not get too confident,” Alex said. “They’ve surprised us before.”

“Don’t try to teach a priest to count the hours.” Kara said. The words had barely left her mouth when she closed her eyes and let out a sigh. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that. You’re right. I’m angry and I’m not thinking clearly. You call it.”

“Your plan is good,” Alex said, “but we go in careful. Kara, you’re the only one who can see through the walls, so you are on overwatch. Astra, you will link up with Leslie. The two of you will be the reserve. You will move in on Kara’s say-so. Byara, Fendra, you’re with me and Maggie.”

“Where else would I be, Tightpants?” Leslie replied. “I see Grumpy Butt, Sunshine, Dimples and a couple of minions up there with you, but where’s Marvin?”

“J’onn was hurt in the explosion,” Alex said.

“You said it,” Leslie said. “We’ve got a dozen hostiles in the building with the fish. You and Astra are going to be our reserve. Maggie, Fendra, Byara and I will breach, while Kara is on overwatch.”

“You said it,” Alex said. “We’ve got a dozen hostiles in the building with the fish. You and Astra are going to be our reserve. Maggie, Fendra, Byara and I will breach, while Kara is on overwatch.”

“Tightpants, I’ve worked in this chickenshit outfit for about three days. I have no clue what half those words mean.”

“Tightpants, Dimples and the minions will kick the door in,” Kara said. “You and Grumpy Butt are going to wait outside. If shit hits the fan, I’ll send you in to bring the pain, but I’m going to stay up here and play sportscaster in case anyone tries to circle around and shoot you in the back.”

“See, Tightpants, Sunshine speaks English,” Leslie said. “Now, let’s fuck these assholes up.”

“Now there’s a sentiment I can get behind,” Alex said. “Helmets on people. Let’s do this.”

All seven of them touched their bracers, and Kara watched as their helmets deployed. Astra dropped onto the Asphalt next to Leslie, while Alex, Maggie, Fendra and Byara touched down near the doors of the warehouse. Kara stayed where she was and watched the people inside the warehouse.

“Simon Tycho and any other members of Cadmus or the Planetary Hygiene Action Network, drop your weapons and come out of the building with your hands up. You are under arrest for murder,
conspiracy to commit murder, and as accessories before and after the fact,” Maggie announced, using the power the suit gave her to boost her voice to the point where it rattled windows a block away.

“Sniper, left corner, third floor window,” Kara called.

Fendra turned and let loose with her heat vision. The sniper screamed as he let go of the rifle and scrambled away from the window.

“Second floor on the right, third window from the end,” Kara called, and Byara responded, using her heat vision to destroy the rifle and drive back the sniper.

“Alex, they’re moving some sort of canister towards the door. If you’re going to breach, do it now,” Kara said.

“Breach, breach, breach,” Alex shouted, as the four of them rushed forward. Alex slammed into the doors, using herself as a battering ram. The lock holding them shut shattered and the heavy steel doors went flying into the interior.

“Harper and Tycho are in the Van. The rest of the tangos are in motion,” Kara called. “Leslie, Astra, be ready to pursue if the van makes a break for it.”

The next thirty seconds or so were tense, punctuated by bursts of gunfire and screaming as Alex, Maggie, Fendra and Byara took down the ten Cadmus goons. Kara expected Tycho and Harper to make a run for it in the van, but they didn’t. They just sat there, and the longer they did, the more worried Kara got, until her eyes flickered back to the cylinder the goons had been moving towards the door. She tightened the focus of her vision a little, but the cylinder was lined with lead as well, and it took her a moment before she could get enough focus to see through it.

“Get clear!” Kara called. “Everyone get clear now!”

There was no hesitation. Alex, Maggie, Fendra and Byara just went vertical, punching four holes in the roof. Astra grabbed Leslie and shot into the sky, and all of them came to a stop next to Kara.

“What happened?” Alex asked.

Kara didn’t answer. She was too busy watching as the cylinder opened, and the horror within climbed out.

“Kara?” Alex asked.

Kara just nodded towards the door as the thing stepped out onto the street.

“What is that?” Alex asked.

“I don’t know,” Kara said.

It stood at approximately seven feet tall and looked like someone had pulled the brain, spinal cord and nervous system out of a person and suspended them in clear gelatin cast in the shape of a man, but thin lines of glowing green ran through it as well, and Kara knew without being told that the green was liquid kryptonite.

Whatever that thing was, it wasn’t natural. It was built, and it was meant to kill Kryptonians.

“It will be strong,” Astra said.

“Fast, too,” Fendra added.
Kara retracted her helmet and looked over to Alex. “Let me call it.”

“It’s all yours,” Alex said.

“Astra, Fendra, Byara, helmets down. Keep your distance. Engage with heat vision, freeze breath and projectiles only. Alex, Maggie, you’re on containment. If it tries to break contact, drive it back to me. Livewire, you’re the Yamato gun. Suck up every bit of power you can hold and tell me when you’re full. I’m going to want a single discharge, everything you’ve got in one shot, right into its brain.”

“Got it, Sunshine,” Leslie said.

“Astra, drop Leslie somewhere where she has a clear line of sight before engaging,” Kara said.

“Understood.”

“Let’s do this,” Kara said. She dove towards the creature, deploying sword and shield as she went, moving for the same attack she’d used to kill Corben. The creature just stood there, and Kara’s sword sank into its neck half way before it hit something impossibly solid, at which point physics took over, and the creature was lifted off its feet and carried a hundred yards while Kara poured on the deceleration, coming to a stop in the middle of an intersection. She planted her feet, and twisted, pulling the sword free with a disgusting slurping sound.

The creature swung a heavy fist at her, but she brought her shield up and braced. When its fist hit, it ended up knocking itself backwards, sailing through the air almost back to the point where she’d caught it with her sword.

“What the hell?” Alex asked.

“I don’t think it knows how to brace against its own strength,” Kara said as Astra, Fendra and Byara opened up with their heat vision. “It’s new. Inexperienced. It doesn’t know how to fight yet.”

“Hit it before it learns,” Byara said, swooping in to do just that.

“Byara, NO!” Kara snapped, but it was too late. Byara came barreling in. The thing sensed her somehow, and turned around, grabbing onto her and bringing her down on its leg with a deafening crunch as her spine snapped. The thing grabbed her head, clearly bracing to snap her neck.

“Livewire!” Kara said. A bolt of lightning hit the thing in the face before the word was completely out of Kara’s mouth, and the creature staggered back, dropping Byara.

“Nimda, transmat Byara to the Medical Halls,” Kara said. There was a flash of light, and Byara disappeared from the monster’s feet.

“Leslie, recharge. Astra, Fendra, freeze breath now! Alex, Maggie, be ready to hit it the second we stop,” Kara ordered before she hit the creature with her own freeze breath. She counted off thirty seconds in her head then stopped. “Hold freeze breath! Alex, Maggie, go!”

Astra and Fendra stopped hitting it with freeze breath, and a moment later, it shattered as Alex and Maggie hit it at full speed with their shields.

“Is it dead?” Leslie asked.

“I don’t know,” Kara said.
She got her answer a moment later when the pieces started to melt. Just smaller pieces at first, the unnatural cold leached out of them by the heat retained in the asphalt from a long day in the California sun, but as they melted, the moved and flowed together.

“Apparently not,” Kara said. She looked around quickly, and spotted a huge chunk of the head, where part of the brain was exposed, and she fired her heat vision directly into it. The air filled immediately with a sickening smell as she burned through the neural tissue, and as she did, the movement of the small puddles of clear fluid stopped.

“Now it’s dead,” Kara said.

“Good,” Alex said. “Let’s get Tycho and Harper.”

As Alex said it, the building echoed with the sound of an engine turning over. Maggie stepped in front of the warehouse door, leaning forward to brace as she raised her hands. The van slammed into her, the front in caving in from the impact. Once the van was stopped, and the sound of the engine died, Maggie straightened up.

“Got them,” Maggie said, and Kara smiled at just how smug her voice sounded.

“Good,” Kara said. Let’s see what they-

The explosion of the warehouse cut her off. The windows blew out, the roof went up in a fireball, and the outer walls came down in a rain of bricks.

“God-damn it!” Maggie screamed as she picked herself up off the street a good twenty yards from the warehouse. “That’s twice in one day.”

Harper watched from the shadows as NCPD, the FBI, and DEO Agents from the desert base processed the scene. They found Tycho, burned to a crisp, still strapped into the control chair in the back of the van, where he’d been guiding the Amalgam from. The Kryptonians were keeping back from the scene, which was now littered with liquid Kryptonite. The DEO was picking it up with cat litter, then scooping the cat litter into hazmat containers.

He’d hated sacrificing good men along with Tycho, but there’d been no time to free them from where the aliens and the traitors had tied them up during their breach of the building, but with a little luck, it would be a while before anyone realized he was missing. Time enough for him to reach the pick-up point and get back to Lillian and the General.

There! That’s what he needed. A hazmat bucket filled with the bio-gel from the Amalgam. He waited until the technician turned away to do something else, and walked right up to the truck, picking up the bucket before turning around and disappearing back into the shadows.

Tonight was a fiasco, but in a few more weeks, they were going to end the alien threat, and while Tycho had been a complete write-off, the Amalgam had showed too much promise to simply be left behind.

Kara sat on the couch in her apartment, staring blankly into space as she tried to get a handle on the night, but all she could feel was anger and frustration. Twenty-three people were dead. DEO headquarters destroyed, Harper, Lillian, Max and Lane were all in the wind, and they were no closer to finding Cadmus than they had been before.

Kara knew how to fight a war, but this wasn’t a war. It was an insurgency, and she didn’t know how
to fight an insurgency. Not really. J’onn and Alex weren’t any better with it. Lucy had been in a few war zones, but despite her training, she was a non-combatant. A lawyer.

In any other circumstance, she’d be on the phone with Olivia asking her to send an advisor. Someone she could trust enough to read into what was really going on. The problem was, Lane had his fingers in so many pies in the military, Kara wasn’t sure there was *anyone* in a uniform she could trust at the moment.

She wished she could call John Stewart. During the war, she’d grown to like the man a lot. He’d spent three months in the slave pens on Apokolips with Sara and Kara and had died along with Kilowog covering their escape. Stewart had enough time in Iraq and Afghanistan to know how to run a counter insurgency, but the ring on his finger meant his loyalties were suspect. He might not like Cadmus, but she couldn’t trust him not to attack her the moment the Guardians ordered it.

She needed someone with experience in this shit that she could trust, but the only one who came to mind was Diggle, and given her current relationship with Oliver, and how weird-averse Diggle was in general, she doubted he’d be willing to hop universes and help her run a counter insurgency. On the other hand, it was worth a try.

“Konex, get Oliver on the line for me,” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

It took a few minutes, but a hologram of Oliver popped up.

“Hey, Kara,” Oliver said.

“Hey, Oliver,” she said. “How are you doing?”

“Good,” he said. “Your advice was right on the money. Darhk is currently sitting in a Federal Prison, and H.I.V.E.’s been completely dismantled.”

“Great news. John’s brother?” Kara asked.

“Argus custody,” Oliver said. “They’re putting him through deprogramming. I don’t know how things will work out for him, but John’s happy with it.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” Kara said. “Look, Oliver, I know we didn’t get off on the best foot-”

“Don’t worry about it,” Oliver said. “Barry and I had a long talk. He told me about the conversation you two had up on the roof.”

“That sounds like Barry,” Kara said. “Always the peacemaker.”

“Yeah. We fought Vandal Savage last week,” Oliver said. “It was kind of a mess. You didn’t tell me I had a son.”

“Yeah, I made that mistake with Joe. I wasn’t about to repeat it,” Kara said. “Please tell me you told Felicity about it?”

“I did,” Oliver said. “I thought about keeping it to myself, but I remember what you said about trust causing issues later.”

“How’s Thea?” Kara asked.

“Better, since the lotus elixir,” Oliver said. “She’s a little unhappy that her almost-boyfriend turned
“Honestly, I’m pretty sure every Superhero sleeps with a villain at some point,” Kara said. “Except Barry and my cousin.”

“Even you?” Oliver asked.

“In my defense, both of them were reformed,” Kara said. “Which is more than I can say for you, Mr. ‘I’m going to train the crazy mobster’s daughter to be a better serial killer’.”

“You know, it’s not fair that you have all the dirt on me,” Oliver said.

“I have a thing for blondes,” Kara said. “I’ve watched everybody I ever loved die. I’m going to therapy five days a week because I have post-traumatic stress disorder, complex post-traumatic stress disorder and flashbacks. I’m extremely claustrophobic, Hawaiian Pizza is my favorite. I was sleeping with my first girlfriend for six months before I even considered I might be gay. I was once asked to help out with a natural disaster in Georgia and I was half way across Europe before I realized they meant the state and not the country. Once, when I was putting on my supersuit I grabbed the wrong underwear, and there was a youtube video of me kicking an alien in the head and flashing the entire world a pair of granny panties covered in pictures of kittens playing with balls of yarn. I have a medical marijuana card because pot brownies are the only thing that make my super-powered period cramps stop, but sometimes I use it to manage my anxiety, and once attended a National Security briefing while high. I have a stupid crush on my boss, and I hate it because even if she were interested in me, and everything worked out and I don’t die fighting Darkseid, I’ll outlive everyone I care about by hundreds of years. Some nights, even as much as I hated you for killing him, I still miss you and Barry so much I cry myself to sleep. When I was a kid, I used to try to cook dinner, and when I messed it up, I’d blame my dad. He was such a terrible cook, my mom always believed me. One time, my super suit was in the laundry, so I fought an alien in my Minnie Mouse pajama pants and a Supergirl t-shirt I picked up at a convenience store on the way to the fight. One time I was undercover in a casino and I used super-speed to stack the deck during a poker game, and after the mission was over, I didn’t give back the money. I spent all two hundred thousand dollars on chocolate. Barry and I once had a pie-eating contest, and ten years later I’m still embarrassed that I lost. My cousin and I and I once got kicked out of an all-you-can-eat buffet. I once ate an entire bottle of Flintstone vitamins because I thought they were candy. I still get scared during horror movies. I’m afraid of sharks. I watched eleven men die tonight, and all I feel is satisfaction that they’re dead, and I’m worried that makes me a horrible person, and I’m terrified I’m doing all of this wrong, and everyone I care about is going to die, again, and I’m going to have to watch it.”

At some point while she was talking, Kara’s eyes had drifted closed, and the tears started flowing. She didn’t hear the commands Oliver gave Alrex, and only looked up when the breach opened up and Oliver and stepped through. He sat down on the sofa next to her, and slipped an arm around her, pulling her into a hug, and Kara found herself hugging him back as the sobs started coming.

Alex stood in front of the crater left by the DEO building, watching as the drones swarmed around, making repairs to nearby buildings which had been damaged when the DEO building came down, or hauling away bits of rubble to the huge recyclers that were churning away, or hauling recycled materials back and stacking them neatly. A pair of attendants worked in the bottom of the crater installing a sunstone receptacle, while Alex looked down at the Omegahedron and the Sunstone she was holding.

“You okay?” Maggie asked.

“Just… wondering if we’re doing the right thing,” she said. “Twelve people died here. It seems
wrong to just… throw up another building like it never happened.”

“That’s not what we’re doing,” Maggie said. “This isn’t about forgetting what happened. It’s about not giving in. Everything Cadmus does is about fear. They are afraid of aliens, and they want to make everyone else afraid too. This is about showing Cadmus that we are not afraid. That they can hurt us, but they can’t stop us from making things better. From turning the DEO into what it always should have been. A force that protects everyone; human, metahuman, and alien. A force for good. Like Kara says, it’s about hope, help and compassion for all of us. That may not be what the DEO stood for before, but that’s what we’re going to make it stand for.”

Alex smiled. “Has Kara been giving you speech writing lessons?” Alex asked.

“No,” Maggie said. “The only thing Kara has given me is a family, and a girlfriend I love so much that I’m half convinced you’re an alien too, because how else could you be so perfect?”

Alex turned and threw her arms around Maggie, pulling her into a hug. “I was so scared when the bomb went off. I thought I’d lost you.”

“I thought I’d lost you, too,” Maggie said.

“I’m glad I didn’t,” Alex said. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Maggie said. She pulled back from the hug and looked Alex in the face. “I love you so much I can’t believe you’re real sometimes. You just look at me and wonder what I could possibly have done to deserve this miracle in my life.”

“You’re the miracle,” Alex said. “You made me understand so much about myself, just by being who you are. I don’t even want to think about what my life would be like without you in it.”

“I don’t think you have to worry about that,” Maggie said. “You are stuck with me, Danvers. Ride or die.”

“Good,” Alex said. She leaned down and kissed Maggie, and Maggie kissed her back with a degree of enthusiasm that was probably a bit too high considering the number of reporters and rubberneckers still around, but she honestly didn’t care. When the kiss finally ended, she looked down at Maggie, and a sudden impulse came over her.

“Move in with me,” she said.

“What?” Maggie asked.

“Yes,” Maggie said.

Really?” Alex asked.

“Really,” Maggie said. “If all of this goes tits up, if a year from now or ten years from now, we’re on the wrong side of a losing war against a god, I don’t want to look back and think ‘I wasted time I could have spent being happy,’” she said. “I’ll move in with you tonight, as soon as we get home. And six months from now, or ten years from now, whenever we’re ready, I’ll get down on my knees and ask you a question.”
It was another hour before the drones had the site ready, but when it was, Alex inserted the Sunstone and the Omegahedron into the Sunstone receptacle, and just like what had happened when Kara placed the /zrhygrhahs im shahreth/ Sunstone, the area around it seemed to liquify, and the materials recycled from the old DEO building, along with new materials added by the drones, all seemed to sink down into the ground as Alex flew up out of the crater and landed on the street. The building followed her up out of the hole, twisting as it rose up, an organic shape of glass-smooth, bone-colored stone towering above the surrounding buildings at almost a kilometer high. It didn’t look like the generic glass-sided office building that had stood there before the bombing. Instead, it looked like what it was. A fortress, an impregnable stronghold, standing ready to defend the people of National City, human and alien alike, from those who would do them harm.

Susan slowly opened her eyes, wanting more than anything to stay in bed, but feeling like it was important that she wake up. Like she was late for work, or something. The room slowly came into view, and she quickly realized it wasn’t hers. She didn’t have any idea where she was, which probably meant she was in a hospital. Something which was confirmed when she realized someone was holding her hand, and she looked over to find Leslie curled up in an easy chair that she’d dragged over next to the bed. Leslie had her boots off, her knees tucked up under her chin, and one arm wrapped around her legs. She was making the cutest little snoring sound, and Susan felt herself melt at the sight.

Susan squeezed Leslie’s hand and lay back, resting her head on the pillow, and deciding that she didn’t give a flying fuck what she was supposed to be doing, because whatever it was couldn’t be anywhere near as important as this moment.

She lay there, watching Leslie, until sleep reclaimed her as well.

“Any word?” Astra asked as she approached Fendra.

“They placed her in the regeneration matrix,” Fendra said. “Her spine will be mended by morning.”

“Foolish woman,” Astra said.

“What did you expect?” Fendra asked. “She’s from the vanguard. What do they know, other than running towards the enemy, screaming like mad beasts?”

“They are not that bad,” Astra said, “though I admit, they lack some degree of finesse.”

“I do not like the turn this has taken, General,” Fendra said. “Your niece is a warrior and a leader. Battle-hardened and true. I would follow her into any fight, confident of the outcome. But the gaps in her training and skill are showing. She does not know how to seek battle with the enemy we face, and this Cadmus is wily and bloody-minded. If Kara allows them to dictate the terms of battle, I fear what we might lose.”

“Then find them for her,” Astra said. “That is your place, and your duty.”

“I will try, General, and I have been trying, but I believe you might be ignoring an avenue of advance,” Fendra said.

“What do you mean?” Astra asked.

“The girl,” Fendra said. “The one you work with. Is she not the daughter of our enemy’s leader?”

“She is,” Astra said, “but she’s not aligned with them. She’s given her loyalty to Kara.”
“So she says,” Fendra said. “But now we have this. I have little love for the DEO, but they are our leader’s allies. An attack of them is an attack on us. Strength most be shown.”

Astra glared at Fendra. “What do our people say?”

“They wonder why Kara has not dealt with these humans yet,” Fendra said. “It’s been more than a bythzeht since she declared war, yet we allow the enemy to set the tempo.”

Astra looked away, considering the options, and feeling uncertainty. She wasn’t sure why the idea bothered her so much. Fendra was right. Lena was the daughter of their enemy. Yet, Astra couldn’t help but remember the day Lena thought she’d given some offense. The kindness in her eyes, and the genuine distress. The idea that it was fake, that anything about Lena might be other than what it appeared troubled Astra in a way she didn’t understand.

“Kara trusts her,” Astra said.

“Kara trusts too easily,” Fendra said. “She has the daughters of two of her enemies in her house. Something must be done.”

Astra did not answer.

“You’re late,” Cat said as she stared up at her approaching visitor.

“I know,” Kara said as she landed on the balcony outside Cat’s apartment. “I’m sorry.”

Before Kara could do anything else, Cat stepped forward and pulled her into a hug. “You come see me after a fight,” Cat demanded. “I need to know you’re okay.”

Kara wrapped her arms around Cat, hugging her closely. “I’m not,” Kara said. She kissed Cat lightly on the temple. “I’m not okay.”

Cat pulled back and looked her over, making sure there were no obvious injuries before looking up at Kara’s face, noting the redness around the eyes and realizing Kara had been crying.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Cat asked.

“I’d like to just sit for a while, if that’s okay?”

“Of course,” Cat said, leading them over to one of the couches. She sat down, and Kara sat next to her, lifting Cat’s arm and putting it around her before she rested her head on Cat’s shoulder.

Cat squeezed her tightly and pressed a kiss to the top of her head before reaching up and gently petting Kara’s hair.

“They keep hurting people I love,” Kara said.

“I know,” Cat said.

“I’m so tired, Cat,” Kara said. “I’m not sure how much longer I can do this.”

“As long as you need to,” Cat said. “You’re strong Kara. Stronger than anyone I’ve ever met.” She placed another kiss on the top of Kara’s head. “But you don’t have to be strong right now.”

Cat felt both of Kara’s arms wrap around her waist, and Kara clung to her tightly as Cat held her. She could feel the tears starting to soak through her blouse. She began to hum softly as she stroked
Kara’s hair, the notes of the tune so soft that no-one but them would hear.

She reached the end of the song before she realized what it was she’d been humming. It was the wedding song they’d danced to at the gala, and Cat felt a faint blush rise in her cheeks as she remembered how that moment ended. She glanced down, to see if Kara was sharing the memory, only to find the girl sleeping against her shoulder.

She wondered, for a moment, where the girl had gone in the hours between the time she had vanished from the scene of the warehouse explosion until she’d turned up here. It didn’t matter, she supposed, other than that she always worried about the girl whenever she was out of sight.

“/.nim urvish vot w i zhor .nahn rrip w voi/” Cat whispered. “/.:zhao w rrip .thonivi w rrip/”

She wasn’t as sure of her pronunciation as she would have liked, but the whispered words seemed to have their desired effect. The troubled expression on Kara’s face melted away, and she looked contented, at peace.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zrhgryhs im shahrreth
*City of Hope*

bythzeht
*A Unit of Time equal to 10 zehtiar (12 Earth Days)*

/nim urvish vot w i zhor
*Be at peace, my heart.*

/nahn rrip w voi
*You are safe.*

/:zhao w rrip
*I love you.*

/.thonivi w rrip
*I will protect you.*
After Action

Chapter Summary

The Day After the DEO Bombing

From Facebook

Supergirl Zor-El

Wednesday, December 17, 2015

Last night, Cadmus bombed two buildings in National City.

The first of those bombings was at the Department of Extranormal Operations’ Headquarters in downtown. Twelve people died in the initial blast, and over three hundred DEO agents and admin personnel were injured. The building collapsed just a few minutes after the initial explosion, but fortunately, Field Commander Danvers had time to evacuate all personnel and prisoners on site at the time of the blast. The explosives in question were placed by Doctor Amelia Hamilton, a woman who had worked at the DEO for a number of years but had been subverted by General Lane. She acted on instructions from Lillian Luthor and Simon Tycho. Her confession is on record as of an hour ago.

The second bombing was at the Happy Cat warehouse on Rothmeyer and Patterson in Nation’s Bay. Eleven people died in the second bombing, including Simon Tycho and ten members of Cadmus. It’s believed the second bomb was set off by James Harper, who is already wanted in connection with the shootings two weeks ago at CatCo World Wide Media. Harper had previously been arrested following those shootings but escaped custody during the National City earthquake. Motive for the second bombing appears to be preventing the DEO from interrogating members of Cadmus.

I want to be perfectly clear as to what this means.

Cadmus claims that they are trying to protect people from some supposed alien threat, but they tried to kill the very members of law enforcement charged with enforcing the law among our alien residents and protecting aliens from those who would harm them. When faced with the possibility that members of their own organization might be interrogated by law enforcement, Cadmus would rather murder their own than let that happen.

There can be no mistake or doubt, at this point, that Cadmus is a hate group. They couch their actions in claims that they are trying to protect humanity from aliens, but they are the ones killing people. They, and their allies in the Planetary Action Hygiene network, are the ones carrying out a terrorist insurgency in the streets of National City.

All we aliens have asked for is to be allowed to exist. To be allowed to live and work alongside you, without fear for our safety and our freedom.

Cadmus would murder us for that audacity, and as it turns out, so would the very government of National City.

This morning, a recording of audio from the Mayor’s office was posted anonymously to YouTube. The recording is of Lillian Luthor and Mayor Gates conspiring to frame the aliens living in National
City for massive destruction in the South Bay neighborhood, as well as discussing the attempt by the Mayor and the Police Commissioner to frame me for the Thanksgiving Day attack on Leslie Willis.

In parting, I will ask you only this. Who is the true threat? The organization that bombs buildings, murders people in their offices, attacks people in their homes, frames people for murder, plots acts of terrorism, and slaughters their own people to keep them from talking to the police?, Or is it the people who come to you, offering you new technology and medicines, who catch planes falling out of the sky, who protect your buildings and homes from earthquakes, and repair the damage that couldn’t be prevented for free, and who save lives every day?

I think the facts speak for themselves.

May Rao Light Your Way

Nia sat at her desk, her hands shaking badly as she read the report in front of her. Twelve dead DEO agents. Eleven dead terrorists. Two buildings leveled. Over three hundred people in the hospital.

She should have said something. She should have done something. She should have found a way.

And if it happened again, she was going to do just that.

“Your girl doesn’t play around, does she?” Vicki asked as she walked into Cat’s office.

“No,” Cat said. “She definitely does not.”

“You think she’s okay?” Vicki asked as she dropped into one of the chairs in front of Cat’s desk.

“Everything that’s going on… It’s got to be a lot of pressure. Especially for someone who’s new to all of this.”

“I think she has a lot of people who care about her and will do everything they can to make sure she’s okay,” Cat said.

“That’s good to hear,” Vicki said. “I wanted you to know, I just sent the Mayor exposé to print.”

“Will it hold up in court?” Cat asked.

“In civil court, yes,” Vicki said. “In criminal court? About eighty percent of it. The Feds can do their own homework on the rest, but I’m pretty sure we’re sending the Mayor, the DA, the Police Commissioner and about two dozen cops to jail. Maybe more if we do some follow ups. I’ll put our little shark on those when she’s done with her two weeks in waterskiing parrot hell.”

“She did a good job with the coverage last night,” Cat said. “I did notice she likes to twist the knife in the last paragraph. Not bad once in a while, but it’s a habit you’ll need to break her of.”

“I know,” Vicki said. “I’ve already told her she’s writing news, not horror novels, but she’s almost as much of a drama llama as Lois.”

“Oh, lord. Should I send her over to the Planet once the merger is complete?” Cat asked.

“Don’t you dare,” Vicki said. “Speaking of drama, where is our fearless leader this morning? I stopped by her office on forty-two, and the only people there were one of Bruce’s sons, and his girlfriend.”

“Ah,” Cat said. “They applied for the jobs as Kara’s personal and executive assistants.”
“One of Bruce Wayne’s kids applied for a job?” Vicki asked.

“It could happen,” Cat said.

“Right… So, Kara?”

“At the hospital,” Cat said. “Lois’s younger sister is a friend of hers. She was hurt in the blast and should be waking up shortly. Kara wanted to be there for her.”

“You know, I don’t understand how Sam Lane managed to raise kids like Lois and Lucy,” Vicki said. “He’s an unmitigated bastard.”

“Considering he tried to murder one of his daughters last night, I’m not inclined to argue about the unmitigated bastard part, but he didn’t raise them,” Cat said. “Their mother died while Lois was away at college, and Lucy was fourteen.”

“Well, that explains it then,” Vicki said. “How’s Lois dealing with all of this?”

“I don’t know,” Cat said, “but knowing Lois, I imagine there’s a lot of yelling involved.

“I swear to God, I am going to find him and cut his fucking balls off with a spork!” Lois said as she paced back and forth across the Medical Hall.

“Is she always like this?” Kara asked.

“When her father is involved,” Kal said. “Are you sure James shouldn’t be here?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“I know they broke up, but he’s been through something like this,” Clark said.

“Kal, no,” Kara said.

“Lady Kara,” Kolex said, “the regeneration cycle is complete.”

“Okay,” Kara said, stepping up next to the crystalline chamber. “Open the regeneration matrix.”

The top of the regeneration matrix opened, and for a moment, Lucy was still, but then she frowned and turned her head slightly towards Kara. She blinked a few times, then opened her eyes, looking up at Kara.

“Mmmm… Now that’s a way to start a morning,” she said, smiling.

Kara laughed, reaching up and covering her mouth to stop it.

“Did we get drunk again?” Lucy asked. “Oh, God, tell me I didn’t get my clit pierced!”

“Short stuff, what have you been doing with my innocent little sister?” Lois asked.

Lucy’s eyes went wide, and she sat straight up, which had the effect of giving Kal and Lois a good view of more than either of them wanted to see.

“Lois?” Lucy asked. “What the hell?”

Kal turned away, his face turning several shades of red, while Lois just stood there, glaring at Kara. Lucy looked down, realized she was naked, and let out a startled yelp before dragging the sheet back
“Where the hell am I?” Lucy asked, looking around the room. “Is this Sanctuary?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“What the hell?” Lucy asked.

“What’s the last thing you remember?” Kara asked.

Lucy thought about it for a minute. “I was in the conference room with Maggie. We were talking about… Things.”

“Things?” Kara asked.

“I was bitching about my love life,” Lucy said.

“What about your love life?” Lois asked, still glaring accusingly at Kara.

Lucy turned to glare at Lois. “I was bitching about getting crotch-blocked by your rich blonde frienem,” she snapped. “Happy?”

“Is it safe to turn around?” Kal asked.

“Nope,” Kara said. “She’s still naked.”

Lucy turned around and slapped Kara on the shoulder, staggering her a couple of feet to the left.

“What the hell?” Lucy asked as she stared at Kara, then looked down at her hand.

Kara took a couple of steps towards Lucy. “Do you remember anything after talking to Maggie?”

“No,” Lucy said. “Maggie was trying to talk me into asking Susan out, and I told her it would be unethical, because Susan works for me, and oh yeah, I’m supposed to interview her future wife tomorrow, so that sucks, and then… Nothing.”

“Well, that’s lucky,” Kara said.

“I don’t like the sound of that,” Lucy said.

“You know J’onn was conducting telepathic security interviews with everyone on staff,” Kara said.

“Yeah,” Lucy said. “I was the fourth one he did. Right after Alex and Maggie.”

“Word got around about what was going on,” Kara said. “Turns out your dad flipped Hamilton before she was even recruited. When she realized J’onn was mole hunting, she went to Lillian for help, and Lillian and Simon Tycho ordered her to blow up the DEO. You were inside when the bomb went off.”

“Oh, shit,” Lucy said. “How bad?”

“Twelve dead,” Kara said. “Three hundred and forty-one injured. We got lucky, though. Alex had Nimda use the transmat system to get everyone out before the building came down.”

“The building is gone?” Lucy asked, horrified.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “It came down about twelve minutes after the bomb went off. You, J’onn, Alex
and Maggie were the only people in the command center that survived the initial blast. Alex and Maggie weren’t hurt because of their war suits, but you-”

“Are in your private hospital for a reason?” Lucy asked.

“You were dying,” Kara said. “Seven hundred and ninety-three individual fractures. Multiple compound fractures, severe internal bleeding, failure of almost every major organ. The barrier fabric uniforms are amazing when it comes to impact damage, but they don’t do a lot against crush damage, and a huge chunk of the ceiling came down on you.”

“But I’m here, and I’m alive,” Lucy said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “That’s because when I was setting up my emergency protocols for this place, I created a special file for medical emergencies. A list of people who were to be saved by any means necessary.”

“Kara, what did you do?” Lucy asked.

Kara turned and pointed at a chamber on the wall. “That is a Chrysalis chamber,” Kara said. “They were invented thousands of years ago, during the colonization of our sister world, Daxam. The planet was different enough that the colonists chose to have their physiology reworked to be better adapted to that world. Jor-El and my father included one in each of our Fortresses as a way out for Kal and I. If the burden of being alone among aliens ever became too much, we could use them to become human.

“There were software lock outs that would prevent us from using the chambers to create more Kryptonians. It was part of the eradicator protocol. A set of laws designed to prevent the abuses of cloning and genetic engineering technology that led to the Clone Wars.”

“You lifted the eradicator protocol,” Lucy said.

“I did,” Kara said. “Which is lucky for you. Nimda took one look at your injuries and decided that the fact that I was already in the process of making you a war suit like Maggie and Alex’s meant that I thought you were trustworthy enough to be given the powers of a Kryptonian, so she used the Chrysalis chamber to convert your physiology. Once that was done, she put you in the regeneration matrix, which is far more effective on Kryptonians than it is on humans.”

“Kara, are you saying what I think you’re saying?” Lucy asked.

“I’m saying that you are Lucy of the House of El. The first Kryptonian not born of Kryptonian blood.”

Lucy let out a small, hysterical little laugh. “Oh, God,” she said. “I’m finally everything James ever wanted.”

“Lucy,” Lois said.

Lucy waved her off. “No,” she said. “It’s okay. It’s…”

“I’m sorry,” Kara said. “I know I messed up.”

Lucy looked up at her.

“I just…” Kara closed her eyes, “I shouldn’t have done it. And after how James reacted, I should have deleted the list, but-”
“You couldn’t deal with the idea of losing anyone else,” Lucy said.

Kara felt a hand grasp hers, and she looked down to see Lucy smiling up at her.

“It’s okay,” Lucy said. “But I better get a cool suit.”

Kara smiled as she let out a laugh. “I think Winn has a couple of designs.”

“So, does this mean we’re married?” Lucy asked.

“Can Lucy put some clothes on now?” Kal asked.

“Shut up, Clark,” Lucy said. “I’m on my honeymoon here.”

Kara sighed. “We’re not married,” she said.

“Damn,” Lucy said. “Then I probably should get dressed, and you can fill me in on all the details.”

“So, let me get this straight,” J’onn said.

“Not the best choice of words for anything to do with the Danvers sisters, but continue,” Wentworth said.

J’onn glared at her as he spoke. “The DEO building collapsed,” he said.

“Yes sir,” Wentworth replied.

“And Agent Danvers used a Sunstone to put up a new building,” he said.

“Yes sir,” Wentworth said.

“And she didn’t get permission first,” he said.

“It’s Agent Danvers, sir,” Wentworth pointed out.

J’onn laid back in the bed and closed his eyes. “Let Assistant Director Lane deal with it. I’m on medical leave.”

“Um, so is she, sir,” Wentworth said.

J’onn sat up and looked at her. “Where’s Agent Vasquez?” he asked, a little fear in his voice.

“Three doors down, making heart eyes at Agent Willis,” Wentworth said.

“If I’m here, and Lucy’s here, and Susan’s here, who’s in charge?” he asked.

“Agent Danvers,” Wentworth said.

J’onn closed his eyes, and reached up, pinching his nose. “I don’t deserve this,” he said.

“You haven’t even seen the news footage yes,” Wentworth said.

“News footage?” J’onn asked.

“Yes ma’am,” Elizabeth said. “Of Field Commander Danvers and Agent Sawyer kissing in front of
the crater.”

“So, to be clear, not only did Agent Danvers violate every single building code in the state of California, not to mention utterly destroy an active crime scene, she did all of it while making out with her girlfriend, who happens to be a fellow DEO agent, on National Television. Is that about right?” Olivia asked.

“Yes, Ma’am,” Elizabeth said.

“Elizabeth?”

“Yes, Madam President?”

“Find me, in order, a bottle of aspirin, a bottle of Macallen 18, the Press Secretary, and Nia Nal. If you have any trouble finding any of those, just bring the launch codes instead.”

“Yes ma’am,” Elizabeth said.

Olivia watched her leave the office and wondered if “Fuck National City and everyone in it!” would be a good slogan for her re-election campaign.

“Fuck this city and everyone in it,” Alex said as she hung up the phone.

“Who was that?” Maggie asked.

“The Deputy Mayor,” Alex said. “Because the FBI arrested the actual Mayor, who already yelled at me about the exact same things two hours ago.”

“Oh,” Maggie said. “I thought you’d already talked to him.”

“No. The City Planner, the Head of the Zoning Commission, the Fire Marshal, the owners of every building in a ten-block radius and the guy from the FFA who’s in charge of flight paths for National City. Oh, and the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the City Building Inspector,” Alex said. “They’re all pissed, which I don’t get, because Kara grew an entire city, and didn’t get yelled at once.”

“Yeah, she kind of got permits and waivers for all of this shit,” Maggie said.

“Why didn’t you tell me that last night?” Alex asked.

“Maybe she was too busy sucking your face on National TV,” Leslie said as she walked into the room.

Alex groaned and buried her face in her hands. “I hate you,” Alex said.

“That’s okay Tightpants, Dimples likes me,” Leslie said.

Alex looked up, glaring at Maggie as she laughed.

“Traitor,” Alex said, before looking over at Leslie. “How’s Susan?”

“Ask her yourself,” Leslie said.

“She’s here?” Alex asked.
“Down in the command center,” Leslie said. “Got discharged twenty minutes ago.”

“Oh, thank God, an adult,” Alex said as she stood up and ran for the door.

“Thank you,” Lena said as Astra walked into the room.

Astra frowned. “Is there a problem?”

“A problem?” Lena asked, a slightly hysterical edge to her voice. “Last night the DEO building collapsed, and there was footage of you and Kara and a bunch of Kryptonians fighting some sort of B movie horror, and it broke one of you in half, but you were all wearing helmets and in the dark I could barely tell any of you apart.”

“You were concerned?” Astra said.

“Of course I was concerned!” Lena said.

“I’m sorry,” Astra said. “I…” She fumbled, not knowing what to say, until a thought occurred to her, and she reached into her pocket. “Kara insists we all carry one of these phones, at all times. I’ll give you my code. If you’re concerned in the future, you’ll be able to reach me.”

Lena seemed to relax a bit at that, which brought Astra more relief than it really should have. “Also, you can have your personal attendant contact mine at any time. Argox will always have my location.”

“Thank you,” Lena said. “I know it must seem silly to you, but I don’t have many friends, and the thought of one of them being hurt terrifies me.”

“No,” Astra said. “That does not seem silly at all. It’s simply been so long since I’ve had a friend, I’ve forgotten what it’s like.”

“But what about the other Kryptonians?” Lena asked. “What about your husband?”

Astra looked down, not sure how to face what should have been a mundane question. “Subordinates,” Astra said. “Colleagues, allies. Of all of them, Fendra is the closest I to what I’d call friend, but a leader must hold herself apart. As for my husband, that was a convenience, more so for him and my family than me. I always found him boorish and lacking. I agreed to the match because it was advantageous to my family. Once we landed here, I could not risk the insult of severing our bond, so I tolerated his presence.”

“That sounds like a lonely way to live,” Lena said.

“Not until the end,” Astra said. “I had my sister. I had Kara. I gave them up in an effort to save them. It seems foolish now, knowing what I do, but at the time it was the only path could see.”

Lena reached out and took one of Astra’s hands in her own. “I think Kara’s lucky to have someone who loves her so much.”

“Kara has always been easy to love,” Astra said. “I fear I lack that talent.”

“Well,” Lena said, “In that, you’re not alone.”

Astra looked at Lena and knew this was the moment she should ask the other woman if she knew anything that might help them find Cadmus, but the words would not come.
“We should get to work,” Astra said. “A few more days, I think, and we can begin fabricating a prototype.”

Lena smiled, and gave her hand one more squeeze before letting go, and Astra felt something stir within her as Lena started to turn away.

“Lena,” she said, and Lena turned back to her.

“Yes?”

“Your residence is only a floor above mine,” Astra said. “If you ever find yourself wanting for company.”

Lena smiled, and for a moment, Astra forgot how to breathe.

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Eliza!” J’onn said, a smile on his face as she stepped into his hospital room.

“Hey, J’onn,” she said. “I hope I’m not bothering you.”

“No, of course not,” J’onn said, setting the tablet he’d been working on aside. “What brings you here?”

“My friend managed to end up in the hospital, and I thought I’d come visit him,” Eliza said.

“I’m sure your friend will appreciate that a great deal,” J’onn said.

Eliza smiled and reached out, taking his hand. “Are you okay?” she asked. “Alex said you’d been badly burned.”

“I was,” J’onn said. “But Kryptonian medicine put me back together again.”

“How long will you be in here?” Eliza asked.

“Another day or so,” J’onn said. “I needed fairly extensive skin grafts, and the attendant is monitoring for infection.”

“Sounds like you’re getting good care,” Eliza said.

“The bedside manner could use a little work, but yeah,” J’onn said. “Are you okay?”

“I wasn’t the one who got blown up,” Eliza said.

“No,” J’onn said, “but a lot of people you care about were in that building.”

“I’m trying not to think about that,” she said. “I was terrified for all of you.”

“I’m sorry you had to go through that,” J’onn said.

“I’m just glad everyone is okay,” Eliza said. She gave his hand a tight squeeze. “I’m glad you’re okay.”

“So am I,” J’onn said.

“Oh, I brought you something,” Eliza said. She reached into her purse with her free hand and pulled
a large package out of her purse.

“Chocos,” J’onn said, seeing the package.

“Kara mentioned you liked them,” Eliza said, “and I know how you superheroes are about your food.”

“You are an amazing woman, Eliza Danvers,” J’onn said as he tore open the package. He was so focused on getting to the cookies, he missed the faint blush on Eliza’s cheeks.

“This is impressive, Lillian,” Max said. “Another one of Lex’s hideouts?”

“No,” Lillian said. “This one is all mine. I kept it tucked away under a dozen layers of shell companies to keep it off Lex’s radar. Sometimes a girl doesn’t feel like sharing her best ideas.”

“Even with your dear little boy?” Max asked.

“Especially with my dear little boy,” Lillian said. “I love my son, but I’d be a fool not to admit the boy has the patience and the attention span of a mayfly. It’s the reason his sister always destroyed him at chess. He needed everything *now*. I tried to tell him that Cadmus was the end game, but he walked away because it was taking too long to satisfy him.”

“Well, if we’re lucky, Tycho’s foolishness won’t have derailed things too much,” Max said.

“Do you think you can finish Project Brain?” Lillian asked.

“It’s mostly finished,” Max said. “With the information we got tonight, I can finish tweaking it.”

“How long?” Lillian asked.

“Another week, at most,” Max said. “But the test results from Non have proven that they’re never going to work with Kryptonian physiology while under a yellow sun.”

“As long as we have the red Kryptonite, the plan is still viable,” Lillian said. “Though without Hamilton, we’ll have to find some vector to deliver it other than dosing Supergirl’s food.”

“Any ideas?” Max asked.

“I have something that might work. One of Lex’s unfinished projects. I might need your help to get it working though,” Lillian said.

“Any way I can help,” Max said.

“Can you do anything with the bio-gel Harper brought back?” Lillian said.

“I’ll find some use for it,” Max said. “But I’m focusing on my other project.”

“How’s that going?” Lillian asked.

“Not bad,” Max said. “She should be ready for deployment soon.”

“She would make a nice Christmas present for our alien friends,” Lillian said.

“I don’t think she’ll be ready quite that quickly,” Max said. “But definitely in time for Miranda’s rally.”
“It will have to do, I suppose,” Lillian said. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I need to go tell General Lane his daughter isn’t on the list of agents killed in the bombing.”

“I forget, is that good news or bad news?” Max asked.

“It all depends on your perspective,” Lillian said. “And from mine, Lane has a soft spot for a pair of traitors.”
Chapter Summary

Kara goes to therapy, then gets drunk, because therapy sucks.

Chapter Notes

Just an FYI, I've set up my own discord server. If you'd like to join, message me on Tumblr (argyle-s) or on discord (themollyjay#1728) for an invite.

Wednesday, December 23, 2015

“How are you feeling this afternoon, Kara?” Doctor Foster asked as Kara dropped down onto the sofa.

“Pretty good,” Kara said. “We managed to take down another PHAN cell last night.”

“That’s good news,” Foster said. “It seems like Mr. Diggle’s help has really turned things around.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Maggie and Lucy are managing to keep things above board in terms of what tactics are legal, but everyone’s picking up the counter-insurgency training really quickly.”

“You don’t sound as enthusiastic as I expected about that,” Foster said.

“I’m frustrated,” Kara said.

“Why is that?”

“We still haven’t found Lillian, Max and General Lane,” Kara said.

“It’s been less than a week,” Foster said.

“I know,” Kara said. “I just hate that they’re out there.”

“You have to be patient,” Foster said.

“Last time I was patient, twenty-three people died,” Kara said.

“Do you blame Alex, Maggie, Susan, J’onn and Lucy for that?” Foster asked.

“No!” Kara said.

“But their investigation motivated the bombing,” Foster said.

“That doesn’t mean it’s their fault!”

“They were in the building where Hamilton was planting the bomb. They had more opportunity to
discover what was happening,” Foster said. “Doesn’t that make them to blame?”

“No!”

“Kara, what have we discussed about holding yourself to standards that you wouldn't hold other people to?” Foster asked.

“This is different,” Kara said.

“Why is it different?” Foster said.

“In the original timeline, there was no bombing at the DEO, which means that the bombing is a result of a change I made,” Kara said.

“That doesn’t make it your fault,” Foster said. “Your actions don’t absolve Cadmus of their guilt. Hamilton killed the twelve DEO agents. Harper killed Tycho and the Cadmus agents. Lillian Luthor and Simon Tycho gave the orders.”

“It’s hard to remember that sometimes,” Kara said.

“Of course it is,” Foster said. “You spent almost a year feeling like you could do no wrong, because you already knew what to expect. Now you’re in uncharted territory, reacting instead of acting. That’s bound to make you feel like you’ve failed, but you haven’t. It’s been less than three months since you caught Alex’s plane. In that time, you’ve managed to push through the Alien Amnesty Act, you’ve built the City of Hope, you’ve cut Cadmus’ government support and funding, you’ve exposed Lillian, Lord and Lane, and you’ve dealt with the threat Simon Tycho presented. You’ve managed to convince your Aunt to give up on Myriad, made a real start on rebuilding your people’s future, and started putting together an alliance to help with the things that are coming.”

“And I got to punch Rip Hunter in the face,” Kara said.

“I don’t like to encourage violence as a way to solve disputes,” Foster said, “but given the circumstances, yes, you got to punch Rip Hunter in the face. These aren’t small accomplishments, Kara. You’ve changed the world for the better.”

“It’s not enough,” Kara said.

“I know it doesn’t feel that way,” Foster said.

“It’s not a question of feelings,” Kara said. “If the Guardians or Darkseid arrived today, it would be a slaughter. Time isn’t on our side, and I feel like I’m trying to kill cockroaches while the house is on fire.”

“Maybe you should delegate the cockroaches, and focus on fighting the fire,” Foster said.

“What do you mean?” Kara asked.

“Cadmus are criminals. Let the DEO handle them and focus on your plans for dealing with the larger problems.”

“I can’t,” Kara said.

“You didn’t delegate during the war?”

“I did,” Kara said. “I was a general. I had captains and lieutenants.”
“Then why is this different?” Foster asked.

“Because I failed!” Kara snapped. “Last time, I failed. I didn’t find them in time, and everyone died. Cat, and James and Eliza and Jeremiah all died. Kara Danvers died that day, too. I just… CatCo moved to another building, but I just couldn’t go back. I couldn’t live that life without Cat in it. I couldn’t watch someone else try to take her place. They took her from me once, and I am *not* going to let it happen again!”

“Kara, would it be okay with you if we looked at that statement for a moment?” Foster asked.

“What statement?” Kara asked.

“You said, ‘They took her from me once, and I am *not* going to let it happen again,’” Foster said.

Kara nodded. “Okay.”

“I’m assuming ‘They’ is Cadmus?” Foster asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“And ‘her’ is… Eliza?”

Kara shook her head. “No,” she said.

“Cat, then?” Foster asked.

Kara nodded.

“You’re afraid of them killing Cat?” Foster asked.

“Of course I am,” Kara snapped. “They’ve already tried once.”

“That’s true,” Foster said. “Her position in the public eye draws attention.”

“It’s not just that,” Kara said, leaning back against the back of the sofa. “They attacked her because they know I care about her.”

“Do you mean the shooting, or the attack in the old timeline?” Foster asked.

“Both,” Kara said. “She died in the other timeline because of me, and she almost died in this timeline because of me.”

“Would it do any good to remind you that Cadmus was to blame for both incidents?” Foster asked.

“Probably not,” Kara said.

“Then we’ll leave it for now,” Foster said, “but something I do want to ask. Cat is important to you?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“When you were talking about the people who died, you mentioned her first. Then, you said you wouldn’t let them take her away from you,” Foster said. “Can you tell me why you phrased it that way?”

“What do you mean?” Kara asked.

“I don’t want to put words in your mouth, so I’m trying to be very careful about how I phrase my
question,” Foster said. “But ‘take her away’ is different from how you referred to what happened to James and Eliza and Jeremiah. First you said everyone died. Cat and James and Eliza and Jeremiah all died. But they you said they took Cat away from you. Why is that different?”

“I…,” Kara stopped, and her gaze dropped to the ground.

“Kara, I’m not going to pressure you. You don’t have to answer, but if you do answer, you have to be honest,” Foster said. “Why is Cat different?”

“Because I love her,” Kara said.

“And what does that mean?” Foster asked.

“It means I love her,” Kara said.

“There are lots of ways to love someone,” Foster said. “You love Alex. You love Eliza. You love J’onn. You love Maggie. Do you love Cat the same way you love them?”

“No,” Kara said. “No.”

“Do you love her the same way you love Sara?” Foster asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I don’t want to, but I do.”

“Why don’t you want to love her?” Foster asked. “Is it because you think she won’t love you back?”

“It’s because I’m afraid she will,” Kara said.

“Why is that so frightening?” Foster asked.

“Losing Sara was hard. I knew it was coming. We planned for it, and we prepared for it, and I had Kara Danvers back. I had Alex and Winn and J’onn and Cat and Eliza back. Even with that, there were nights what I would cry so hard it felt like I was dying. The night I built Sanctuary was one of the worst. I stood there in the middle of this beautiful piece of my home, and I had no one to share it with, and I curled up on the floor and I cried for hours, because I wanted Sara back. Then, the next morning, I went and I had breakfast with Alex and I pretended like nothing was wrong. Like I was just this happy twenty-something assistant who loved her job, and her new apartment and her life, when all I wanted to do was curl up and die.

“But I had things to do. I had a mission. So, I did the same thing I did when I got into the pod the first time. I took everything I was feeling, and I stuffed it down, and I made the choice to be Kara Danvers again. I made the choice to be happy, and friendly, and to care about people again. I stuffed Sara down as far as I could, but I could never shove her into the same hole I managed to shove Krypton and my parents and Astra into. Sara was my light, my hope, and my shelter.”

“My first time through, Cat was always a touchstone for me. I could go to her, and she was my mentor and my guide, but this time, it was different. This time, the playing field was more level, and even before Supergirl, we were friends. We teased and played and went back and forth. She was still Ms. Grant, and I was still Kiera, but the gap between them was a lot smaller, and when Supergirl came along, she figured it out so much faster.

“She knew right away, but this time she didn’t push. This time she let me tell her the secret, but even before I did, she was there, protecting me, helping me, being the friend and confidant I remembered, and the inspiration I needed. She reminded me of who I used to be and made me want to be that person again.
“When I hurt, when I’m exhausted, when I’m overwhelmed, I go to her. She didn’t replace Sara. They’re not the same. But she could step into the hole Sara had left in my life so easily. She could become my light, my hope, and my shelter.

“You can’t imagine how terrifying the possibility of having that again is, when it comes with the certainty of losing it again.”

“I can’t imagine,” Foster said, “but I do have a question for you.”

“Okay,” Kara said.

“Are you really protecting yourself by holding Cat at arm’s length?” Foster asked.

“Did you hear a thing I just said?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Foster said. “You said you love Cat. You said you are afraid of Cadmus taking her away from you. The emotional investment already exists. You’re in a position where you are experiencing all of the risks, but not receiving any of the rewards.”

Kara closed her eyes and sighed. “Sara said something similar,” she admitted.

“Sara knew about your feelings for Cat?” Foster asked.

“She told me I should tell Cat how I felt. Said she didn’t want me to be alone,” Kara said.

“How do you feel about that?” Foster asked.

“Scared,” Kara said.

“Scared because you’re afraid of losing Cat?” Foster asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“What if that wasn’t a risk?” Foster asked.

“What do you mean?” Kara asked.

“I mean, if you were sitting exactly where you are, and everything about your life was the same, except there was no chance that you would lose Cat if you started a relationship with her, would you pursue it?” Foster asked.

“That’s ridiculous,” Kara said.

“A little,” Foster said, “but think about it. If there were no risk, what would you do?”

“Well, if I listen to drunk Kara, the answer is ‘Climb Cat like a tree.’”

Foster laughed. “I think I would like drunk Kara,” she said.

“Don’t be so sure. She gets handsy,” Kara said.

“Sounds like there’s a story there,” Foster said.

“More than one,” Kara said. “Most of them involve blondes.”

“Someone has a type,” Foster said, a grin on her face.
“I do,” Kara said. They sat in silence for a few moments, until Kara reached out and picked up one of the Rubik's cubes. “Is this where you tell me I should ask Cat out?”

“Kara, I try not to judge my patients. I understand that your fears are very real, and that there is a lot of trauma and emotion mixed up in these issues,” Foster said.

“But?” Kara asked.

“But you’re telling me that the woman who was your de facto wife for six plus years, who is still madly in love with you, and who knows you literally better than anyone in fifty-three universes, thinks it’s in your best interests to tell Cat how you feel,” Foster said.

“She doesn’t want me to be alone,” Kara said.

“Do *you* want to be alone?” Foster asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I just can’t lose anyone else.”

“So you would rather be alone than take the risk?” Foster asked.

“No. Yes. I don’t know!” Kara said. “I know that sometimes when I think about how I felt when Sara left I feel like I can’t breathe, and I think I can’t go through that again. But every time I have a bad moment, I run straight to Cat for comfort.”

“Did you go to her after the fight last week?” Foster asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said, “because crying all over Oliver Queen wasn’t humiliating enough.”

“Why was that humiliating?” Foster asked.

“Crying on Oliver, or falling asleep on Cat?” Kara asked.

“Both, but let’s start with Oliver,” Foster said.

“Because I punched him in the face the last time I saw him,” Kara said.

“You do that a lot,” Foster said.

“It’s satisfying,” Kara said.

“I’ll bet,” Foster said, “But we should probably work on a healthier response to anger.”

“Punching has been my go-to for a long time,” Kara said.

“Noted. Why was falling asleep on Cat humiliating?” Foster asked.

“Because I know that every time I go to her, I just make it harder on myself,” Kara said. “Every time she touches me, or holds me, the world stops, and I want to stay there forever, and I feel like I’m making a promise I can’t keep. Because it reminds me of how scared I am of losing her, and of losing her, and I feel like a coward.”

“But you do want to be with Cat?” Foster asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Kara, I know you’re scared, and in most situations like yours, I would honestly advise against the
start of a new romantic relationship while you’re under this much stress, but there are always exceptions. You’ve told me that your relationship with Sara was what allowed you to function during the war. That having that kind of comfort and support kept the weight of what you were going through from crushing you. The stress and pressure you are under may have changed from what it was during the war, but that doesn’t mean it’s any less, and your mental and emotional health are deteriorating. The panic attacks, the flashbacks, the bursts of rage are all signs of that.”

“And I get why you are scared. After the way Sara hurt you-“

“Sara didn't hurt me,” Kara protested.

“Yes, Kara, she did. She might not have wanted to. She might have had the best reasons in the world, but she left you, and someone leaving you is a particular source of pain for you. I’m not saying Sara made the wrong choice, but she did hurt you.

“And now, you’re looking at taking a risk with Cat, and you are justifiably afraid of being hurt again, and as a result, you are hurting yourself first, by denying yourself a chance to be happy with someone you love, who clearly cares a great deal for you.

“I’m not saying that a romantic relationship is a magic cure-all for what you are going through. Love is powerful, and it can be healing, but it’s not a miracle cure for mental health problems. You are still going to need help. You are still going to have post-traumatic stress disorder. You are still going to be at risk of flashbacks and panic attacks.

“But the truth is, you are already emotionally invested. You are not protecting yourself. You’re hurting yourself, and if Cat feels for you what you feel for her, you're probably hurting her as well.”

Kara stared at Foster as she absorbed the words. “That’s not what I expected you to say.”

“It’s not what I would normally say,” Foster admitted. “But you’re not a normal case. I would normally never allow someone with your level of trauma to return to active duty. Unfortunately, you are the only soldier I have ever come across that is literally indispensable.”

“Lucky me,” Kara said.

“I know it’s not fair, but like you’ve said, it is the world we live in,” Foster said. “For what it’s worth, I believe you are the best choice for the job. You are incredibly strong. But no one can be strong all the time, and from what you’ve told me, Sara and Cat give you a place where you can rest, where you don’t have to be strong, and that is something you desperately need.”

Kara sighed and closed her eyes. “I’ll think about it.”

Kara opened the door to her apartment and gave Alex and Maggie a huge watery smile. “You guys came.”

“Of course we did,” Alex said, stepping in and hugging Kara tightly. “You call and say you need a sister night, where else are we going to be?”

“Skinny-dipping in the lagoon on Sanctuary Island,” Kara said without missing a beat.

Alex stiffened. “We weren’t skinny-dipping!” she said indignantly.

“Not in this timeline,” Kara said.
“Yeah,” Maggie said, “that’s all you and Lucy.”

“I swear I’m going to put itching powder in her war suit,” Kara said as she let go of Alex.

“Be nice,” Maggie said. “She didn’t mean to spill the juicy gossip. She’s just no match for my interrogation skills.”

“Yeah,” Kara said, “I’m sure the step stool you have to stand on to loom over people is really intimidating.”

“Brat,” Maggie said. “How you holding up?”

“I’m okay,” Kara said.

“Bullshit,” Maggie said. “But we have pizza, potstickers, ice cream, chocolate, and…” Maggie held up a bottle of something blue and glowing. “Bolovaxian whiskey.”

Kara’s face lit up like a Christmas tree. “Where did you get this?” she asked, taking the bottle from Maggie.

“M’gann has a guy,” Maggie said.

“You’ve had it before?” Alex asked as she carried the two insulated shopping bags filled with ice cream over to the apartment’s ridiculously large chest freezer.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Kilowog and I went through two bottles of this the night we took Oa from the last remaining Guardians.” She looked up at Maggie and Alex. “None for you two.”

“Why not?” Alex asked, sounding a little insulted.

“Babe, have you ever seen a Bolovaxian?” Maggie asked.

“No,” Alex said. “I know Vasquez took one down, but that was before I was recruited.”

“That stuff is about fifty times more potent than scotch,” Maggie said.

“Right, none for us,” Alex said. “Please tell me you brought my booze back from Sanctuary…”

“It’s in the cabinet,” Kara said.

“Good,” Alex said as she turned around and started searching for her prized bottle of Johnny Walker.

“So, what kind of movie are you going to torture us with?” Maggie said.

“Why don’t you pick?” Kara said. “Just-”

“No Disney films,” Maggie said. “I remember.”

“That’s because you’re awesome,” Kara said, feeling the tears start to well up in her eyes again.

“Hey,” Maggie said, stepping in and wrapping her arms around Kara. “We’re here. We’ve got you.”

“Always,” Alex added.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said. “I’m being ridiculous.”

“No, you’re not, honey,” Maggie said. “Therapy sucks sometimes.”
“You want to talk about it?” Alex asked.

“Maybe later?” Kara asked. “Right now, I just want to spend time with a couple of my favorite people.”

“Well, I think we can manage that,” Alex said.

“So, there I am, the only other human in the room, while this guy just goes on and on about how disgusting aliens are, and how we should run them all off the planet, and I kept trying to interrupt the guy, but he just wouldn’t shut up,” Maggie said.

“What happened?” Kara asked.

“M’gann walked up behind him and shapeshifted into her Green Martian look, then tapped him on the shoulder,” Maggie said. “You should have seen the look on his face. I swear I thought he was going to wet himself. He put in for a transfer out of Science Division the next morning. That was the last time the Lieutenant tried to give me a partner.”

“You know, I don’t think I’ve ever heard the story of how you met M’gann,” Kara said.

“Oh, no,” Maggie said, shaking her head. “No way. I am not telling that story.”

“Okay, now you’ve *got* to tell us,” Alex said.

“No way,” Maggie said. “Not happening, Danvers.”

Kara smiled and leaned over, whispering in Alex’s ear. When she pulled away, Alex turned and looked at her.

“Really?” Alex asked.

Kara nodded.

Alex turned to Maggie.

“What did you tell her?” Maggie asked, narrowing her eyes.

She glanced over at Alex, who was smiling, and as soon as Maggie looked at her, she scrunched her mouth to one side and bit her lower lip.

Maggie stared at Alex for a good thirty seconds, realizing her fate had been sealed. She picked up a cushion off the couch and hurled it at Kara’s face. “TRAITOR!”

“So, after the underwater breathing tests, Eliza instituted the teddy bear rule,” Kara said. “Alex had to try any experiment she wanted to try on me on a teddy bear first.”

“I hate you,” Alex said.

Maggie, who was laughing so hard tears were rolling down her face managed to choke out, “How many teddy bears did she go through?”

“Five,” Alex said grumpily.

“Six,” Kara said.
“The one in the wood chipper doesn’t count!” Alex said.

“Eliza counted it,” Kara said.

“So, we get home, and keep in mind we’ve been out for three hours, and Mom takes Kara’s candy bag and the only thing in it is a box of raisins. Mom looks at Kara like she’s the most pitiful thing on Earth, and asks, ‘What happened sweetie? Were you too nervous to go up to the houses?’” Alex said. “I’m standing behind Mom, nodding my head, hoping Kara will catch on, when Dad walks in and asks, ‘Kara, what’s that in your pocket?’ and Kara pulls out two huge fists full of candy wrappers.”

“She kept the wrappers?” Maggie asked, barely able to contain her mirth.

“I didn’t want to litter,” Kara said indignantly.

“If you want to talk about useless lesbian stories, ask Kara about the night she broke a table at Girbar,” Maggie said.

“You snitch!” Kara shouted.

“Hey, you told her Winn beat me at pool!” Maggie shot back.

“Was there a blonde involved?” Alex asked.

Maggie laughed. “Is everyone in this room gay?” she asked.

“Wait, Alex had a mohawk?” Maggie asked.

“And a Joan Jett poster,” Kara said.

Maggie looked over at Alex in confusion. “How did you not know you’re gay?”

Alex picked up a pillow and pressed it over her face to muffle the scream.

“What are your intentions towards my aunt?” Kara asked.

“What?” Maggie asked. She and Alex exchanged a look, before she asked, “Kara, how drunk are you?”

“Really drunk,” Kara said, “but quit trying to change the subject. Lucy told me she saw both of you staring at Astra’s ass.”

“Was that before or after you tattooed your name on her back in Kryptonian?” Alex asked.

“Before!” Kara said. “And it's a signature. All artists sign their art. But it was after she told me she wanted to be the filling in an Alex Maggie sandwich.”

“Okay, but Susan,” Kara said.

“Agreed!” Maggie said with a little too much enthusiasm and got a slap on the arm from Alex for it.

Both Maggie and Kara turned towards Alex and gave her their best ‘bitch, please’ look. She stared
back defiantly for a good forty-five seconds.

“Okay, fine!” Alex said.

Kara raised a finger and pointed at Alex. “You are so gay,” she said, before she fell of the couch, laughing all the way down.

“Well,” Alex said, “time for you to switch to orange juice.”

“How’s she doing?” Maggie asked.

“I think she’s finally asleep,” Alex said.

“Am not,” Kara muttered in a sleepy voice from where her head rested in Alex's lap.

“Or not,” Alex said.

“Hey, can I ask you guys a question?” Kara asked.

“Of course,” Alex said as she stroked Kara's hair gently.

“Do you think I should marry Cat?” Kara asked.

“What?” Alex squeaked.

“I was going to marry Sara, but she said I should marry Cat, but then Lucy said I should marry her, but I said I couldn't because she'd get jealous if I climbed Cat like a tree, and I think Lena wants me to climb her, which would be nice because I like her boobs, but I love Cat and Cat doesn’t share,” Kara said in a long sleepy ramble.

“Lucy asked you to marry her?” Alex asked.

“Mmm-hmm,” Kara said. “Lucy always smells so nice. Do you think she would get her tongue pierced if I married her?”

“What is it with your sister?” Maggie asked.

“Harley had a pierced tongue,” Kara said. “It was nice.”

Kara reached and patted Alex's knee. “You should get your tongue pierced. Maggie would like that.”

Alex groaned.

Maggie laughed.

Kara started snoring.
Christmas Time In The Multiverse

Chapter Summary

It's Christmas day. Alex spends some time with her dad, Maggie covers things at the DEO, Jeremiah thinks about how he get help get his family out of danger, Kara tried to mend fences with Olivia, and welcomes some visitors to National City. Sam and tried to cheer Ruby, Astra and Lena spend some time together, and Kara receives an unexpected Christmas Present.

Chapter Notes

I've started a discord server. If you'd like to join, message me on Tumblr (argyle-s) or on discord (themollyjay#1728) for an invite.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Friday, December 25, 2015

Alex smiled as the door opened, barely able to contain her excitement when she saw Jeremiah’s face.

“Hey, Dad,” she said as she stepped in and pulled him into a tight hug.

“Hey, Alex,” Jeremiah said as he hugged her back.

Alex let go of him, stepping back and bouncing lightly on her heels. “How you holding up?” she asked.

He gave a weak smile and a shrug. “Going a little stir crazy, if I’m honest,” he said.

“Well,” Alex said, not able to keep the grin off her face as she reached into her pocket and pulled out an envelope. “I’ve got good news for you.”

“What’s this?” he asked as he took the envelope.

“The US Marshals *finally* came through with your new ID’s,” Alex said, not mentioning she’d gotten a little frustrated and had Nimda expedite things a bit.

“Really?” Jeremiah asked as he opened the envelope. He pulled out a driver’s license, passport, social security card, a voter registration card, and two credit cards.

“Yeah,” Alex said happily. “The credit cards are a gift from Kara. There’s linked to a trust fund Kara set up. I wouldn’t worry too much about the limit, but she said to try and keep it under a million dollars a month. I think she was joking, but when it comes to money and Kara, it’s hard to tell these days.”

“Yeah,” Jeremiah said. “I did notice that.”
“So, the official story is that you’ve been in witness protection this whole time,” Alex said.

“You’re kidding, right?” Jeremiah said.

“Hey, don’t knock it,” Alex said. “You should hear the line of bullshit J’onn had to feed the White House about how you’re alive.”

Jeremiah frowned. “You didn’t tell them the truth?”

Alex scoffed. “No,” she said. “Half the government already wants to dissect Kara or raid her little island retreat for all the tech they can carry. Telling them Kara has access to time travel would be like throwing gasoline on a dynamite fire.”

“Well, that’s certainly an image,” Jeremiah said.

Alex grinned and took a step back, nodding towards the elevator. “Come on,” she said. “I want to show you what Kara got me for Christmas.”

“What on earth is that?” Jeremiah asked as he stared at Alex’s new toy.

“That is a two-thousand-sixteen Lamborghini Aventador in Metallic Blue with silver trim,” Alex announced. “Or at least, that’s what the paperwork says. Kara ran the original through the recyclers out at Sanctuary, and this baby is the result.”

She walked over, running a hand over the car lovingly. “Turns out having a sister who’s a billionaire with her own private island full of alien super-tech has its advantages.” She pulled the door latch, swinging the door up. “Come on, let’s take her for a spin.”

“Okay,” Jeremiah said.

“No Maggie today?” Jeremiah asked as Alex whipped them around a curve a lot faster than he thought was safe.

“She’s filling in at the DEO today,” Alex said. “Lucy’s still recovering from the bombing.”

“Ah,” Jeremiah said. “Sorry. I know it must suck not to get to spend the day with her.”

“She volunteered,” Alex said. “I was supposed to cover Lucy’s shift, but Maggie said she thought I could use some dad time.”

“That was nice of her,” Jeremiah said.

“Yeah. Maggie’s pretty great,” Alex said.

“How did you two meet?” Jeremiah asked.

“Which time?” Alex asked with a grin on her face. “Kara said in the original timeline, we met arguing over jurisdiction at a crime scene.”

Jeremiah made a small, non-committal noise.

“This time around, we met through Kara,” Alex said. “Kara was supposed to be on a blind date Mom set up, but she got stood up, and Maggie sat down next to her at the bar. Kara decided to make friends, because that’s what Kara does, and they started hanging out. A couple of months back, Kara
and I had a fight, and I went over to her place to apologize, and Maggie answered the door."

“I don’t know how to describe what that was like. I mean, I took one look at her, and my brain just sort of crashed. I didn’t get understand it at all at the time, but I just stood there, staring at her, and I couldn’t breathe. A few days later, we worked security for a Presidential visit. After that, we started hanging out, and the more time I spent with her, the more time I wanted to spend with her, until one night, she just kind of let me know that she liked me, which was terrifying because you know, I still hadn’t admitted to myself that I was gay, but God, the idea of saying no to her was so much worse, and when I thought about what it would be like to just be her friend, and watch while she fell in love with someone else, it felt like I was dying.”

“It sounds like you really love her,” Jeremiah said.

“Yeah,” Alex agreed. “Yeah, I do. I know it’s quick, but when I’m with her, it’s like the whole world just stops. I mean, I love Kara, but ever since she came out as Supergirl, I’ve felt like I was living in the middle of a hurricane. Maggie is the calm at the center. When I’m with her, it doesn’t matter if we’re curled up on the couch watching Chopped or in the middle of a fight with some kind of monster. If she’s there, I’m at peace, and I know everything will be alright.”

Alex glanced over at Jeremiah, relieved to see him just watching her and smiling.

“Sounds a lot like me and your mom when we first met,” he said.

“Really?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Jeremiah said.

“Have you guys talked at all?” Alex asked.

Jeremiah sighed and shook his head. “Not since I moved into another apartment.”

“Mom wouldn’t say why you moved out,” Alex said. “She said she didn’t what the issues between the two of you to get in the way of my relationship with you.”

“Ten years is a long time,” he said. “She changed. I didn’t get a chance to.”

“I’m sorry,” Alex said, feeling the guilt settle into the pit of her stomach.

“It’s not your fault,” Jeremiah said.

“It kind of is,” Alex said. “I’m the one who picked you up off the jungle floor.”

“I thought it was Kara’s girlfriend,” he said.

“No,” Alex said. “Sara took us back to get you. We’d looked for you everywhere. We even went to an alternate universe to get a computer, just to help look for you. But when Sara and the Legends showed up, Kara realized the reason we couldn’t find you in any of the places you should have been was because Cadmus never had you in this timeline. That’s when she asked Sara to go back.”

“Why didn’t you just patch me up and leave me there?” Jeremiah asked.

“We had to preserve the timeline,” Alex said. “Everything depended on Kara talking Astra down before she deployed Myriad, and that depended on using Vartox to send Astra a message, which she could only do if her public debut as Supergirl went just right.”

They road in silence for a while, Alex steeling the occasional glance over at her dad to see what he
was thinking.

“I know it has to be hard,” Alex said. “And I’m probably not making it better being so busy.”

“It’s not your fault,” Jeremiah said. “You’re all grown up, with a life and an important job and a wonderful girlfriend.”

“You’re part of that life,” Alex said. “At least, if you want to be.”

“Of course I do,” Jeremiah said. “Alex, I will always want to be a part of your life.”

“Good,” Alex said.

“Where are we?” Jeremiah asked.

“This is one of my favorite spots,” Alex said as she rounded the last turn and started down the narrow strip of asphalt leading to the beach. “It’s far enough outside the city that most of the people don’t know it exists, and since the cliffs don’t leave any room for hotels, the developers haven’t snatched it up yet.”

Alex brought the car to a stop on a small, flat patch of bedrock that sat between the cliff face and the narrow ribbon of sand. She put the car in park, and pressed the button to pop the trunk, then climbed out.

“Come on,” she said before shutting her door and walking around to the front of the car and fishing out the picnic basket and the large blanket she’d stashed there earlier.

“What’s this?” Jeremiah asked.

Alex beamed as she opened the basket to show Jeremiah what was inside. “Pimento sandwiches, sour cream and onion potato chips, and grape-cranberry juice,” she said proudly.

Jeremiah returned her smile. “It’s been a while, hasn’t it?” he asked.

“Thirteen years, seven months and twenty-seven days,” Alex said.

“Your thirteenth birthday,” Jeremiah said. Neither of them mentioned it was because Kara arrived two and a half months before Alex’s fourteenth birthday. “I’m sorry. I never meant to let Kara get in the way of being your dad.”

“You didn’t,” Alex said. “I know things were tough, and I didn’t understand then, but I do now. I just wish I could have brought you home sooner.”

“Hey, Babe,” Maggie said, not able to stop herself from smiling as she answered her phone.

“Hey, yourself,” Alex said. “How are things at the DEO?”

“Fine,” Maggie said. “I’ve already had to send Lucy home. And I had to send J’onn home twice.”

Alex laughed. “I’m surprised you haven’t had to send Susan home.”

“Well, she did show up, but she took one look, saw Chase was here, and just noped right the fuck out the door,” Maggie said.
“Christ,” Alex said. “You’re sure Kara said those two got together in the other timeline?”

“According to Lucy, but it’s got to be one of those enemies to lovers things,” Maggie said, “because I have yet to see the two of them in the same room without wanting to claw each other’s eyes out.”

“What are they fighting about now?” Alex asked.

“What do they always fight about?” Maggie asked.

“Leslie,” both of them said at the same time.

“Cameron called her an impulsive, reckless hothead,” Maggie said, “which, let’s face it, she is.”

“And Susan blew her top?” Alex asked.

“I believe Susan’s exact words were, ‘Shut your fucking mouth, and don’t open it again until you’ve taken down four Kryptonian-level threats,’” Maggie said.

“Susan said that?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Maggie said, “but then, this is the same woman who called the President of the United States a ‘damn stubborn fool’ to her face.”

“I know, but honestly, that was justified,” Alex said.

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “I do not get her deal with Leslie. It’s like watching a grizzly bear protect an especially surly alley cat.”

“You don’t think they’re a thing, do you?” Alex asked.

“You know, I’ve had that thought a time or two,” Maggie said. “If I didn’t know Susan was supposed to end up with Chase, I’d be sure of it.”

“What is it Kara said? Just because something worked in that world, doesn’t mean it will work in this one,” Alex said.

“And when Susan met Leslie in that world, Leslie was a full-on super villain,” Maggie said.

“You know, as fun as the gossip is, it’s not really the reason I called,” Alex said.

“Good to know,” Maggie replied. “Enjoying your new toy?”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Dad loves it too. I packed a lunch and we’d down at the beach.”

“You got a Lamborghini for Christmas, and you used it to take your dad on a picnic?” Maggie asked, not able to keep the laughter out of her voice. “Nerd!”

“I know,” Alex said, and Maggie could almost hear the smile she knew was on Alex’s face. “It’s kind of terrible, isn’t it?”

“I think it’s adorable,” Maggie said.

“That’s cause you love me,” Alex said.

“I do,” Maggie said. “I love you.”

“That’s good, because I love you too,” Alex replied.
“See you at the party tonight?” Maggie asked.

“I can’t wait,” Alex said. “Bye.”

“Bye, Babe. Have fun with your Dad.”

Jeremiah sat on the sand and watched Alex leaning against her new car, talking on the phone with her girlfriend, and hated that it was a sight which gave him mixed feelings. He was incredibly proud of the woman Alex had become. She was fiercely smart, and you couldn’t look at her and not see how passionate and loving she was, and she was so incredibly brave that it almost stopped his heart. But her job, her girlfriend, the car, her entire life seemed to revolve around Kara, and that worried him.

Everyone seemed to love Kara, and everyone went out of their way to protect her and defend her, but he’d listened to her debrief more than once, and a lot of things stood out to him. The casual way she talked about ordering entire worlds burned, the satisfaction on her face and in her voice when she talked about crushing Desaad’s skull or killing the Furies terrified him. Kara was marching head first into a war that, if she was telling the truth, had already killed him, his wife, and his daughter before, and she was dragging everyone he loved along with her.

He just couldn’t figure out a way to separate Kara from them. To stop her from dragging them along into the disaster she was headed for. But Alex had given him the first hint. Now he just needed to figure out how to get in touch with the most carefully-guarded woman in the entire world.

Olivia frowned as she looked down at her phone and saw Kara Danvers’ name staring up at her. She hit the accept button, wondering what fresh hell she was about to be plunged into, on Christmas of all days.

“Hello, Kara,” Olivia said.

“Hey, Olivia,” Kara said. “How are you?”

“That depends entirely on what you say next,” Olivia said.

She heard a soft laugh on the other end of the line. “I suppose I deserve that, but I promise you I’m not calling to ruin your day.”

“Well, that’s good news,” Olivia said. “What can I do for you?”

“Two things,” Kara said. “First, I wanted to call and wish you a Merry Christmas. I don’t know which holidays you and your family celebrate, and I know things have been a little tense between us since the CatCo shooting, but I really do owe you a lot for your help, and I wanted to take a few minutes to tell you I *am* grateful for everything you’ve done.”

Olivia smiled, a feeling of relief going through her. Maybe, if she could convince the girl to exercise a bit of discretion every now and again, things wouldn’t escalate.

“You have no idea how happy it makes me to hear you say that,” Olivia said.

“It’s the truth,” Kara said. “I know I can be difficult, but we have the same goals in mind. A better world for everyone. My approach is a little more turbo-charged steamroller than yours, but we’re trying to get to the same place.”
“That’s definitely a good way to put it,” Olivia said.

“Do you think you could get away for a few hours this evening?” Kara asked.

“It might be a bit late to vet security arrangements,” Olivia said, wondering what the girl had in mind.

“I promise you, I’m inviting you to what is probably the fourth or fifth safest place on the planet right now,” Kara said. “Sanctuary being number one and Kal’s Fortress being number two.”

“I wonder where the White House ranks on that list,” Olivia said.

“Not in the top ten,” Kara said.

“Maybe I should ask your security people to help us upgrade,” Olivia said.

“The only reason I haven’t offered is I didn’t think you’d accept if I did,” Kara said.

“I’d at least consider it,” Olivia said.

“Well, while you consider it, consider coming to the Solarium tonight,” Kara said. “I’m throwing a Christmas party for my friends and my family, and as much of a bitch as I can be sometimes, I really would like to include you in the former group.”

“I’d like to count myself there as well,” Olivia said, relaxing for the first time since the phone rang. “Unfortunately, I’m afraid I can’t attend.”

“Are you sure? You could bring your husband and your son along,” Kara said. “It’s going to be more of a family affair than the CatCo Gala. This isn’t a working event. Strictly fun.”

“I wish I could,” Olivia said. “Unfortunately, affairs of state don’t always take holidays off. But thank you for the invite.”

“You’re welcome,” Kara said. “And if you ever do want to visit, just let me know. I’d love to have you, and to show you around /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/.”

“I’m planning a visit next month,” Olivia said.

“Really?” Kara asked. “It wouldn’t happen to be around the twenty-fifth, would it?”

“As a matter of fact, it is,” Olivia said.

Kara laughed. “I look forward to it,” she said.

“Merry Christmas, Kara,” Olivia said.

“Merry Christmas, Olivia,” Kara replied.

Kara glanced up from her phone as the limo pulled into Nation’s Bay Executive Airport and headed for the JetSuite hangars. She was more than a little nervous about this meeting, even with all the trouble she’d gone through to arrange it, but some people deserved the effort, and in this case, Kara could swallow her own nerves and deal.

The limo came to a stop in front of the designated hangar, and she was relieved to see she’d gotten the timing right. A plane was just heading in from the taxiway, and a quick check of the tail number told her it was the flight she’d spent several days arranging. Kara climbed out of the limo, and
waited, watching as the plane rolled to a stop, and the door opened. A moment later, a pair of flight attendants came down, carrying luggage, and heading for the limo. The chauffeur met them at the back of the limo and loaded the luggage in the trunk as the first of Kara’s guests appeared at the top of the stairs and started making her way down.

She was a beautiful woman, lean, oval-faced, with skin a shade or two darker than Maggie’s, wavy brown hair, and rosy cheeks. The lines under her eyes gave a hint as to her age, but then, Kara had never thought age lines took away from beauty. She was dressed in comfortable traveling clothes. Loose-fitting jeans, a knit Henley covered with a heavy wool sweater, which was going to become way too hot for her in the Southern California warmth.

Two people followed her down the stairs. One of them was a young Chinese woman. The other was Latinx, but Kara couldn’t quite get a read on their gender. They were short, with close-cropped black hair, and were wearing black leather jeans, biker boots, and a leather jacket over a Florence and the Machine t-shirt, and Kara could see the lines of a tattoo climbing up their neck. When the Chinese girl said something, they smiled, and the dimples removed any doubt that they were related to Maggie.

The Chinese girl was absolutely tiny. She might have stood five feet in heels. She was also strikingly beautiful, with inky black hair, a triangular face, high curving brows and lovely eyes. She wore her makeup light, but with a bold red lip color which made the rest of her face look a bit lighter in color than it probably was. It was a good effect, and Kara made a note to give it a try sometime.

“Kara?” the older woman asked as she approached.

“Yes,” Kara said. “And you must be Juanita.”

“Si,” Juanita said. “How is my mija?”

“She’s good,” Kara said. “She’s covering a friend’s shift at work today, but she’ll be home before the party.”

Juanita smiled, and without warning, she stepped forward and pulled Kara into a hug. “Thank you,” she said. “My Marguerita told me how you took care of her, and I cannot thank you enough.”

Kara put her arms around Juanita and squeezed her gently. “It was nothing,” Kara said.

Juanita laughed as she let go. “Liar,” she said. “I love my mija, but I know she’s high maintenance. Which makes me ask, where is your hermana? I have to see if this Alex is good enough for my Maggie.”

Kara laughed. “Alex is having lunch with her father right now,” Kara said. “But I promise you’ll get to meet her soon.”

“Good, good,” Juanita said. “You said it was okay if I brought guests with me, so I hope you don’t mind. This is Miguel, Maggie’s brother, and his girlfriend, Ying Yue.”

Kara turned from Juanita and saw the defensiveness written on Miguel’s face, the expectation of rejection, and understood it immediately, because Maggie had said she only had one sibling, and that sibling had been a sister.

“Miguel,” Kara said as she stepped around Juanita, “it’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“I go by Mike,” he said. “Aunt Juanita just likes being contrary.”
“Mike it is, then,” Kara said. “Maggie never mentioned having such a handsome brother.” She held out her hand, and Mike took it, a smile on his face that would have done Maggie and her dimples proud.

“It’s a recent development,” Mike said, and Kara laughed.

“You have your sister’s sense of humor,” Kara said. “National City may never be safe again.”

She turned slightly to face Ying Yue and clasped her hands in front of her, giving a very slight bow of the head.

“Xìnhuì!” Kara said.

“Ó! Nǐ huì shuō pǔtōnghuà,” Ying Yue replied.

“Wǒ hěn hàipà, fēicháng zāogāo,” Kara said. “But it seemed polite to try.”

Ying Yue smiled brightly, clasping her hands and returning the head bow to Kara. “Your pronunciation is very good.”

“Is it?” Kara asked. “I’m told I have a terrible Hong Kong accent.”

“I didn’t notice, but I spent half my childhood back and forth between Hong Kong and New York, so you just sound like home.” She slipped her arm through Mike’s, and leaned into him a bit, giving him a big grin. “I like your sister’s friend,” she said.

Mike gave Yue a smile as he put his hand on hers before turning to Kara. “Thank you for having us,” he said.

Kara smiled. “Maggie is my family, which means you’re my too,” she said. “Come on, I want to beat Maggie home, so the surprise doesn’t get spoiled.”

Sam sat on the sofa in her new apartment with Ruby tucked in beside her.

“How you feeling?” she asked.

“Okay, I guess,” Ruby said.

Sam slipped an arm around her daughter. “I’m sorry, sweetie. I know it’s hard, missing your friends.”

Ruby made a small, non-committal sound.

“Okay, but you gotta admit, the robots are cool,” Sam said.

Ruby gave her a little smile, but it faded after a minute. “Do I really have to go to the party?” Ruby asked.

“Yeah,” Sam said. “Come on, kiddo, you might like it.”

“It’s just gonna be a bunch of grown-ups standing around drinking wine and talking about the office. It’s going to be boring.”

“There will be at least one other kid there,” Sam said.
“The boy who lives upstairs?” Ruby asked.

“Yeah. His name is Carter,” Sam said.

Ruby just shrugged.

“Tell you what,” Sam said. “I’ll make you a deal. You put up with it for one hour, then we can go ice-skating tomorrow.”

“Really?” Ruby asked, brightening up.

“Yeah,” Sam said. “I think that’s fair.”

Ruby threw her arms around Sam. “You’re the best.”

“I just don’t see why it’s always a Christmas party,” Felicity said. “I mean, she’s not even Christian, right? She belongs to some alien religion or something.”

“I don’t know,” Oliver said. “I was as surprised as you when I got the invitation.”

“Yeah. I mean, I know she called you about getting John’s help, but I kinda thought she hated you,” Felicity said.

“Well, as someone very wise pointed out, ‘everyone I know has wanted to punch me in the face at some point,’” Oliver said, before he leaned down and kissed Felicity’s neck, right where it joined her shoulder.

“Okay,” she said, in a slightly breathless tone, “now you’re just cheating.”

“It’s just a couple of hours,” Oliver said. “We pop over, we mingle a little bit, and we come home.”

“You realize something is going to go horribly wrong while we’re over there,” Felicity said.

“Yeah,” Oliver said. “Chances are pretty high.”

“We’re going anyway though, right?” Felicity said.

“Yes,” Oliver said as he rested his hands on her hips. “The invitation was for you, me, Thea and John.”

“Not Laurel or Sara?” Felicity asked.

“I don’t think she’s ever met Laurel, and I think she’s avoiding Sara because of time travel stuff,” Oliver said.

“Or because they used to date,” Felicity said.

“WHAT?” Oliver asked.

“You didn’t pick up on that when her sister and her best friend punched you in the face over the yacht incident?” Felicity asked.

“I was a little busy being concussed,” Oliver admitted.

“Big baby,” Felicity said. “But that’s got to be awkward, seeing your ex-girlfriend before you ever dated her. How would you even start a conversation? ‘Hey. Have you learned to do that thing I like
with your tongue yet?’”

Oliver laughed as he slipped his thumbs under the hem of her shirt. “You know, we have a few hours before we have to get ready.”

“That’s good, because if you don’t stop teasing and take me to bed right now, I’m going to put itching powder in your suit.”

“Where would you even find itching powder?” Oliver asked.

“Cisco knows a guy,” Felicity said.

“Do I even want to know why?” Oliver asked.

“Something about Barry seeing Caitlin in her underwear,” Felicity said. “I honestly don’t know. He was too pissed off to make much sense.”

Astra sat in her apartment, going over schematics, trying to find some way to reach the necessary force needed to complete the assembly of the betahedrons without gravity clamps. The problem was, she wasn’t familiar enough with Earth manufacturing equipment to know if they had a machine that could generate that much force in twelve directions simultaneously.

It was a small matter but having to fabricate custom tooling would add to the assembly expense, and one of the mandates Kara had laid out was that the hedrons be produced as cheaply as possible. Astra hadn’t really understood that at first, but Lena had filled her in on the politics of energy extraction on this world, and it had painted a bleak picture. She wished she could say Kryptonians were above the barbarity of killing each other for financial gain, but considering they’d been tricked into blowing up their own world out of greed, she’d be lying. At least the humans were more honest about it, though only just.

The sound of her door chime made her look away from the hologram she was studying with a small frown. Kara was her only regular visitor, and she’d already been by that morning before departing for the airport to pick up some guests for the party that night. Some human holiday that Kara seemed enthusiastic about. An exchange of gifts to commemorate the birth of some godling or other. Astra had agreed to join the celebration because it had seemed important to her niece but hadn’t truly paid attention to the details.

She left her work space and walked over to the door, surprised when she saw Lena’s image on the screen. She stood there in the hallway, holding a bag of some sort. Curiosity got the better of her, and she reached for the door latch, opening the door before she even had a chance to consider why Lena might be visiting.

“Hey,” Lena said, her lips curling into a small smile, and Astra’s heart skipped a beat.

“Hello,” she said.

“I hope I’m not interrupting. It’s just, you said if I was ever wanting for company…” Lena said.

“Of course,” Astra said, stepping back from the door to let Lena enter. Lena walked into the apartment, and Astra followed her every move. There was something compelling about the woman’s stance that she couldn’t quite place. An elegance that would not have been out of place in the halls of power on Krypton, but something very different from what Astra had seen there.

Astra closed the door and followed Lena into the apartment. Lena headed for the kitchen and sat the
“I know bringing food is a little silly, when the attendants can fetch anything you need, but I remembered you telling me you’ve never had pizza before Kara introduced you to it, and I realized as busy as Kara has been, she probably hasn’t had time to introduce you to all Earth has to offer in the way of food, so I thought I’d do the honors,” Lena said.

“And I also thought you might like this.” Lena reached into the bag she was carrying and pulled out a bottle. “Tamaranian sparkling wine” Lena said proudly. “My assistant found a bar in /zrhygrha/im shahrrehth/ that carries a stock of alien spirits, and the bartender said this would be safe for both of us and would pack about the same punch.”

Astra smiled. “I would like that,” she said. “I haven’t had a decent drink in thirty-seven of your years.”

Lena stopped for a moment, staring off into space, but before Astra could ask if something was wrong, she gave a little shake, and sat the bottle down. “I’m sorry. Sometimes I forget that you and Kara are so much older than you appear.”

Astra felt her mood sink a little. “Does it bother you?” she asked.

“No,” Lena said. “It just doesn’t seem fair.”

“I’m sorry. I don’t understand what you mean,” Astra said.

“Your people have already lost so much. Your world, all the people you care about. You, Kara and Kal are the only ones lucky enough to have any family left,” Lena said. “It seems unfair that after everything you’ve already been through your people are destined to watch anyone you find to love on this world wither and die.”

“Your compassion is admirable,” Astra said. “It’s a trait I find myself admiring about your people, and one whose lack I regret in my own.”

“It seems common enough in the Kryptonians I’ve met,” Lena said. “You, Kara.”

“Kara is an aberration,” Astra said. “Even among your people, her capacity for love and kindness is rare, and the longer this conflict drags on, the more I fear for the price it extracts from her. As for myself, I was ready to enslave your world to achieve my ends.”

“Kara is definitely a rule unto herself,” Lena said. “How she’s managed to come through the things my mother has done without being ready to murder the world, I don’t know. The way she reacted to my mother’s little kidnapping attempt-“

“Kidnapping attempt?” Astra interrupted.

“Kara didn’t tell you?” Lena asked.

“No,” Astra said. “I’m surprised your mother survived an attempt to kidnap Kara though.”

“Oh,” Lena laughed. “No. My mother’s insane, but she’s not stupid. She tried to kidnap me.”

“She what?” Astra asked, the words slipping out before she had a chance to filter them, or to stop the surge of anger that ran through her.

“She bribed the dispatcher at the car service,” Lena said. “The day I moved in, I called for a car to
take me to lunch, and one of my mother’s drivers picked me up instead. Kara had loaded an app onto my phone that signaled for an emergency transmat back to my apartment. When I used it, she showed up and I think if I’d been a little longer in answering the door, she would have broken it off the hinges.”

Astra stared at Lena for a moment before she decided. “No. This is unacceptable.”

“Astra,” Lena said, “It’s okay. I had the beacon on my phone.”

“And what if you were separated from your phone? I love my niece, but she has been careless. Argox,” she said.

Her attendant floated out of the recess in the wall where it spent most of its time. “Yes, Lady Astra?”

“Contact Nimda. Instruct her to fabricate a /belahd udolkhehd im/. /vrreiahv/ pattern and load the seeker protocol into my war suit’s computer,” Astra said.

“Astra?” Lena asked, but a moment later, there was a flash on the counter, and a silver necklace appeared on the counter. The chain of the necklace was attacked to a pendant, composed of three rings that were twisted together, with a clear, flat crystal set inside them. A silver Kryptonian glyph was set into the crystal. Lena stared at it for a moment, then looked up at Astra.

“I thought I’d memorized all the House glyphs, but I don’t recognize this one,” Lena said.

“It belongs to no House,” Astra said. “It’s the /tiv vrreiahv/. It’s been used by my family for five thousand years to mark those who we will defend.”

Astra reached out and picked up the necklace, carefully slipping it over Lena’s head. “The chain is promethium. Nearly indestructible, even by Kryptonian hands. Wear this, always. If you ever have need, simply squeeze the crystal. I will know you are in danger, and I will come for you.”

Lena looked down at the necklace, then up at Astra.

“You Kryptonians never do anything by halves, do you?” Lena asked.

“Wait, what now?” Wally asked.

“We’re going to a party,” Barry said.

“No, I got the party part,” Wally said. “It was the part after that I’m hung up on.”

“It’s a party in an alternate universe,” Iris said. “No big deal.”

“Okay,” Wally said. “You know, in the last couple of weeks, I’ve put up with some pretty weird stuff. Meeting my sister and my dad for the first time. Finding out you can cure my mom’s supposedly incurable disease. Finding out you have a flying alien robot. Finding out Barry’s the Flash, very cool by the way.”

“Thanks,” Barry said.

“The way you just casually offered to give me all the same powers as Barry,” Wally said.

“I objected to that part,” Joe said.

“Noted,” Wally said. “But now, you want me to go with you to an alternate universe to meet an
actual alien, who’s from the future.”

“You’re not taking this well,” Iris said.

“I’m not taking it well, either, and I’ve been putting up with this shit for a year and a half,” Joe said.

“Dad,” Iris said.

“I’m in,” Wally said.

“What?” Barry, Joe and Iris all asked at the exact same time.

“Look, I think you’re all crazy,” Wally said, “but I’m gonna ride the crazy train. Having super powers is really cool, and meeting an alien? I am so there for that!”

“Okay,” Barry said, “that didn’t go the way I expected.”

“It never does,” Joe said. “Iris, is there any of Grandma Ester’s Egg Nog left?”

Kara walked out of her bedroom, feeling just a little haggard. For a holiday, she’d had a lot of running around to do, and despite having a good two dozen Kryptonians on patrol, she’d still had to rush out and deal with a tenement fire in South Bay. She felt terrible, because by the time she arrived, the entire building was fully invested, and the families lost pretty much everything, so she’d taken the extra time to have Nimda and the drones move everyone into empty units in one of the residential towers in zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ and went ahead and had the fabbers replace all their stuff. It was the least she could do, but it had left her running late for the party she’d planned so carefully.

That was why she almost missed it. The faint whiff of a familiar soap made her stop in her tracks, and she looked around, and spotted the carefully wrapped present sitting on the coffee table next to the TV remote.

A small smile spread across Kara’s face, and she walked over, picking up the note that was tucked in under the bow.

My Dearest Alkawala al-Saghir,

I remember how excited you used to get about Christmas, and I even though I tried to hide it, my heart always melted over the sight of you sitting on our bed, wrapping gifts with so much care. Even now, I still tear up a little at the thought, and how much I miss sharing those moments with you.

I hate that I can’t be with you, and I hate that I have to let our first Christmas apart pass unmarked, but for the second, I can at least let you know that even if we can’t be together, wherever I am in space, and in time, you will always be in my heart, and I will always love you.

Yours, forever and always,

/i khehshtom ,sehrh,lans,/  

P.S. I know the gift I’ve enclosed violates your ‘nothing practical’ rule about gifts, but I hope you’ll forgive me, but I thought you could use a copy of the Time Bureau’s schematics database. Also, the security video of me punching Rip in the nose to get it. You can see the break while he’s lying unconscious on the floor, and the part where Professor Stein kicks him on the way out is hilarious.
Love you, always and forever.

P.P.S. The Time Courier and the Flash Gun are a gift from Snart, because he’s a big old klepto.

Kara smiled as she around the tears she could feel on her cheeks, and reached for the box on the table, tearing the paper off, and opening it. There were three items inside. A Time Bureau-issue Time Courier and Memory Flasher, both with an adhesive label that read ‘Property of Agent Gary Green’, and a flash drive with the Time Bureau insignia on it.

Chapter End Notes

A drawing of the symbol on Lena’s pendant can be found [here](#).

Translated from the Kryptonian

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
*City of Hope*

belahd udolkhehd im
Literal: *Song of fear*
Semantic: *Distress Beacon*

vrreiahv
*Promise*

tiv vrreiahv
*The Promise*

Translated from the Mandarin:

Xìnhuì!
*Nice to meet you.*

Ó! Nǐ huì shuō pǔtōnghuà,  
*Oh! You speak Mandarin*

Wǒ hěn hàipà, fēicháng zāogāo.  
*Very poorly, I’m afraid.*

Translated from the Arabic:

Alkawala al-Saghir
*Little Koala*
Friday, December 25, 2015

“Hey, babe,” Maggie said as she walked into the ballroom. Alex looked up from the snack table and smiled. “First one here, huh?”

Alex smiled and looked up, giving a dramatic little shrug. “Well, I heard this really cute girl was coming tonight, and I thought if I got here early, I might get a chance to ask her to dance.” She lowered her eyes, grinning as she walked over to Maggie.

“Cute girl, huh?” Maggie asked. “Where is she? I’m going to kick her ass for putting the moves on my lady.”

Alex laughed and reached out, taking Maggie’s hand. “Come on,” she said as she led Maggie towards the dance floor. “Nimda, play ‘slow dance’ playlist.”

The room’s sound system came to life and the first notes of ‘Can’t Help Falling in Love’ drifted through the room. Maggie smiled as she rested her hands on Alex’s hips. “Elvis? Really? That’s what you’re going with?” she asked.

“Uh huh,” Alex said, grinning. She hooked her hands behind Maggie’s neck, and they started swaying to the music.

“Feeling pretty sure of yourself, aren’t you, Danvers?”

“When I’m with you? Always,” Alex said.

Maggie leaned in, closing the distance and kissing Alex softly. “Merry Christmas, Alex,” she said as the kiss ended.

“It definitely is,” Alex said, leaning down and kissing Maggie in return.

Eliza stood, leaning against the door frame, smiling as she watched Maggie lead Alex around the dance floor. Both of them were so wrapped up in each other, they were lost to the world, and Eliza felt a little tightness in her chest, remembering what it was like to be that much in love.
“That’s a beautiful sight, isn’t it?” J’onn asked.

She glanced over at him, taking in the warm smile on his face, and the way he looked at Maggie and Alex, and gave him a small nod. “It really is,” she said, turning back to watch them. “I was afraid I’d never get to see it. Alex is always so hard on herself, so driven. I didn’t realize how much of that was my fault, until recently.”

“We all make mistakes,” J’onn said. “But you still have time to correct yours, and I’d say you’ve made a good start.”

“I hope so,” Eliza said. “I worry about them so much, especially now.”

“I can’t promise they’ll be okay,” J’onn said, “but I can promise you, I will be with them, every step of the way.”

“Thank you, J’onn,” Eliza said.

“Shall we go in?” he asked.

Eliza stood up straight, and turned to him, “Are you asking me to dance, Mr. J’onnzz?” she asked.

J’onn considered it for a moment, then offered Eliza her arm. “Why yes, Mrs. Danvers, I believe I am.”

Jeremiah arrived early, not because he had any particular desire to mingle with Kara’s friends, but because the Alex he remembered was a lot like him. She hated being late anywhere, so she always wanted to leave early, and he hoped to get a few extra minutes with his little girl before the party started. That would be worth stomaching an evening with these people.

When he walked into the ballroom where the Christmas party was supposed to be, he saw Alex there, dancing with Maggie. The sight brought a smile to his face until he got a good look at the other couple on the dance floor. He stopped dead at the sight of J’onn and Eliza dancing together and decided that he just couldn’t stomach the party after all.

He turned and left, quietly as he came, without anyone but the drones having realized he was there.

Kara smiled as she made her way around the room, working it with all the skill she’d picked up from Cat, but with a bit less of the shark since these were her friends. It was good to see everyone. People were still arriving, and Kara had gotten a bit of a shock when she’d seen Tim in the corner with a blue-haired girl instead of Stephanie, especially since it was pretty obvious they were together. The shock had turned to fear when she’d seen Stephanie march up behind Tim, but Tim and the blue-haired girl had just smiled, and Stephanie had kissed them both, at which point Kara had decided that as long as they didn’t burn the building down, she’d ask Jason about it later.

Jason and Artemis were busy trying to wear a hole in the dance floor, and Kara had to admit they were doing a good job of it. She’d had no idea the two of them were into swing but watching Artemis lift Jason and twirl him around like he weighed nothing was glorious.

Mostly though, Kara was waiting. People had been drifting in for almost half an hour, but the party had only officially started five minutes ago, and Kara was excited for several arrivals that hadn’t happened yet.

She glanced over at the door when she heard the faint chime of the elevator, and just a moment later,
Juanita, Mike and Ying Yue appeared. Juanita looked absolutely stunning in a white pantsuit, while Mike looked very dapper in a black suit with a thin tie and Ying Yue was positively breath-taking in a royal blue qipáo.

Kara caught Juanita’s eye and waved her over, and the other two followed. She smiled and offered her arm to Juanita who grinned as she took it.

“Where is mija?” she asked.

Kara nodded towards one of the couches where Maggie and Alex were sitting. Maggie was leaning into Alex’s side, resting her head on Alex’s shoulder as the two of them talked to Eliza and someone Kara couldn’t quite see from that angle.

“That’s your sister?” Juanita asked.

“Yes,” Kara said proudly.

“Maggie’s done well for herself,” Juanita said. “Come on, I want to go make her life difficult.”

Kara laughed as she led the small group across the ballroom.

“Hey, Maggie,” Kara said as they stepped in front of the small group that included Alex, Maggie, Eliza to her surprise, Leslie.

Maggie looked up, about to say something, but her eyes bugged out. “Tiá?” she asked.

“Oh,” Juanita said. “Now you know who I am. Weeks without a phone call. Superheroes shot out of the sky, I hear nothing. A news story about you getting shot. Nothing! Christmas day, nothing! Did I not raise you better than this?”

“Uh… I’m… Tiá, I’m sorry…” Maggie sputtered.

“Not even a call when I see you fighting monsters on TV!” Juanita announced.

Kara glanced down, making sure Juanita had let go of her arm, and backed away slowly, before Maggie could realize just who was responsible for her present predicament. As if sensing her intentions, Juanita reached out and caught her around the bicep.

“Your friend here had to let me know you were alive,” Juanita said, and Kara seriously considered calling for a transmat evac, right up until Maggie burst out laughing.

A moment later, Juanita did the same, and Maggie stood up and threw her arms around her aunt.

“That was a good one, Tiá,” Maggie said.

“I know,” Juanita said. “I thought your poor amiga was going to gnaw her own arm off to get away.”

Maggie let go and stepped back, looking Juanita over. “Are you okay, Tiá? You’ve lost a little weight.”

“It’s nothing, cariña. I’ve been dealing with my pendejo brother again. You know what that does to my appetite,” she said.

Maggie’s face fell. “What did papi do now?” she asked.

“Your brother Miguel came home from college with this lovely young lady on his arm,” Juanite said,
stepping aside just a bit so Maggie had a clear line of sight to see Mike. “Of course, your papi didn’t like this, so he did what he always does when he’s unhappy with one of his children.”

A confused expression passed over Maggie’s face as she turned to look at Mike, and Kara watched as understanding came, and the expression on Maggie’s face shifted.

“Hey, Loba,” Mike said, and Kara could hear the tiny quiver of fear in his voice.

Maggie stepped forward and wrapped her arms around Mike.

“Don’t you listen to a word papi says,” Maggie said. “He was a jerk fifteen years ago, and it doesn’t sound like he’s changed a bit.”

“I’ve missed you, Loba,” Mike said. “So much.”

“Me too, cariño,” Maggie said. “Me too.”

“That cousin of yours is something else, Smallville,” Lois said.

“She is that,” Clark replied.

“You should go talk to her,” Lois said.

“You know you’re about as subtle as that mallet Harley carries around,” Clark said.

“I’m sorry, did you think I was trying to be subtle? Because I was really going for ‘get over there and make nice with our new boss, or you’ll be spending the entirety of 2016 sleeping on the couch,’” Lois said.

Clark laughed. “Fine,” he said as he headed for Kara.

“And no stabbing!” Lois said.

“You really are a piece of work, Sunshine,” Leslie said as she and Kara headed for the bar. “But I gotta admit, that was a nice thing you just did.”

“Thank you,” Kara said.

“How long since they’ve seen each other?” Leslie asked.

“Maggie hasn’t seen her aunt since she made detective,” Kara said. “She hasn’t seen her brother in fourteen years. Fifteen, come February.”

“What a kick in the teeth,” Leslie said. “Sometimes, I think I’m lucky my parents died before I figured out I’m gay. Other times, I wish they’d died before my dad figured out he enjoyed kicking the shit out of me.”

Kara let out an exasperated sigh. “What is it with this planet and shit parents,” Kara said. “Not that I can talk. My whole society was kind of shit.”

Leslie laughed. “Damn, Sunshine. Sometimes I forget you got a mouth on you.”

“Yeah, like I said, I prefer to curse in Kryptonian. It just sounds better,” Kara said. “Besides, the angrier I am, the harder it is to translate.”
“Now that, I get,” Leslie said.

They reached the bar, and Kara looked up at the drone behind it. “Strawberry Daquiri with Tamaranian Rum,” she said.

“Why did I know it would be some fruity froo-froo drink?” Leslie asked.

“Well, normally I’d drink scotch, but I’d actually like to get a bit of a buzz going, and Tamaranian rum is decent enough as a mixer, but it tastes like Bacardi if you drink it straight,” Kara said.

Leslie gave a small shudder. “I’ll just have a Corona,” she told the drone.

Kara accepted a daiquiri in a hurricane glass while Leslie pushed the lime wedge down into her beer bottle.

“I didn’t realize you identified as gay,” Kara said.

“I don’t,” Leslie said. “Honestly, I didn’t get the whole romance thing or the whole sex thing at all, until I met Cat.”

“Oh,” Kara said. “What about after?”

Leslie shrugged. “There wasn’t really an after,” she said. “Not until I saw her with you, and realized I never really had a chance.”

“Leslie-”

“When’s Susan going to get here?” Leslie asked, turning around and looking towards the door.

“I don’t know,” Kara said.

“She is coming though?” Leslie asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “She mentioned she might be late. Something about Skyping her moms and her sister.”

“Well, it’s nice one of us doesn’t have a fucked-up family, I suppose,” Leslie said.

“Hello, ladies,” Kal said as he approached them.

“Fuck off, hair gel, or I’ll put a couple of gigawatts through your balls,” Leslie said without looking away from the door.


“Oh, fine. I have to go be somewhere else anyway, but if you need me to roast his chestnuts, just yell.” Leslie walked away, and as she passed Kal, Kara saw her flick her wrist, and a bolt of electricity shot out of her finger tips and arced right into Kal’s butt, and Kara couldn’t stop herself from snorting with laughter at the way Kal jumped slightly. “I got my eye on you,” she said.

“She doesn’t like me much,” Kal said.

“Nope,” Kara said, grinning. “Though to be fair, you did stab one of her friends through the chest the night you two met.”

Kal winced again. “Kara-”
“I heard Lois give you your marching orders,” Kara said. She took a sip of her drink. “I don’t know, baby cousin. Maybe a year on the couch will make you remember to listen to your elders.”

She watched his face drop and managed to keep it together for about thirty seconds before she broke down laughing. “Oh, the look on your face!” she said. “I wish I had a picture.”

“I can produce a still image from my sensory logs, Lady Kara,” the bartender drone said.

“That won’t be necessary,” Kal said.

“Oh, it’s necessary,” Kara said. “Send it to my email, please.”

“Of course, Lady Kara,” the drone said.

Kal gave her a pained smile. “Really?”

Kara nodded. “So, how’ve you been?” she asked. “I saw that business last week with Intergang. It looked like one of those power suits got a couple of good hits in.”

“I took it on the war suit,” Kal said. “Those things are really handy, by the way. My clothes budget dropped by about ninety percent.”

“I know, right!” Kara said. “pick up a clothes steamer, stash it at work, and when you get back from a rescue you can just steam out the wrinkles and no one will ever be the wiser.”

“That’s a great idea,” Kal said.

“One of Cat’s,” Kara said. “I found the steamer in my office one day with a snarky note about CEOs and wrinkled clothing.”

“That sounds like Cat,” Kal said. “Where is she, anyway?”

“Still in her apartment,” Kara said. “She’ll be here at 6:35 PM, and not a moment later.”

“You know that for sure?” Kal asked.

“I organized her schedule for thirteen months in this timeline, and for two solid years in the old one. Thirty minutes after an event starts looks too staged. Forty minutes is moving from fashionably late, to actually late. Thirty-five minutes is the perfect balance, Kiera,” Kara said.

“You really do love her, don’t you?” Kal said.

“I do,” Kara said. “I try not to. I know I shouldn’t. But I can’t help it.”

“You know she feels the same way, don’t you?” Kal asked.

“I know a lot of things, Kal. Things I shouldn’t know. Things I don’t want to know. Things I wish weren’t true but are. Things I wish were true but aren’t and never will be,” Kara said.

“I still don’t know what that means,” Kal said.

“It means, sometimes, just being in love isn’t enough,” Kara said. “It means you did me more harm that you realized that night on Sanctuary. It means I never get to put this down. For better, or worse, I’m the leader of the Kryptonian people, and no matter how much I don’t want to, I always will be. There’s no Chrysalis chamber in my future. No day where I can lay down my powers, settle down with Cat, and have a happily ever after. I have to fight this war, and if I live through that, I have to
fix this world, then rebuild Kryptonian society into something functional instead of the degenerate mess it was. I have to repopulate the species and find them a new planet. Do you really think she would want to take all that on?"

“Are you so sure she wouldn’t?” Kal asked.

“No,” Kara said. “And I’m afraid to ask. Because she might say no, and it would kill me, or she might say yes, and then hate me for it.”

“Or she might say yes, and be right there by your side for it,” Kal said.

Kara smiled at Kal and leaned over to look past him. He turned, and Kara read the moment his eyes connected with Lois in the set of his shoulders.

“Talked to Lois about the Chrysalis chamber yet, Kal?”

He turned back around, and she looked up at him, smiling. “Don’t worry,” she said. “Your face is all the answer I need. Oh, hey, look. Bruce and Selina are here.”

“Hey, Dad,” Alex said when she heard the line connect.

“Hey, Alex,” Jeremiah said.

“You coming down to the party?” she asked.

“I don’t think so,” he said. “I’m not really feeling well.”

“What’s wrong?” she asked. “Do you need me to come up?”

“No,” he said. “I’m just a little tired is all.”

“Okay, that’s not an excuse,” Alex said. “The President isn’t even here, so the party is actually going to be fun instead of a stuffy mess.”

“The President?” Jeremiah asked. “I didn’t know she was on the guest list.”

“Yeah. Kara’s got her on speed dial if you can believe it,” Alex said. “I mean, we sort of all do, since we’re routing all our calls through Nimda, but I don’t think I’d get away with just casually calling her and inviting her to a party, so I try to save it for those days when the world is ending.”

“I hope those days don’t come around too often,” he said.

“They’re pretty rare so far,” Alex said. “I got to admit, I kind of hope it stays that way.”

“No argument there,” he said.

“Are you sure you can’t come down?” Alex asked. “Kara flew Maggie’s aunt Juanita in from Nebraska as a Christmas present, and Juanita brought Maggie’s brother and his girlfriend along.”

“I’m sorry, honey. Maybe we could do lunch tomorrow, if they’ll still be in town,” he said.

“Okay,” Alex said. “Feel better. Love you.”

“Love you too,” he said.
“Hey, Jackson,” Kara said. “Mind if I borrow Winn for a bit?”

Kaldur’ahm smiled and gave a small nod. “Please return him quickly,” he said. “He has promised to show me his ‘mad dance skills.’”

“I’m never going to live that down, am I?” Winn asked.

“No,” Kaldur’ahm said.

“One dance,” Kara said. “Two, tops.”

Winn took her hand and went up on his toes to kiss Kaldur’ahm on the cheek before he led Kara out onto the dance floor.

“So, that’s new!” Kara said, a big smile on her face.

“The PDA’s are new,” Winn said. “The kissing has been going on for a while.”

“And you didn’t tell me?” Kara asked. “I’m hurt!”

“I didn’t think you’d be up for hearing about my smoking-hot new boyfriend right after Sara left,” Winn said.

“Well, you were wrong,” Kara said in a haughty voice. “Winn, I love you. You’re my brother-”

“Oh, the ‘like a brother’ speech. That hurts, Danvers,” Winn said.

Kara slapped him on the shoulder. “Stop it,” she said, laughing as she did. “Seriously, I always want to know what’s going on with you.”

“I know,” Winn said, “but you carry so much, and with everything that’s happened this last month-”

“Always, Winn,” Kara said. “And I’m sorry. I know I haven’t been the most present friend lately.”

“Well, I imagine flying around the Pacific naked, buzzing cruise ships with Lucy in your arms keeps you occupied,” Winn said.

Kara felt the blood drain out of her face. “Does everyone know about that?” she asked.

“Ah, no,” Winn said. “Nimda pinged me when the photos turned up. One or two people may have lost their vacation photos, but there are no blurry pictures of you and Lucy streaking.”

“What about clear ones?” Kara asked.

“Oh, those I kept,” Winn said.

Kara narrowed her eyes.

“Kidding,” Winn said. “Your modesty is safe.”

“You are amazing,” Kara said.

“I know,” Winn said.

“Brat.”
“Oh, no,” Cat said as she stepped into the foyer and spotted Krypto sitting next to the door. He dropped his head and whined slightly.

“It’s a party,” Cat said. “Go chase a blimp, or something.”

He dropped down on his belly, and rested his head on the floor, letting out an even lower whine.

“Forget it,” Cat said. “Kara may be a soft-hearted push over, but I’m not. You are staying here, and that’s final.”

“Is that Cat Grant?” Oliver asked, more than a hint of fear in his voice.

“You want to run for cover?” Felicity asked as Kara turned towards the door. Cat, Carter and Krypto were walking into the room. Kara let out a sharp whistle and smiled as Krypto took off at a run headed right for her. He skidded to a stop in front of her and went up on his hind legs and started licking her face. She laughed and reached up, scratching behind his ears.

“I see you found the flea magnet,” Cat said as she walked up. She turned slightly, and Kara watched as she took in Oliver.

“Aren’t you supposed to be dead?” Cat asked.

“Um…” Oliver said.


Krypto sat down and looked up at Oliver.

“Well, I hope this one is less handsy,” Cat said. “I had to break the last one’s nose.”

Felicity turned and looked at Oliver, shaking her head. “I can’t believe I’m marrying you,” she said.

“It wasn’t even me!” Oliver said.

“Oh, dear,” Cat said. “Are you a frat boy wanna be in every universe?”

“I was seventeen!” Oliver protested.

Kara shook her head and bent down, whispering in Krypto’s ear. “Find Damian.” Krypto was off like a shot, and Kara stood back up.

“What did you send him to do?” Cat asked.

“Pest control,” Kara said casually. “Cat, this is Oliver Queen from Earth One. He’s been kind enough to loan us the services of his friend and bodyguard John Diggle to help us locate and eliminate the Cadmus and PHAN cells in National City, and the lovely, and brilliant woman at his side is Felicity Smoak, CEO of Palmer Technologies. Oliver, Felicity, this is Cat Grant, Chairman and CEO of CatCo WorldWide Media, as well as my mentor, business partner, and very dear friend.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Grant,” Felicity said, shaking Cat’s hand. “You’ll have to excuse Oliver. He’s had bad luck involving Kara’s friends and right hooks lately.”
“If he’s anything like the Oliver Queen from this Earth, I can’t say I’m surprised,” Cat said.

“Where’d Carter get off to?” Kara asked.

“He saw Winn over by the bar and wanted to ask if he’s played the new episode of Minecraft,” Cat said.

“Oh!” Felicity said, bouncing slightly in excitement. “He plays story mode?”

Kara turned and pointed towards the bar. “Winn’s the short one with the curly hair, next to the blonde hottie with the arm tattoos.”

“Nice,” Felicity said. “Ms. Grant, nice to meet you. Oliver, I’ll see you later.”

“Wait!” Oliver said, a little desperately, but it was too late, Felicity was already gone.

“My God, it’s like there are two of them,” Cat said.

“Three,” Kara said. “but Cisco isn’t here yet.”

“Where is Barry and the gang, anyway?” Oliver asked.

“Probably still trying to talk Joe into jumping through the breach,” Kara said.

“I’m gonna go check,” Oliver said. “Ms. Grant, if you’ll excuse me.”

Kara watched as Oliver rushed towards the door, barely avoiding a collision with Sam and Ruby as they walked in.

“Skittish, isn’t he?” Cat asked.

“Oliver doesn’t know how to deal with something when he can’t shoot it, punch it, blow it up or get it into bed,” Kara said. “He’s pretty good at leading people into a fight, but outside of a war zone or a fight with a bunch of mobsters, he’s a little useless.”

“You like him though,” Cat observed.

“I do,” Kara said. “We’ve had our problems, but he’s a good friend when he tries to be. It just took me a little time to remember that.”

Kara felt the weight of Cat’s hand in the middle of her back and leaned into it a little.

“You okay?” Cat asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “You know me. I have emotions.”

“Pesky things,” Cat said. “Never touch them myself.”

Kara leaned in, and whispered conspiratorially, “Just between you and me, I may also be a teensy, tiny bit buzzed.”

“Oh, really?” Cat said, raising an eyebrow.

“The bartender is a little generous with his pours,” she said.

“That robot isn’t going to serve Carter a boilermaker, is it?” Cat asked.
“No,” Kara said, giggling a little. “Though I’d be more worried about Damian trying to sneak a bottle.”

“Damian Wayne?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded.

“I don’t think you need to worry,” Cat said. “Krypto seems to have that situation well in hand.”

Kara turned, and let out a little giggle as she saw Krypto very politely sitting on Damian’s back while Damian lay on the floor, trying to crawl out from under the very amused dog.

“Hey there, stranger,” Susan said as she walked up to the bar. Leslie spun around, a smile spreading across her face.

“About time,” Leslie said, but she was grinning too much for it to come out as surly sounding as she probably intended.

“Sorry, Mom and Mom are both talkers,” Susan said. “Once you throw my sister into the mix, the family Skype sessions never end on time.”

“Where’s your sister?” Leslie asked.

“Japan, right now,” Susan said. “She’s a defense contractor, so she travels a lot.”

“I’m glad you got to talk to them,” Leslie said. “Beer?”

“Please,” Susan said.

Leslie whistled, and the drone turned and started floating down the bar towards her. “Kasteel Rouge,” she said.

“Of course, Ms. Willis,” the drone said. It reached down and pulled out a bottle of Susan’s favorite beer, popped the top, and slid it down the bar. Leslie caught it and passed it to Susan.

“How’s the party going so far?” Susan asked.

“It’s been fun,” Leslie said. “I got to zap Superman in the ass, Cat’s dog sat on McBroody’s kid and refused to let him up, Wonderbra and Fender Bender had an arm-wrestling match… Oh, and Sunshine flew Dimples’ aunt and brother in from Nebraska as a Christmas present, so that was exciting.”

“What?” Susan asked. “I processed her security clearance, and I don’t remember Maggie having a brother.”

Leslie tipped her Corona towards the couches where Alex, Maggie and Maggie’s family were sitting, and Susan looked over.

“Oh,” Susan said.

“Yeah, that was kind of Dimples’ reaction too,” Leslie said.

“Those Sawyer kids know how to find girls, though,” Susan said.

“Personally, I think we should run him in on suspicion,” Leslie said.
“Suspicion of what?” Susan asked.

“Assault with a shrink ray,” Leslie said. “How else is a Sawyer going to find a girlfriend shorter than them?”

“Just a moment,” Lena said as she walked out of her bedroom, still in the process of putting in her left ear ring. She gave the monitor a quick look and smiled when she saw a familiar head of hair with a narrow white stripe in it. She took a moment to check in the mirror next to the door that the earring was on straight, then swung the door open.

She immediately regretted not looking more closely at the monitor for the video doorbell, because then she might have been prepared for what she saw standing in front of her. Astra stood there, dressed in a tailored oxford, a black silk tie, pinstriped suit pants and a matching vest, along with a pair of black patent sandals. Her makeup was impeccable, deep red lipstick with edges so sharp you could cut yourself, perfectly color matched to the polish on her nails, and eyebrows expertly done, and Lena found her mouth very, very dry.

“Greetings,” Astra said. “I do hope I look presentable. Kara said this was an informal gathering, but I’m afraid I’m still a little unsure as to modes of dress on this world that don’t involve uniforms.”

“You look breathtaking,” Lena said, and immediately felt herself blush as the honesty of her own words. She started to take them back, to say something more socially acceptable, but Astra smiled at her, and Lena’s heart skipped, and she realized she was in so much trouble. Especially when Astra turned slightly, presenting Lena with her right arm, bent at just the right angle.

Lena closed the door behind her, and hooked both of her arms through Astra’s, allowing Astra to lead her towards the elevator.

“So, how are you and Ruby settling in?” Cat asked Sam.

“Pretty well,” Sam said. “Ruby misses her friends, but I’m hoping that once she starts school, that will ease up a little.”

“Where is Ruby?” Kara asked. “I haven’t had a chance to meet her yet.”

“She’s over in the corner with Cat’s son and Mr. Wayne’s youngest,” Sam said.

Kara and Cat both turned to look, and sure enough, Damian, Carter and Ruby were huddled in the corner talking.

“Something wrong?” Sam asked.

“Just a moment,” Kara said. She reached into her pocket and pulled out her phone, and dialed Damian, watching as he frowned. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone.

“Hello?” Damian said.

“If you return either of them with so much as a mussed head of hair, I will drop kick your scrawny little butt back to Nanda Parbat by way of the moon,” Kara said.

Damian looked over at her, his eyes going wide. “Understood,” he said.

Kara hung up, and turned back to Sam, “No, it’s fine,” she said, smiling.
“Right,” Sam said, glancing nervously over at Ruby for a moment. She turned back toward Kara and Cat, but the next words out of her mouth were a surprise.

“Oh, shit!” Sam said. Kara and Cat both turned following her gaze to where Astra was walking in, with Lena draped on her arm.

“Is everyone in your family gay?” Cat asked.

“Right now, I’m thinking yes,” Kara said.

Astra led Lena into the ballroom and was a little surprised by what she saw. She’d expected something like the parlay Non had interrupted, which was primarily a standing affair. Instead, the room was arranged in Kryptonian fashion. The dance area off to the left of the entrance, as custom dictated. The food on the far wall from the door, and the bar to the far right. The center of the room was filled with a number of small conversation pods, isolated from each other by an arrangement of seats. It was comforting and familiar. If not for the alien skyline outside the windows, the room might have been hosting a party in the middle of Argo or Kryptonopolis.

“I had no idea this was here,” Lena said.

“It most likely wasn’t,” Astra said. “I reviewed the schematics when I took residence in the building, and this was listed as unallocated space. I suspect Kara reprogrammed the space last night. It still smells of reshaping, and that’s not a scent which lingers.”

“You use programmable matter for construction?” Lena asked.

“Yes,” Astra said as she selected one of the empty conversation pods.

“That’s amazing,” Lena said as Astra led them into the pod she’d selected. “I knew there was some form of nano-assembly involved from the videos of the construction of /zhrygrhahs im shahrrehth/, but I had assumed a fixed final product.”

“For a building like this, we employ a hybrid design. The building is a programable matter matrix over a fixed form substrate.”

“Because the fixed form is stronger?” Lena asked as she took a seat.

“More shock-resistant,” Astra said. “The substrate is flexible to a degree, like a spring steel. The programmable matrix is hard, but brittle.”

“I can’t believe you two are talking about science,” a voice said from behind Astra. She turned around to find Lena’s friend Sam entering the conversation pod with Kara.

“Little One, Ms. Arias,” Astra greeted.

“Hey Sam, Kara,” Lena said.

Astra glanced over at Lena, not quite sure how to interpret the shift in her tone of voice.

“Sam’s only surprised because she’s not familiar with Kryptonian manners,” Kara said. “On our world, science, engineering and mathematics were considered polite small talk.”

Sam smirked at Lena in a fashion Astra did not care for at all, and said, “So you two haven’t gotten past talking about the weather?”
Astra didn’t follow the undercurrent of the conversation, but there was some sort of insinuation in Sam’s voice that she was sure was inappropriate. Something which was confirmed a moment later when Kara slapped Sam’s ribs with the back of her hand.

“Oww!” Sam said.

“Be nice,” Kara said.

“Oh, I see how it is,” Sam said. “Abusing your employees. The shame.”

“You deserved that,” Lena said.

“Probably,” Sam said, taking the seat next to Lena. Astra started to sit down on Lena’s other side, but Kara signed ‘wait’ to her in sidespeak.

“Lena, would you like anything to eat?” Kara asked.

Lena turned towards the buffet tables. “Are there any vegetarian options?” she asked.

“Of course,” Kara said. “What kind of hosts would the House of El be if we allowed our guests to starve?” She pointed towards the tables. “The table with the green tablecloth is vegetarian dishes, the red table cloth is dishes which contain meat and cheese, the white is Kosher, and the gold is Halal.”

“What, no vegan?” Sam asked.

“I’ve never met one who isn’t evil,” Kara said. “I try to avoid inviting villains to parties.”

“How’s that working for you?” Sam asked.

“Mostly okay,” Kara said, “but I’m starting to have my doubts about you.”

Lena laughed, and Astra couldn’t stop herself from smiling at the sound.

“She’s harmless,” Lena said. “Annoying, but harmless.”

“I’ll take your word for it,” Kara said, “but if she tries to take over the world, I’m revoking her access card. Come on, Aunt Astra, let’s go get our guests some food.”

Lena watched as Kara led Astra towards the buffet tables, not quite able to keep the smile off her face.

“I told you that you jinxed it,” Sam said.

Lena looked over at her and gave an exasperated sigh. “What are you talking about?”

“I told you that you’d be head over heels in love with an alien by Christmas. New Year’s at the latest. I admit I was picturing a bit more green and scaly, but the soft butch and gorgeous thing isn’t bad at all,” Sam said.

“Stop it!” Lena snapped. She knew she’d made a mistake when she saw Sam’s eyes go wide.

“Oh,” Sam said. “You really like her, don’t you?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Lena said.

“Lena,” Sam said. “You never get upset when I tease you about a girl. Not since Mercy.”
“Well, we both remember how that ended, don’t we?” Lena asked.

“I doubt Astra is an anti-alien bigot who’s going to hop on your brother’s crazy train,” Sam said.

“And tell me what Veronica’s excuse was?” Lena asked.

“Apart from being a heinous bitch?” Sam asked. “How about the part where she’s a complete sociopath?”

Sam leaned over and rested a hand on Lena’s shoulder. “Lena, it’s okay to like her.”

“She’s married,” Lena said.

“Okay, valid point,” Sam said. “I mean, she did agree to send her husband to jail for the rest of his life, so I’m sure it’s a solid, loving marriage.”

“They’re coming back,” Lena said.

“Your skills at subterfuge need work, Little One,” Astra said as Kara led them away from Lena.

“If I was trying to fool anyone, I’d agree, but that was what humans call a ‘polite fiction.’ It’s an obvious lie whose purpose is to make an otherwise rude action socially acceptable,” Kara said.

“I see,” Astra said as they arrived at the buffet tables. “What did you want to discuss?”

Kara turned her body part way towards the drone serving the food, and began signing instructions for her, Sam and Lena’s plates. “I wanted to ask if you intended to court Lena,” Kara said.

The question was so utterly unexpected that Astra stopped half way through signing her order to the drone.

“Court Lena?” Astra asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

Astra turned to the drone and finished signing her order, watching as it began preparing the four requested plates.

“I don’t understand why you would ask me this,” Astra said. “I am bonded.”

“A bond easily dissolved,” Kara said. “There are no houses or families to worry about here. No feud if you break the bond.”

“Why would you ask me this?” Astra demanded.

“Because whether you realize it or not, you’re engaging in what the humans consider courting behavior,” Kara said. “The way the two of you entered tonight, I promise you a good three quarters of the people assumed the two of you arrived as a couple.”

“But I’ve seen you and Cat Grant walk around in a similar manner on several occasions,” Astra said. “I assumed it was proper form.”

“Human etiquette is every bit as layered and complex as Kryptonian etiquette, but the rules are much more fluid,” Kara said. “I’ve lived among them for decades, and there are still subtleties and intricacies I don’t understand, but Cat and I are not the model for how to behave in a platonic
relationship with another woman.”

Astra glanced down, seeing the plates were ready. She signed a command to the attendant, making a correction to Lena’s plate. The drone removed the rice paper rolls that Lena ate more out of politeness than fondness and replaced them with a large square of the spinach and feta pie Lena loved, but always felt guilty about ordering.

Kara watched it happen and looked up at her.

“You care for her,” Kara said, and her tone made it clear she was stating a fact, not asking a question. “I care for both of you. This is not Krypton. If you want to be with her, be with her. But if you don’t, then make that clear to her as well. The two of you giving the wrong impression to the rest of the world doesn’t concern me, but for both your sakes, be very careful not to give Lena the wrong impression.”

Kara was sitting in the pod with Astra, Lena, Winn, Felicity, Luke Fox, and Harper Row, the blue haired girl she’d seen with Tim and Stephanie earlier, cheerfully listening to them argue over the finer points of engineering, computer programming, and a dozen other topics, when a pair of hands covered her eyes, and she heard a familiar voice.

“You’re slipping, Danvers,” Lucy said.

Kara turned around, a huge smile on her face. “Lucy!” she said. “I didn’t see you come in.”

“I ninjaed my way in while you and Winn were dancing,” Lucy said.

“Oh, so you’re a ninja now?” Kara asked.

“Ninja, superhero, lawyer, lady killer-”

“Handsy drunk,” Kara put in, earning a swat on the shoulder.

“Great kisser,” Lucy said.

“No argument.”

Lucy came around the couch and took Kara’s hand. “Come dance with me,” she said.

“I’d love to,” Kara said. She stood up and gave a small wave to the group she’d been sitting with before letting Lucy lead her out onto the floor. When they got there, Lucy turned around and put one hand on Kara’s shoulder while raising their joined hands up and adjusting her grip, so Kara could take the lead.

“How have you been?” Kara asked as she started guiding Lucy around the dance floor.

“Frustrated,” Lucy confessed. “I have all this power and so much energy I’m climbing the walls. I feel like I should be out there, helping, but instead, I’m stuck out at Sanctuary, contemplating my belly button.”

“Well, it’s a very cute belly button,” Kara said.

“You know, I can throw you through a building now,” Lucy said, the smile on her face undermining the glare she was giving Kara.

“I know,” Kara said, “and I know it sucks. But trust me, Torquasm Vo is the fastest way to learn to
control your powers, and it will give you much better control of them that most of the other Kryptonians have.”

“I know,” Lucy said. “I’m amazed at how fast I’m learning, but I still feel useless.”

“And lonely?” Kara asked.

Lucy dropped her gaze and closed her eyes. “I didn’t want to say anything,” she admitted.

“Hey,” Kara said, “look at me.”

Lucy glanced up.

“You, Lucy of the House of El, have spent your whole life living on scraps. Whatever your dad had left after the job, whatever James had left after my cousin. You deserve so much better than that, so don’t you dare accept scraps from anyone ever again. Even me,” Kara said.

“Scraps from you are better than a five-course meal from anyone I’ve ever dated,” Lucy said.

Kara stared at Lucy as she guided them through another turn, and for a minute, she thought about how easy it would to fall in love with her, because she could. All it would take would be time. It would be practical too. Lucy was a Kryptonian now. Full-blooded, and every bit as long-lived as Kara was. Brilliant, beautiful, with military and legal training. An asset to the House in every way. Just lean forward and give in. Except the next turn brought Cat into Kara’s line of sight, and she remembered what she’d just said. Lucy deserved better than what she’d been given her whole life. She deserved to be someone’s first choice, and as hopeless as it was, Kara was in love with Cat.

She met Lucy’s eyes and opened her mouth to say something, but the song changed, shifting from a more upbeat song to ‘You’ve Ruined Me’ by Nora Jones. Lucy looked up for a moment, then back at Kara. She brought their joined hands down to her side, placing Kara’s hand on the swell of her hip, then stepping forward, pressing their bodies together, and resting her head on Kara’s shoulder as she wrapped her arms around Kara.

“Lucy…,” Kara said.

“I know,” Lucy said, “but can we pretend, just for a little while?”

Kara wrapped her arms around Lucy and pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Yeah, we can do that.”

“What the hell is my sister doing?” Lois asked.

Cat frowned and turned around, expecting to see Lucy making a drunken fool of herself. Instead, she saw Lucy wrapped around Kara like an ill-fitting coat.

“Well, she’s definitely not leaving room for Jesus,” Cat snapped.

“You know,” James said, “I think I need a drink.”

“That’s a good idea,” Lois said. “Cat, you want something?”

“No,” Cat snarled. “I’m fine.”

“Alright,” Lois said.
“You okay?” Clark asked as he sat down next to James.

“Do I look okay?” James asked.

“Honestly, no,” Clark said.

“You’re gonna give Bruce a run for his money with detective skills like that,” James said. He lifted the tumbler of scotch he was nursing an took a sip.

“You want to talk about it?” Clark asked.

“What’s there to talk about?” James asked. “I fucked up.”

Clark looked at James for a moment, then followed his line of sight to where Lucy was out on the dance floor with Kara’s friend Maggie.

“What happened between the two of you?” Clark asked.

“I didn’t pay attention to her, I didn’t respect her, I didn’t put her first. Every time you called, I ran off with you to do something. It never even occurred to me to just take her along. To include her.”

“What we were doing is dangerous,” Clark said.

“Yeah,” James said. “And Lois was right there with us, and you know what. Kara told Lucy the truth the second time they met.”

“Kara’s got the advantage of hindsight,” Clark said. “She already knows all the mistakes she made.”

“Yeah, but I have that advantage too,” James said. “I knew all the mistakes I made back in Metropolis, and I was all set to make the same ones here. Did, the first time round.”

“She broke up with you because of the other timeline?” Clark asked.

“Yeah,” James said, “and at first, I didn’t get it, but look at her. She was never that happy with me. She’s out there dancing with a friend, and happier than she ever was when she was with me. Messes with your head, doesn’t it?”

“Do you dance, Astra?” Sam asked.

“Yes, of course,” Astra said, wondering at the sheer ridiculousness of the question before it occurred to her that this world might not include dance in their basic social training. “Why do you ask?”

“Well, on Earth, or at least most parts of it, it’s customary for someone to invite you do dance if they escorted you to a social gathering,” Sam said.

“I see,” Astra said. She stood up and extended her hand to Lena.

“It’s really not necessary,” Lena said.

“I insist,” Astra said.

Lena reached out and took her hand, and Astra helped her up, and after a very brief moment’s consideration, she offered Lena her arm again. The smile she got in return was enough to convince her it was the right decision, despite what Kara had said. Lena took her arm, and Astra led them out.
onto the dance floor.

“I’m afraid I haven’t had much time to learn human dances,” Astra said, taking Lena’s left hand in her right, and placing her left on Lena’s waist.

Lena smiled as she rested her hand on Astra’s shoulder. “I’m sure you’ll do just fine,” she said.

Astra started leading them through one of the simpler forms she’d observed that evening, and after a few steps, she noticed Lena looking at her with a surprised expression.

“Am I doing something wrong?” Astra asked.

“No,” Lena said. “Just the opposite. You’ve got the basic waltz down perfectly.”

“It seemed simple enough,” Astra said. “A basic box pattern, with a quarter turn added to each repetition.”

“Was dance training a big thing in the military guild?” Lena asked.

“Of course,” Astra said. “One could hardly be an effective representative of Krypton if one couldn’t engage in basic diplomatic courtesies. I admit, I enjoyed the training more than some of my cohort. Many complained bitterly that we’d already had dance training during our basic social education, but I found it relaxing. Memorizing the patterns, stretching your muscles, enjoying the rhythm of the music.”

“I understand,” Lena said. “I feel the same way about chess.”

“You play?” Astra asked excitedly.

“Yes,” Lena said. “Do you?”

“Just a few games,” Astra said. “I enjoyed it though. Director J’onzz taught me when I was imprisoned prior to the amnesty, but I haven’t found anyone else to play with.”

“I’d offer, but I’ll warn you, I’m very good,” Lena said.

“I enjoy a challenge,” Astra said.

“I hope you enjoy losing,” Lena replied.

“I’ll make you a deal,” Astra said. “You can defeat me as often as you can at chess, and I will teach you how to play /mizrhosh,levrrosh/.”

“What’s that?” Lena asked.

“It’s similar to chess, but the game is played in three dimensions,” Astra said.

“Sounds interesting,” Lena said. She glanced up, as the music changed. The tempo of the new song was much slower, and Lena brought them to a halt.

“Do you not like this song?” Astra asked.

“I love this song,” Lena said as she let go of Astra’s hand. “It’s just the wrong sort of dance for it. Put both your hands on my waist.”

Astra did as she was told and a thrill went through her as Lena stepped in closer and put her arms
around Astra’s neck, and began to sway softly with the music. This was a kind of dancing Astra was familiar with as well. It wasn’t done in formal settings, but it seemed to be near universal among species who danced. A desire to share physical closeness. She’d always avoided it. Found it stifling on the few occasions she hadn’t been able to, but it felt different with Lena, and without really meaning to, she found herself drawing Lena in closer, holding her in the same way she’d seen Kara holding the girl on the dance floor earlier, and Lena leaned in, resting her head on Astra’s shoulder as the song played.

“Barry!” Kara said as she walked up to the team Flash crew. “You came. And only an hour and a half late.”

“Yeah,” Barry said, “sorry about that. Joe took one look at the breach and decided this was a bad idea.”

“Look,” Joe said, “I saw enough episodes of that show you watched with the ring and the guy with the gold thing on his head to know that going through the big sideways whirlpool is a bad idea.”

Kara smiled and looked at Cisco, holding out her hand. Cisco sighed and pulled a hundred out of his pocket and slapped it into Kara’s hand.

“This is robbery,” Cisco said. “You realize that.”

“You were the one who bet against a woman from the future,” Caitlin said.

“Wait, you’re her?” Wally asked. He looked at Barry for a moment. “This is the alien you’ve been telling me about?”

“Not what you expected?” Kara asked.

Wally turned back to her. “Not really,” he said, flashing her a grin, “but I definitely like it.”

Iris and Joe both reached over and slapped him in the back of the head. “Knock it off!” they said.

“Hey!” Wally said.

Cisco reached up and took Wally by the arm. “Trust me, you’re barking up entirely the wrong tree,” he said. “Let’s go get some food before one of these ladies breaks something.”

Kara smiled as she watched Cisco lead Wally off towards the buffet table, then turned back to the rest of the crowd. She held her hand out to Joe.

“Joe, would you care for a turn around the floor?” she asked.

Joe grinned. “I’m a little out of practice, but I think I can manage,” he said, taking her hand.

Kara let Joe lead her out onto the dance floor. Despite what he said, it was immediately apparent that Joe wasn’t out of practice at all, or if he was, he must have been a competitive ballroom dancer at some point.

“You’re good at this,” Kara said.

“My mom insisted I learn,” Joe said.

“I take it you made Barry and Iris learn too?” Kara asked.
“Yeah,” Joe said. “They hated it. Tried to get out of it every time, but I gave them lessons every Sunday until they went off to college.”

“I used to dance with my father,” Kara said. “I’d come home from my lessons at the halls of learning and rush down to his lab to show him what the dance master had taught us, and he’d set aside his research for an hour and put on some music, and we’d just dance and laugh. I loved it.”

“It’s always the small things that are the hardest to lose,” Joe said. “I remember when I lost my mom, the thing I missed most was cornbread and butterbeans. I used to go and visit her every Saturday, and we’d just sit and talk, and she’d always have a pan of cornbread and a pot of butterbeans on the stove.”

“How are you doing with Wally?” Kara asked.

“It’s tough,” Joe said. “Francine transferred to Central City, so he’s back and forth, but I think the fact that I was able to come up with a cure for his mom helped.”

“How are you and Francine doing?” Kara asked.

“If you’re asking if we’re getting back together, the answer is no,” Joe said. “Won’t be no days like that. But I think we’re about as good as we’re ever going to be, and Iris is getting to know the Francine I fell in love with. The one who wasn’t strung out all the time. I’ve got you to thank for that.”

“It was nothing,” Kara said.

“Oh, no,” Joe said. “It was definitely something.”

“Well, I know for you it didn’t happen,” Kara said, “but my Joe West saved my life, more than once. If I can pay even a bit of that back, I’m happy to.”

“Well, I think I can say that *both* Joe Wests thank you, deeply, and from the bottom of our hearts. Especially the part where you knocked some sense into Barry and Iris’s heads.”

“They got together?” Kara asked, a brilliant smile on her face.

“They got together,” Joe said.

“Are they insufferable? I bet they’re insufferable,” Kara said, adding a little hop to her steps.

“Completely insufferable,” Joe said. “I have to walk from room to room with my hand over my eyes.”

“Yeah, they never get over that,” Kara said.

“Damn,” Joe said. “I was hoping they’d wear themselves out eventually.”

“Not for the next six years, at least,” Kara said.

“Can you get one of those robots with a built-in fire hose?”

Kara sat back in the corner, only half paying attention to the party as she nursed her second daiquiri of the night. She hadn’t been kidding about the bartender being generous with his pour, and her younger body wasn’t as used to alcohol that actually affected her as her older self was, so the effects of the first one had lingered. But between the talk with Clark, the dance with Lucy and the fact that
running on fumes was her default state these days, she needed a few minutes away from the hustle and bustle of the party.

Besides, she was enjoying just seeing all of her friends in one place, being happy.

“Mind some company?” Alex asked, making Kara jump a little because she hadn’t noticed her approaching.

“No,” she said, patting the seat next to her.

Alex sat down. “You okay? You look tired.”

“Just a touch peopled out,” Kara said.

“I can leave you alone,” Alex said.

“No!” Kara said, hooking her arm through Alex’s. “You’re not a people, you’re an Alex. I never get Alexed out.”

“Alexed out? Is that a technical term?” Alex asked.

“Maybe,” Kara said.

“How much have you had to drink?” Alex asked.

“This is my second,” Kara said. “First one was about two hours ago.”

“So, you’re just normally silly, and not drunk silly,” Alex said.

“Maybe tipsy silly,” Kara said.

“I wanted to say thank you,” Alex said. “What you did for Maggie tonight was amazing.”

Kara leaned over and rested her head on Alex’s shoulder. “She’s family,” Kara said, tapping her glass against Alex’s beer bottle. “Love bonds us all.”

“Love bonds us all? That’s new,” Alex said.

“My people were always far too worried about blood. They didn’t understand that this is what matters,” Kara said, gesturing out towards the room with her drink.

“I take it back,” Alex said. “You’re not silly drunk, you’re philosophical drunk.”

Kara chuckled. “I’m depressed sober,” she said.

“Because of Lucy?” Alex asked.

“Lucy, Sara, Cat. Take your pick,” Kara said.

Alex slipped an arm around Kara’s shoulder. “Tell me,” she said. “How do I make it better?”

“I don’t think you can,” Kara said. “Sara isn’t coming back. I like Lucy, but I never meant to make her fall in love with me, and then there’s Cat.”

“What about Cat?” Alex asked.

“It’s like I said that day in my apartment. This, all of this, doesn’t end for me. If I don’t die fighting
Cadmus, or the Guardians, or Darkseid, my future belongs to Krypton, and to the other aliens. I have to come back and be a champion for them, and I have to rebuild my entire world. I can’t ask her to take that on. I can’t ask anyone to take that on.”

“Kara,” Alex said, “you are my sister, and I love you, no matter what, but that is the most self-pitying crock of horseshit I have ever heard. And I grew up in the same house as a teenage Alex Danvers.”

“What?” Kara said, sitting up so she could properly glare at her sister.

“She is Cat fucking Grant,” Alex said. “Have you read any of the nineteen different biographies of the woman? She walked fourteen blocks with multiple stab wounds and a perforated intestine. She bought a bankrupt TV station at auction and turned it into the second largest media conglomerate in the world. You really think a little hard work is going to scare her away?”

“A little hard work?” Kara asked indignantly.

“Look, you love her, and she’s obviously got a great big lady boner for you, so quit being miserable and go talk to her. Give her the chance to *choose* whether or not she takes all that on, but don’t be surprised when she does, because you are absolutely worth it,” Alex said.

Kara sat, staring at Alex in disbelief for a solid two minutes before asking, “Lady boner?”

Alex squeezed her eyes shut and shook her head. “Yeah, that one was Leslie’s. I knew it was a mistake as soon as I said it.”

Kara smiled and grabbed Alex’s arm, putting it back around her shoulder as she settled in against Alex’s side, resting her head on Alex’s shoulder. “Let us never speak of it again.”

“Agreed,” Alex said, “but what about the rest of what I said?”

“You really think I should talk to her about it?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Alex said. “I think if you’re going to pass up someone as great as Lucy because you really want to be with Cat, you owe it to yourself to see if Cat wants to be with you. I know you well enough to know you won’t move on until you do.”

“Well,” Kara said, “You’re not wrong. I-”

“Danvers!” Zatanna said, making Kara and Alex both look up as she walked into the conversation pod they were in. “Sorry, blonde Danvers,” she added apologetically, before glaring at Kara.

“You promised me things, Blonde Danvers,” she said. Then she pointed to the pod where Diana, Donna Troy, Koriand’r and Kate sat.

Kara’s eyes went wide at the sight of a gorgeous, dark-skinned Latina sitting in Kate’s lap.

“Who is that?” Kara asked.

“Her name is Renee Montoya,” Zatanna said. “Apparently, after your little ‘the world is ending and this is how you’re going to die’ speech a few weeks ago, Kate decided to call her ex-girlfriend and make nice.”

“Oh, shit,” Kara said. “Zatanna, I’m sorry! I didn’t know Kate had ever been serious with anyone.”
“It’s okay,” Zatanna said. “I mean, I’m a little disappointed that the butch of my dreams is over there making time with the futch of my dreams, but I’m mostly yanking your chain. You did warn me that it might not work in this timeline, and as reasons go, a smoking-hot Dominican is actually pretty good. But if you do happen to have any other hot, single ladies tucked away somewhere, please share.”

“No,” Kara said.

“Actually,” Alex said, “we might be able to hook you up.”

Kara turned and looked at Alex. “What are you thinking?”

“Look over by the bar,” Alex said.

Kara glanced towards the bar and saw Cat glaring daggers in her direction.

“Alex?” Kara aside.

“Relax,” Alex said. “I am a genius, and I’m about to solve three problems at once.” She reached up and tapped her ear piece. “Nimda, open a comm channel to Lucy, Maggie and Kara.”

“Hey Babe, hey Lucy,” Alex said.

“What’s up,” Maggie asked.

“I need a favor from Lucy,” Alex said.

“Looking for a threesome Danvers?” Lucy asked.

“What?” Alex sputtered. “No!”

“I’m hurt,” Lucy said.

“You will be,” Maggie said. “I’m not the sharing type.”

“Lucy, come over here, climb into my sister’s lap, and kiss her until she can feel it in her toes,” Alex said.

Kara turned towards her sister. “Alex, no!”

“Shut up,” Alex said. “I promise you, you will thank me later.”

Cat stood near the bar, nursing a glass of scotch. She normally wouldn’t drink at a party she’d brought Carter to, but Carter, Ruby and the youngest Wayne boy were ten floors up in the Nerf Arena Kara had put in for Carter and Ruby as a joint Christmas present, and Krypto, Kleenex and Gonk were all with them, so she’d had a drink to keep her from murdering Lois’s little sister.

Most of the rage had dissipated when Kara had left the Lane girl to greet a group of late arrivals, and Cat had watched Kara contentedly as she had danced with Joe, Barry and Iris in turn.

Cat spent the time thinking about Kara, and about what Sara had said. That Kara shouldn’t be alone. Cat knew Sara was right about that part, but seeing Kara and the Lane girl together, she’d started to wonder if Sara was right about her being Kara’s choice. It was clear Kara cared for the Lane girl, and it was painfully obvious the girl worshiped the ground Kara walked on.
Cat had been trying to give Kara enough time to process Sara’s departure, and she wondered if she’d waited too long and missed her chance. Wondered if Kara had found comfort in someone else’s arms.

Cat had just started on her second glass of scotch and made the decision that it was useless to pine like a love-sick idiot. The solution was simple. She’d wait until Kara was alone and talk to her. A few quick questions about the Lane girl and she would know if Kara intended to pursue a relationship. If she did, then she didn’t ever need to know how Cat felt. Cat would accept it. Drink herself into a stupor and throw a world-class pity party the next time Carter was visiting his father, but accept it and be happy that Kara was happy and loved.

She watched as Kara finished her dance with Iris and headed off the dance floor. For a moment, it looked like Cat would have her shot, but then Kara made a couple of odd hand gestures as she approached the bar and the drone jumped into action, making some ridiculous fruity concoction with a strange, glowing ingredient and a huge pile of strawberries. When Kara reached the bar, the drone handed her the drink. Kara made another small gesture with her free hand, and it hit Cat that Kara had placed her order with the drone in some sort of sign language.

The realization took her by surprise so much she almost missed the small wave Kara gave her before heading off towards one of the empty collections of couches. Cat smiled to herself, amazed again at all the little things she was still learning about Kara, and was about to go over and talk to her when she saw Alex heading in the same direction, and decided to give them a few minutes.

She watched them, taking in the closeness and the unselfconscious affection between them, and felt a pang, wondering if that could have been Adam and Carter if she’d just fought a little harder for her oldest son.

It was a lovely moment to watch, right up until the tramp in the tuxedo walked up, sat down and put an arm around her Kara.

Cat told herself not to be jealous. She’d always hated jealousy in men. Considered it a sign of insecurity and weakness. When Alex and Kara looked her way, she tried to choke it down, but from the alarmed look on Kara’s face, she was sure she’d failed miserably.

Then it happened. Lucy walked right up and flung herself into Kara’s lap.

Cat barely saw the kiss that followed through the red haze of rage because NO WOMAN NAMED LANE COULD KEEP HER GOD DAMNED HANDS OFF THINGS WHICH DID NOT BELONG TO THEM!

She was half way across the room before she knew she was moving and shoved her glass of scotch into Bruce Wayne’s hand as she walked by, growling out, “Make yourself useful for a change,” without so much as breaking stride.

Lucy didn’t quite believe that Alex asked her to do at first. She looked over at Alex in confusion and saw the panicked look on Kara’s face, and almost told Alex to go fuck herself. What stopped her was the realization that Kara’s panicked look wasn’t directed at her.

Lucy knew without looking exactly who it was directed at, and exactly what Alex had in mind. She didn’t even try to pretend that it didn’t hurt, just a little bit, but that was the funny thing about caring for someone. You wanted them to be happy, even if it wasn’t with you.

“Alex, no,” Maggie said. She looked at Lucy. “You don’t have too.”
“It’s okay,” Lucy said, even though it really wasn’t. She let go of Maggie and headed straight for Kara, working herself up to what was coming with each step.

She smiled at Kara as she dropped into Kara’s lap.

“Lucy,” Kara said, almost a whisper, offering her a chance to back out.

“It’s okay. Just a little goodbye kiss,” Lucy said, before giving Kara just that.

It wasn’t their first kiss. It wasn’t even their longest kiss. But it wasn’t drunken, desperate fumbling on Kara’s couch. Lucy was stone-cold sober, and she put everything she felt into it. Every thrill from the first day in James’ office right up to the warmth of Kara’s body pressed against her on the dance floor earlier that night. Every idle daydream of a future together. Every raunchy fantasy that she’d toyed with in the dark of night when she lay alone in bed. Every moment she let herself feel what it was like to want Kara, and every moment she wasn’t going to get in the future. All if it went into the kiss.

She wasn’t sure if the moan came from her or Kara, but when she broke the kiss and pulled back, Kara chased her lips and Lucy had to reach up and press a finger to Kara’s mouth to stop her.

Kara opened her eyes and for a moment, she smiled up at Lucy, but a moment later, Lucy saw her eyes go wide in panic, and knew Cat was behind her.

Kara wasn’t sure why she didn’t stop it. She could have. She could have gotten up and walked away. She could have told Lucy no.

She didn’t.

She watched Lucy walked towards her. She let Lucy climb into her lap. She reached up and wrapped her arms around her, and when Lucy leaned in, Kara tilted her head up and accepted the kiss.

It was amazing. Lucy was warm and gentle and soft and sweet and she tasted of cherry lip gloss, and Kara heard Alex and Zatanna both hooting and the kiss ended before she was ready and she only stopped chasing it when she felt Lucy’s finger on her lips.

She opened her eyes, smiling up at Lucy, right up until Cat appeared over Lucy’s shoulder, looking furious and glowing blue, and one thought echoed through Kara’s head.

Cat saw the exact moment the Lane girl realized she was behind her. The girl’s spine stiffened, and she sat a little more upright. The girl turned slowly and looked up at Cat, practically daring Cat to say something. If the girl had shown even the slightest hint of fear, Cat would have absolutely destroyed her, and based on the look on the girl’s face, that’s exactly what she was expecting. As angry as she was, though, Cat found herself impressed. She shouldn’t have. She should have known anyone Kara had feelings for would be extraordinary.

There was a moment where she considered just turning around and walking away. When every doubt she’d ever had about starting a relationship with Kara screamed at her from the bottom of her soul. Every fight, every failed marriage, every broken relationship told her how inadequate she was. The Lane girl was younger. The Lane girl was prettier. The Lane girl was Kryptonian. Not by birth, but that hardly mattered. She’d live as long as Kara, she could fight beside Kara, and they could
grow old together.

It would be the right thing to do, to step away, to bow out gracefully, to let the girl have Kara and to wish them well.

She knew it, but a voice, louder than all the rest, and sounding suspiciously like Sara, said ‘Fuck the right thing, get the girl!’.

“Kara,” Cat said, “I believe you promised me a dance.”

Kara laughed. She couldn’t stop herself, because the moment was just so Cat. The big entrance, the drama, the tension, and the perfectly-timed demand, just as the blue aura of the ring had faded away.

“Yes, I did,” Kara said, even though they were both aware she had done no such thing. She gripped Lucy around the waist and stood up, setting Lucy on her feet. On impulse, she pulled Lucy into a hug, kissing her cheek and whispering, “/gampili ,rao, ñivi rraop bem/” in her ear. She let go of Lucy and gave a quick sign in sidespeek to draw the attention of the nearest drone. The drone returned a gesture of attention, and Kara quickly signed instructions to the drone, then she turned and offered Cat her arm. Cat took her arm and Kara led them towards the dance floor.

“I didn’t realize you knew sign language,” Cat said as they crossed the room.

“I know about five hundred of them,” Kara said. “That was sidespeek, and every Kryptonian learns it by their tenth /ahmzeht/. About five Earth years.”

“Why?” Cat asked.

“On Krypton, it’s considered rude to interrupt a conversation to give instructions to a servant. Honestly, sidespeek is the only reason my people didn’t die of starvation thousands of years ago.”

“Polite to a fault,” Cat said.

“Yes,” Kara said. “A Kryptonian might cut your throat, but they would be unfailingly polite about it.”

“Charming,” Cat said in a dry tone as they stepped onto the dance floor. Kara turned towards Cat and took the lead as they began to dance.

“I love my people but seeing Krypton again as an adult wiped away a lot of my illusions about them,” Kara said.

“You went back to Krypton?” Cat asked.

“Twice,” Kara said. “There were also a few universes where Krypton survived.”

“That must have been hard,” Cat said.

“Only every time,” Kara said.

“I’m sorry,” Cat said.

Kara smiled. “I appreciate the sentiment, Ms. Grant, but if you stop to offer me condolences every time I talk about something I’ve lost, this will be a very long interview,” she said.

“Is that what this is?” Cat asked.
“I don’t know what this is,” Kara said.

“I’m not sure I know either,” Cat admitted. “But whatever it is, I want it to last.”

“As you wish,” Kara said.


Kara smiled and raised an eyebrow. A few seconds later, the song changed and ‘Storybook Love’ started playing.

Cat gave her a playful glare. “You planned that.”

“Yes,” Kara said, “but to be fair, you gave me the perfect straight line.”

Cat chuckled. “I don’t think there’s anything straight going on here tonight.”

“No,” Kara said. “I don’t think there is.” She watched as Cat glanced off towards where Lucy and Zatanna were still sitting.

“Younger Lane-”

“Lucy,” Kara corrected.

Cat huffed and turned back to Kara. “She’s beautiful,” Cat said.

“She is,” Kara said. “And smart, and tough, and brave.”

Cat rolled her eyes. “Yes, yes. She’s wonderful. I get it.”

“She is,” Kara said, “but I’m not in love with her.”

“What?” Cat asked.

“Cat, you taught me how to be a reporter,” Kara said. “You might have handed me off to Snapper Carr for a final polish, but I learned everything that made me a good reporter at the feet of the master. I recognize a fishing expedition when I see one. Especially from the woman who taught me how to fish.”

“You are being a smart ass,” Cat grumped.

“You like it,” Kara said.

“Maybe a little,” Cat admitted. “So, if you’re not in love with her, what was that kiss about?”

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Cat saw the Supergirl swagger Kara had been running on ever since Cat asked her to dance just melt away, and Kara’s whole demeanor changed. Her eyes dropped, and she seemed to draw into herself. She almost cringed.

“Kara, look at me,” Cat said in a firm tone, and waited until Kara looked up and met her gaze. “No judgement. Remember?”

Kara visibly relaxed, and a lot of the tension seemed to melt away, even of the swagger didn’t come back.

“I forget, sometimes,” Kara said. “It’s too easy to judge myself, when I let people down, or when I
“You think you hurt Lucy?” Cat said.

“I didn’t mean to,” Kara said. “I never mean to, but it happens anyway.”

“What happened?” Cat asked.

“In the other timeline, I was a terrible friend,” Kara said. “I didn’t mean to be, but I wanted to be normal so badly, I managed to convince myself I wanted James, and then Lucy showed up, and I got so jealous of her. I wanted to do better this time. I wanted to be a good friend, and I didn’t want to get in the way of Lucy and James, but I knew that they were on shaky ground.”

“I should have known better, after Harley,” Kara said.

“Harley?” Cat asked. “You mean on the Waverider?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “Harley was so broken and abused, she fell in love with the first person who ever showed her an ounce of kindness.”

“The Joker?” Cat asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Ivy came later, and she took care of Harley. Got her away from the Joker. Got her help. Really, really loved her. But Harley still had a bad habit of latching on to anyone who was kind to her.”

“You’re not saying that Lucy-”

“No!” Kara said. “Just, her Dad, and all of the guys she’s dated, especially James, never put her first, never made her a priority. I knew most of her issues with James were because she just wanted to be a priority in his life. I also knew Lucy was bi. I thought a little flirting might help. Make James jealous. Make him realize how she felt, and maybe realize what he was missing out on.”

“Except for the first time in her life, she had someone really paying attention to her, and she fell in love,” Cat said.

“I don’t know when it happened. Maybe when she was still with James. Maybe after Sara,” Kara said.

“What happened after Sara?” Cat asked, and the color in Kara’s cheeks told the story. “Oh. You slept with her.”

“No!” Kara said.

“Kara, it’s okay,” Cat said, even though it wasn’t. “No judgement.” Well, no judgement of Kara. She might judge the Lane girl upside the head with a baseball bat.

“I didn’t,” Kara said. “I wanted to. We were both drunk, and we were lonely, and she was there, and she wanted me, and I just wanted too not be alone anymore, but I just… I couldn’t do that to her.”

“What do you mean?” Cat asked.

“She deserved better than to be someone’s second choice,” Kara said. “I couldn’t sleep with her when I really wanted to be with someone else.”

“You wanted Sara,” Cat said.
“No,” Kara said. “No. I love Sara, I will always love Sara, but Sara isn’t what stopped me that night.”

“Kara-”

“So, the kiss,” Kara said. “That was Alex’s bright idea, and I let it happen. I shouldn’t have, but when we were dancing earlier, Lucy asked me to hold her, and just let her pretend, that’s why I let her kiss me. It was greedy, and it was selfish, and I shouldn’t have, but it was nice to pretend, just for a moment.”

“Oh, Kara,” Cat said, feeling her heart break. Sara was right. She shouldn’t have waited. She should never have let Kara be alone after Sara left. She did this. She let Kara hurt like this, and she hated herself for it.

“It’s okay,” Kara said, dropping her eyes. “You don’t have to say it. I know. It’s too much. I’m broken, and I don’t have anything to offer.”

“Kara, stop,” Cat said, and Kara did, bringing their dance to a halt.

Kara looked up again, and Cat felt her throat close up at the sight of tears running down Kara’s face.

“I didn’t mean to do it,” she said. “I didn’t understand it. I’d never been in love before, and I walked into your office that morning, and I wanted to matter, to be someone my parents would be proud of, but then I caught the plane, and you were so excited, and I became Supergirl, and you were there every time I didn’t know what to do, and one day, it wasn’t my parents I wanted to make proud anymore, and then you died, and I just… I was broken, but I got you back. I got everyone back. It took so long, but I got you back, and I tried not to do it again. I tried, but you were there, and I couldn’t help it. Every time it hurt, you were there, and I didn’t mean to fall in love with you again. I tried not to, but I’ve loved you through life and death and I can’t help it.”

“Kara-”

“I can’t offer you anything. I can’t. I don’t have anything left. I gave away my future for a chance to save you, to make the world better, and to give my people a chance to live again. I’m sorry, but just please don’t send me away.”

Cat shook her head. “Oh, you stupid girl,” she said, “I love you too much to ever send you away.”

She saw the look of shock on Kara’s face and she couldn’t take it anymore. She reached up, cupping Kara’s face in her hands and pulling Kara down towards her as she rose up.

Kara wasn’t sure how it happened. One minute, her world was falling apart, every fear she had about what would happen if she told Cat how she felt about to be realized, then, by some miracle, Cat said she loved her, and before she even had a chance for the words to sink in, another miracle happened. Cat kissed her.

It wasn’t slow. It wasn’t gentle. It was desperate and needy and frantic and Cat was in her arms and kissing her. Cat was kissing her, and it was magic. Cat was kissing her and every world in fifty-three universes just stopped, and for the first time since Astra disappeared so long ago, everything felt right, and perfect, and peaceful. For the first time in forever, she didn’t feel the overwhelming screaming of the universe around her. There was no torrent of sound to filter out, no spread of spectrums assaulting her eyes. Cat was kissing her, and the cacophony was replaced by the weight of the woman she loved in her arms, by the moan she let out as Cat sucked gently on her tongue, by the sharp edges of Cat’s nails digging into her back, by the smell of Chanel No. 5 worn so lightly most
people wouldn’t even know it was there, and by the taste of scotch and rum and strawberries and tears.

Cat was kissing her, and for the first time since she arrived in the past, Kara didn’t hurt.

Cat broke the kiss and pulled back and Kara chased her lips and caught them and the kiss started again, because anything else was unbearable. Kissing Cat was like the warmth of Rao’s light on a bright day, the taste of clear water from the diamond springs, the smell of her Dar-Essa tree, the sound of the waves crashing on the shore of the Red Ocean, and the sight of the Firefalls at twilight.

When the kiss finally ended and Cat had pulled away, Kara opened her eyes and stared at Cat in wonder.

“\:.zhao w rrip/” Cat whispered.

“You love me?” she asked.

“I do. I don’t know when it happened, but somewhere between ‘where’s my 10:15’ and ‘I’m not pretending today’, I fell completely, hopelessly in love with you,” Cat said. “Now put us down before you drop us.”

“What?” Kara asked. She glanced down, and felt her cheeks turn red as she realized they were floating about three feet off the ground. “Oh. Sorry.”

She lowered them down until their feet touched the ground, Cat smiling at her the whole time. She risked a glance around the room, which confirmed her suspicions.

“Everyone is watching us,” she said.

“Let them watch,” Cat said. 

Kara closed her eyes and leaned forward, resting her forehead against Cat’s.

“I love you,” she said.

“I love you, too,” Cat replied.

“Can we go somewhere?” Kara asked.

“Where do you want to go?” Cat asked.

“Anywhere we can be alone,” Kara said.

Cat smiled. “Well, I have a very nice balcony a few floors away.”

“That sounds perfect,” Kara said.

Maggie stared across the room, watching Kara and Cat float a good three feet off the dance floor and suppressed the urge to scream.

“Margarita, you want to tell me what I’m seeing?” Juanita asked.

Maggie looked over at her, then back and Cat and Kara making out in mid-air.

“Did I forget to mention Kara is Supergirl?” Maggie asked.
“Yes,” Juanita said.

“Sorry,” Maggie said.

J’onn was sitting, having a nice, quiet chat with Eliza, and completely ignoring the fact that his Assistant Director had just climbed into Supergirl’s lap and kissed her in the middle of the room. He was off duty. Lucy was off duty. It was none of his business. He just wanted to sit and enjoy himself for the evening.

They were talking about gardening, which was something of a hobby of his. He liked to brew, and growing the ingredients first made the process a lot more enjoyable than just picking them up at the grocery store. They were just starting to bat around ideas for converting a couple of the unused floors of Sanctuary into a garden for the plants and the Martian lichens he used when Eliza turned, obviously distracted by something behind him.

He turned around slowly, reluctantly, knowing that whatever he was about to see wasn’t going to make him happy. Sure enough, there were Cat and Kara, floating three feet off the floor, kissing each other like the world was about to end.

He thought about it for a minute, then turned back around and asked Eliza if she had any experience with hydroponics, because he was off duty, it was none of his business, and he just wanted to sit and enjoy himself for the evening.

Diana was the first to notice, because she’d been watching the entire interchange between Lucy, Cat and Kara with both hope and dread the whole night, and when Cat took Kara’s face in her hands and kissed her, she let out a whoop of joy.

Wally, Cisco, Caitlin, Barry, Iris, Bruce, Selina, Lois and Clark all turned to see what she was shouting about, and saw Kara and Cat slowly drift up from the floor as the kiss continued.

Wally leaned over to Cisco. “Is anybody in this universe straight?” he asked.

Cisco looked at Wally, then looked over at Bruce, who had his arm around Selina, and Lois and Clark who were holding hands.

“Um,” Cisco said, pointing to the two couples.

Selina laughed and looked over at Diana with a Cheshire cat grin on her face, that made Diana’s cheeks turn red.

“What Selina means to say is, we’re both bisexual,” Bruce said.

“Oh,” Cisco said, turning to Lois and Clark.

“Same,” Lois said, then looked over at Clark. “You know, I never actually asked. How about it Smallville? You straight?”

“Mostly,” Clark said.

“Mostly?” Lois asked. “You want to explain that?”

“No,” Clark said.
“You know, Oliver, I’m thinking you’re really going to have to up your game,” Felicity said.

“Oh, come on! That’s just showing off,” Oliver said.

Joe stared at the couple floating in the middle of the dance floor, then stared down at his glass and decided it didn’t have nearly enough bourbon in it.

“I honestly don’t know what’s more depressing,” Lucy said. “Watching the girl I’ve got a huge crush on kissing the woman she’s got a huge crush on, or watching my ex-boyfriend sit in the corner and mope in my general direction.”

“I feel your pain,” Zatanna said. “See the hot redhead over in the corner?”

“The one with the hot girl sitting in her lap?” Lucy asked.

“Yeah,” Zatanna said. “Kara told me that we were together in the other timeline.”

“Damn,” Lucy said.

“Yeah,” Zatanna said.

“This party sucks,” Lucy said.

“Spent the last six months in Vegas,” Zatanna said, “and this is still the most depressing party I’ve been to all year.”

“Want to get out of here?” Lucy asked.

“Best idea I’ve heard all night,” Zatanna said. “Where do you want to go?”

“I know an all-night burger place in New York,” Lucy said.

“Let’s go.”

“Well,” Lena said, “your niece certainly seems popular.”

“Yes, she does,” Astra said, as she watched her niece, who earlier had felt the need to lecture Astra on etiquette and decorum, float around the room kissing one woman less than ten minutes after being very publicly kissed by a different one.

“The only one?” Susan asked as she leaned back against the balcony railing.

“Yeah,” Leslie said. “Makes me a freak, right?”

“No,” Susan said. “But it does sound like you might be demisexual.”

“I don’t even like Demi Lovato,” Leslie said.

Susan laughed. “A demisexual is someone who only experiences sexual attraction after they’ve formed an emotional bond with someone.”

“Sounds like some kind of tumblr level new-age bullshit,” Leslie said.
Susan shrugged and took a sip of her beer, so Leslie wouldn’t see her smiling at the thoughtful look on Leslie’s face.

Both of them looked back at the door leading to the ballroom as the volume from inside increased.

“Wonder what all the noise is about,” Leslie said.

“Don’t know, don’t want to know. Not my circus, not my monkeys.”

“Amen to that,” Leslie said. “So what about you?”

They sat on one of the couches on Cat’s balcony, with Kara leaning into Cat, her head resting on Cat’s shoulder, while Cat had one arm around her, and used her free hand to slowly stroke Kara’s hair.

“If this is a dream, I don’t ever want to wake up,” Kara said.

“If it’s a dream, it’s mine,” Cat said, leaning down to press a kiss to the top of Kara’s head. “I’m sorry I waited so long. I should have said something sooner.”

“I’m glad you didn’t,” Kara said. “I don’t think I was ready. Before Sara, before Lucy, I probably would have run screaming.”

“If that’s your idea of flattery, dear, we’re going to need to work on it,” Cat said.

“Just the truth,” Kara said. “I’m scared. I’m terrified, if I’m honest.”

“Of what?” Cat asked.

“Everything.” Kara said. “I love you so much, and I’ve loved you for so long that the thought of having you scares the life out of me, because I know I’d never survive losing you.”

“You won’t,” Cat said. “I will be here with you as long as you want me.”

“I want to believe that, but what I said was true. All of it. I can’t offer you anything. I’m so broken I don’t think you could make a whole person with three of me, and my life isn’t my own. I have so many fights waiting for me. Cadmus and the Lanterns, the Guardians and Darkseid, and if I live through all of that, there’s so much still left to do. The fight for aliens rights will take decades, and I have to rebuild my people’s culture, to make it something that works, something better, so we don’t end up committing mass suicide again. I have to help repopulate the species, and when there are enough of us, I’ll have to find us a new world. Cadmus has nearly killed me more than once, and the Guardians and Darkseid are out there, waiting. It’s a lot to take on, the work of lifetimes, and there’s no one else. It should have been Kal. He was born to lead our people, but he’s too human. That’s my fault.”

“It’s not,” Cat said. “You got lost.”

“I wouldn’t have, if I’d been stronger. If I hadn’t waited long enough to hug my mother that last time,” Kara said. “I told them I wasn’t afraid, but I lied. I was so scared.”

“Love, you can’t know what would have happened,” Cat said.

“I do though,” Kara said. “I met her. The me that got in the pod just a few seconds faster. The me that arrived on time and raised Kal. She’s magnificent. Strong and smart and fast, and her Kal is everything he should be.”
“Is that the life you want?” Cat asked, and Kara could hear the dejection in her voice.

“Don’t knock it,” Kara said. “She’s been married to her Cat Grant for twenty-two years.”

Cat laughed and kissed Kara on the head again. “It does sound like a good life.”

“I wouldn’t take it. She has you and she has Kal, but she doesn’t have Alex, or Maggie, or J’onn, or Winn, or Susan, or Lena, or Leslie, or Astra and there’s no Adam or Carter in that world,” Kara said. “Here I get to have all of you, even if it’s just for a little while.”

“I told you,” Cat said. “You can have me for all long as you want me. Or at least, as long as I live.”

“You’re sure?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Cat said. “Every night since you told us the truth, I’ve lain awake, worrying about the weight you’re carrying, wishing I could take some of the load off your shoulders. I’ll help. Any way I can, I’ll help, if you’ll just let me.”

Kara shifted so she could sit up and look Cat in the eyes.

“/pahskilahres w khap ni :divi/” Kara whispered.

“/nahn rrip w tiv :divi chanes ,rao, w khap/” Cat replied, and when Kara heard the words spoken in perfectly-accented Kryptonian, she couldn’t stop herself. She leaned forward, kissing Cat eagerly.

“You’ve read The Courtship of Erok and Milia?” Kara asked.

Cat shrugged. “I had some time,” she said.

“/zhaow rrip/” Kara said as she leaned forward and kissed Cat again. “/zhaow w rrip/”

Astra stepped off the elevator with Lena on her arm, a smile on her face, a light buzz warming her up, and Kara’s words playing in the back of her mind. Lena was, perhaps, a touch more inebriated than her, and a little unsteady on her feet, but Astra found she didn’t mind so much, because it made Lena lean in against her, and the contact was pleasant in a way she was starting to become used to whenever Lena touched her. A way that was cast in a very different light by her earlier conversation with Kara.

They reached Lena’s door, one of only two on the floor, and came to a stop. Lena placed her hand on the palm plate, and the door clicked open. Lena turned around to face.

“Thank you,” Lena said.

“For what?” Astra asked.

“For escorting me tonight. For…” Lena stopped, and Astra could see from her face that she was struggling to find the words. Finally, Lena lifted a hand and rest it on Astra’s shoulder. “Thank you for caring,” she whispered.

“You are easy to care for,” Astra said.

Lena gave her one of those heart stopping smiles that always seemed to take her by surprise, and she felt a subtle shift in the air, and could practically see the moment Lena made a decision.

“I’m about to do something stupid,” Lena said, her voice soft in a way that made Astra want to pull
her close.

“I very much doubt that,” Astra said.

“We’ll see,” Lena said, as her hand slipped from Astra’s shoulder down to her tie. Lena gripped it, and pulled Astra forward as she leaned in. Astra made the decision to let herself be pulled, and when their lips met, it felt like the entire world moved under her feet. She slipped her arms around Lena without ever making a conscious decision to do so, and in all her life, Astra couldn’t ever remember anything that felt so perfect and right as Lena’s body pressed against her own. It wasn’t the first time she’d ever been kissed, but it was the first time she’d ever enjoyed the experience, and she suddenly understood what all the fuss was about, and knew it ended far too quickly for her.

Lena smiled as she pulled back. “Come inside?” Lena asked.

Astra knew what Lena was asking. She might never have taken anyone to her bed before, but she was hardly naïve about the way her fellows in the military guild hopped into bed with each other at the least provocation. Even those who were bonded often took lovers of convenience. Ones more accessible on campaign than whatever bond-mate their families had foisted on them. She could say yes, and it would be done. She’d take Lena as her lover, keep her for as long as she wanted her, and none of her people would think anything of it. A lover was a lover. A woman taking another woman was unusual. Downright odd, even, but etiquette would prevent her subordinates from questioning or discussing it.

It was also etiquette that made her decide against it, no matter how much she wanted it, because she was still Kryptonian, and there was one absolutely iron-clad rule regarding lovers. One so old, so steeped in precedent and tradition that it was practically law. Lovers did not become bond-mates.

Not ever.

If she took Lena as a lover while she was still bonded to Non, then a lover was all she would ever be, and Kara was right. This was not Krypton. There were no Houses to worry about. No feuds if she broke the bond. If she wanted to be with Lena, she could be, but it would require just a bit of patience.

“I don’t think that would be appropriate,” Astra said.

She saw Lena’s face fall. Saw the disappointment, and it hurt her heart, but she knew what needed to be done.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “When Kara pulled me aside tonight, it was to warn me that in my ignorance of human etiquette, I might be giving people the wrong impression.”

“Now I feel like a fool,” Lena said.

“You shouldn’t,” Astra said, “I was giving you the wrong impression, but not the one my niece thought. I gave you the impression that I was free to court you, and I’m not. The truth is, I would very much like to come inside. But I can’t. Not while I’m still legally bonded.”

“Oh,” Lena said.

“Would you give me time to sever the bond?” Astra asked.

“How much time?” Lena asked.

“As long as it takes to find my husband,” Astra said. “Once I tell him our bond is severed, I will be
Lena smiled up at her, and Astra’s heart skipped a beat. “I suppose I could wait,” she said. “Just don’t take too long.”

“I will make the search my highest priority,” Astra said.

“Would it be okay if I kissed you again?” Lena asked.

“I would like that, very much,” Astra said.

“Kara, it is five o’clock in the morning,” Olivia said. “If there is not an invasion fleet parked over National City right fucking now, I’m going to have J’onn arrest you.”

“I’m sorry about the timing, Madam President, but I needed to wait until I was sure no one would notice me calling,” a male voice said.

Olivia sat up. “Who is this, and how did you get this number?”

“This is Jeremiah Danvers,” the voice said. “I got the number from Kara’s computer.”

“Alex Danvers’ father?” Olivia asked.

“Yes,” Jeremiah said. “Madam President, I don’t know what you’ve been told about me, but whatever it was, it’s not the truth, and we need to talk.”

“About what, Mr. Danvers?” Olivia asked.

“About what Kara *isn’t* telling you,” Jeremiah said.

Olivia looked at her husband, who was sitting up next to her with a concerned look on his face. She waved him back to bed and got up, heading into the next room, and closing the door.

“Go on, Mr. Danvers,” she said. “I promise you, you have my full attention.”

It was almost half an hour later when Astra finally stepped off the elevator on her own floor, smiling and humming the second song they had danced to softly to herself. She was so caught up on the pleasant memories of the evening that she didn’t notice Fendra waiting by her door until she was half way down the hall.

“Is something wrong?” Astra asked.

“I’m unsure,” Fendra said. “Last we spoke, I suggested you interrogate the Luthor woman about her mother’s whereabouts. I have heard nothing about an interrogation, and tonight, you were down at that party, acting like a love drunk *vrazhium* instead of a daughter of the *bythgro :zugur im*/.

“You forget your place, Lieutenant,” Astra snapped.

“No,” Fendra said, “you forget yours. I am a sitting member of the Council, and I’ve given you an order, General.”

“Lena knows nothing about her mother’s whereabouts,” Astra said. “Or have you forgotten what Kara told us about the other timeline? Her mother had her killed because she wouldn’t cooperate.”
“That is what Kara believes,” Fendra said. “But Lillian Luthor has your husband, one of her underlings nearly killed Byara, and while I care little for Kal-El, her son tried to kill him.”

“The humans are searching for Non,” Astra said. “Kara has recruited someone to help in the search. Everything that can be done, is being done.”

“Not everything,” Fendra said. “You are neglecting a valuable source of intelligence because you’ve allowed your emotions to cloud your judgement. It’s pathetic.”

Astra was across the space between them in an instant, her hand tight around Fendra’s throat.

“You, Fendra of the House of Kann, have no idea of the sacrifices I’ve made, for my world, for my house, and for my family. But I. Am. Done. Giving. Lena Luthor, Kara Zor-el, Alex Danvers, Maggie Sawyer, Winn Schott Jr., Cat Grant, Carter Grant, Lucy Lane, Eliza Danvers, James Olsen, Susan Vasquez, Leslie Willis, J’onn J’onzz, Kal-El, Lois Lane, Sara Lance. These are the names of Kara’s family. These are the names of my family. Come near them, threaten them, and I will remind you why I was the most feared General in generations. Member of the Council or not, I will call you out, and you will face me by Kandor Rules,” Astra said.

She watched with far more satisfaction than she should have felt as every drop of color drained from Fendra’s face, and fear stared back at her out of Fendra’s eyes. She let the woman go, and stepped past her, slapping her hand on the palm plate to unlock her door.

“I know better than you think,” Fendra said from behind her.

“Go home, Fendra,” Astra said without turning around. “I have no desire to kill anyone tonight.”

Kara smiled as she entered her apartment, so full of happiness and joy she could barely keep her feet on the floor. Cat loved her, which was wonderful. Cat wanted to be with her, which was amazing. Cat wanted to help her with everything, with was unbelievable. Cat spoke Kryptonian, which was really fucking hot.

It had taken every ounce of will power she had to peel herself away from Cat and go back to her own apartment, but she wanted to do this right. She wanted their first night together to be special, to be a celebration of its own.

And she wanted a chance to install red sun lamps in Cat’s bedroom, because she did not want to hold back anything.

She flopped down on the couch.

“Konex, is there any food left over from the party?” she asked.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex said.

“Any potstickers?”

“Two trays worth,” Konex said.

“Bring a tray to me, along with a grape soda,” she said.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex said.

“Lady Kara,” Nimda said, “would now be a good time to report?”
“Sure,” Kara said as Konex brought in a steam tray full of potstickers and a bottle of grape soda.

“Project Dragon’s teeth is complete,” Nimda reported.

“Fantastic,” Kara said as she heat-visioned the potstickers. She picked one up and popped it into her mouth, chewing happily.

“Should we proceed to Project Phalanx?” Nimda asked.

Kara swallowed. “Yes, but hold at the end of Phase One,” she said. “No need to scare the natives. What is the status of Project Sunblade?”

“Estimated completion in thirty-six days,” Nimda said.

“Any way to speed that up?” Kara asked.

“Provide one hundred and thirty-two kilos of exotic matter,” Nimda said.

“So, thirty-six days,” Kara said.

“Affirmative,” Nimda said.

“Anything else?” Kara asked before popping another potsticker in her mouth.

“Affirmative,” Nimda said. “I have detected a developmental anomaly in birthing matrix one five.”

Kara frowned as she picked up a third potsticker, wondering what, exactly, Nimda meant by developmental anomaly. By design, a birthing matrix weeded out genetic abnormalities, and there were all kinds of ways a matrix could adjust for incorrect fetal growth. There hadn’t been a child born on Krypton with a birth defect since before the Unification.

“What kind of anomaly?” Kara asked.

“Development is progressing at two hundred percent of expected growth rate,” Nimda reported.

“/:zhaooldh w tov dovrrosho/” Kara said, dropping the potsticker back in the pan. “Show me.”

The room filled with a hologram showing what looked like a weird C-shaped sort of fish with dark spots where the eyes should be and a red lump in the center. The room filled with the fast, thumping beat of a heart, and Kara stared in disbelief. The seeding had been on December 8th. At this stage, the child should be little more than a spherical lump of cells. It certainly shouldn’t have a heartbeat.

“Nimda, who are the parents who seeded matrix one five?” Kara asked.


Fendra walked into the Genesis chamber, staring at the back of the figure who stood in the center. She approached with caution, not knowing what had brought the summons, and wondering if what she’d done had been discovered yet. It was almost certain it had, but there was a difference between almost certain and absolutely certain, and she hoped that she might slip through that gap.

She was almost to the center of the room when the figure turned, and she found herself looking not at Kara Danvers, not at Kara Zor-El, not even at Lady El. She had no reference for what she saw before her. She had never seen the face of the woman who had ripped Darkseid’s eyes out with her
bare hands. She’d never heard the names the forces of Apokolips gave her. The Red Daughter of Krypton, the Blue Death, Hivekiller, Godslayer, Destroyer of Worlds, and the one name Kara had hated above all others, the Survivor.

She did not know the woman in front of her. She knew only that she should be afraid.

“Do you know what you’ve done?” Kara asked in a voice barely louder than a whisper.

“I did what was needed,” Fendra said. “Our people need a leader.”

“They have me,” Kara said.

“Your loyalties are divided,” Fendra said. “You care too much for these humans, when they would slaughter us all. You gave one of them a House. A place in our government. You used our technology to make one of them into one of us!”

“I have given everything to save my people,” Kara said. “Kryptonian. Human. They are both my people. They have to be. We have no future without them.”

“You said it yourself,” Fendra said. “We have the Genesis chamber. We have the genetic archive. We have everything we need to rebuild Krypton, to restore everything we’ve lost.”

“Why would you want that?” Kara demanded.

“You want that too,” Fendra.

“No,” Kara said, shaking her head. “No. I never wanted to rebuild Krypton as it was. I never wanted to raise the Houses up and cast the rankless down again. I never wanted to rebuild the sick, twisted cancer at the heart of our world. We deserved what happened to us, Fendra. We killed ourselves. The guardians might have paid for the gun, and the Brainiacs might have put it to our heads, but *we* pulled the trigger. We killed ourselves, and we took fifty-three universes with us, and I had to watch every one of them burn.”

“Kara-”

“I AM TALKING NOW!” Kara roared, and the force of the sound drove Fendra to her knees. “The humans are our hope. They are our salvation. I wanted to rebuild Krypton with only the best of us, and the best of them. Our past. Fifteen thousand years of art and culture and faith and science. Our knowledge, our wisdom, our belief, and I wanted to infuse the new world with their humility, their compassion, their hope, and most of all, their capacity for love. In fifteen thousand years of progress, we’d forgotten how to love, forgotten what passion feels like. We’d forgotten that every single person *has* to matter, or no one does. That is what they can give us back.”

Kara fell to her knees, as the tears started rolling down her cheeks.

“You have no idea what you’ve taken from me,” Kara said. She reached up and wiped the tears from her face.

“No one has to know,” Fendra said.

“I know,” Kara said. “And you know. And we both know what it means.”

“It’s never been done before,” Fendra said. “The others-”

“The others will accept this,” Kara said, “you’ve given them no choice.”
“Very well,” Fendra said.

“Speak of this to no one,” Kara said. “Cat deserves to hear it from me.”

“When will you tell her?” Fendra asked.

“As soon as I can bring myself to,” Kara said.

“When do you want to do this?” Fendra asked.

“Soon,” Kara said. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “We’ll do it New Year’s Day. As good a day as any for a wedding.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zrhygrahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope

.nizrhrsh,levrrosh,
Advance-Retreat (a Kryptonian Board game similar to chess)

.nahn w zhi:zhaoluhs
I am so screwed

.gampili .rao , :divi rraop bem
Literal: Rao will bring you light
Semantic: No semantic translation is possible, because the sentiment being expressed is bound up within Kryptonian Culture. Light is a common metaphor for joy, peace, happiness, divinity and heaven. The closest it can be rendered is "May God guide you to the happiness you deserve."

.zhao w rrip
I love you (romantically)

.pahskilahres w khap ni :divi
Literal: You make me see light
Semantic: No semantic translation is possible, because the sentiment being expressed is bound up within Kryptonian Culture. Light is a common metaphor for joy, peace, happiness, divinity and heaven. The closest it can be rendered is "You are the reason I am capable of feeling joy."

.nahn rrip w tiv :divi chanes ,rao, w khap
Literal: You are the light that Rao gave me.
Semantic: No semantic translation is possible, because the sentiment being expressed is bound up within Kryptonian Culture. Light is a common metaphor for joy, peace, happiness, divinity and heaven. The closest it can be rendered is "You are the source of my joy. In the Kryptonian Historical Epic The Courtship of Erok and Milia, Erok, son of El, asked Milia, daughter of Zod for her hand in marriage, this was her response.

vrazhium
Rankless. An individual who does not belong to a house.

bythgro :zugur im
War queens

:zhaolodh w tov dovrrosho
Literal: Fuck the shadows
Semantic: Fucking Hell
Chapter Summary

Kara goes missing, and while everyone searches for her, a number of secrets find their way out into the light of day.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: This chapter deals with Kara's mental illness in a very big way. It contains depictions of self harm, suicidal behavior, suicidal ideation and attempted suicide. Please, please proceed with caution.

Notes: Unless things change radically, this will be the last bonus chapter I post for Devils in the Dark. When I started posting Future Shock, I had 37 chapters completed and in the buffer. Once this chapter goes up, the buffer will be down to nineteen. Devils in the Dark was finished back in January, but I have not started writing A Plague of Righteousness as of yet, because I have been working on my Sanvers High School AU, Taking In Strays, which is the first in a new series called Little Girls Lost that will start posting in a few weeks. Which means that there *may* be a gap between the last chapter of Devils in the Dark and A Plague of Righteousness. It depends on how quickly I can move through writing A Plague of Righteousness. I am sorry about that, but as you will see moving into the end game of Devils in the Dark, I needed a chance to work on something a lot lighter and happier, which Taking In Strays definitely is. It just turned out to be a lot bigger than expected (It's currently at 173K words, and will probably end up closer to 190K words by the time it's finished). The good news is, the break let me get a much more solid idea of how I wanted to approach a couple of the threads from A Plague of Righteousness, and I think the finished product will be a lot better because I had the chance to step away from it for a couple of months.

Chapter 46, Titled "The Lifesaving Properties of Coconuts" will go up on Saturday, per my normal schedule. This chapter is getting posted early in order to move through this particular arc in the story a little more quickly, because a lot of people were so upset by the ending of Saturday's chapter. My goal, as always, it to entertain, not leave you in misery.

If you want to talk about Future Shock with me, or any of my stories, feel free to join my Discord Server.

Now, enough jibber jabber. Onto the chapter, and once again, please proceed cautiously and mind the trigger warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, December 26, 2015

-Kara Danvers’ Text Messages-
08:32 AM – Cat: Morning, love. Would you like to come up for breakfast?

09:08 AM – Cat: Darling, are you awake?

10:03 AM – Cat: I missed you at breakfast, love, but I had Kleenex save you some of those disgustingly sweet Orange Sticky Buns you like. They’ll be here when you wake up.

-Alex Danvers’ Text Messages-

10:31 AM – Cat: Do you happen to know where your sister is?

10:33 AM – Alex: She’s not with you?

10:34 AM – Cat: Oh, why didn’t I think to check that? Wait. I did. Of course she’s not with me, you raging imbecile. I wouldn’t be texting you, asking you were she was, if she was with me.

10:36 AM – Alex: Okay. Good point. I just kind of assumed she’d be spending the night at your place.

10:37 AM – Cat: Do I look like the kind of woman who puts out on the first date?

10:37 AM – Alex: I’m not even gonna touch that.

10:38 AM – Cat: Wise choice.

-Kara Danvers’ Text Messages-

10:38 AM – Alex: Hey, Kara. Your girlfriend is blowing up my phone looking for you.

10:39 AM – Cat: Kara, please answer me. Kleenex says you’re not at home, but the damn pile of circuits won’t tell me where you are, and I’m starting to worry.

10:42 AM – Alex: Hey, Kara. I had to spend the night on the couch because of you. Do you think maybe you could let me know where you are?

-Cat Grant’s Text Messages-

10:46 AM – Alex: She’s not answering.

10:46 AM – Cat: You’d make a terrible reporter. That was old news two hours ago.

10:47 AM – Alex: Just keep your panties on. I’m getting dressed and going to her apartment.

10:48 AM – Cat: This damn floating junkpile she gave me says she’s not there.

10:49 AM – Alex: Yeah. I’ll trust my own two eyes, thanks.

10:49 AM – Cat: I’ll meet you there.

10:49 AM – Alex: Do not go into the apartment without me.

10:50 AM – Cat: Hurry.

Alex and Maggie stepped off the elevator to find Cat standing in the hall in a Blue Lantern uniform. Not a regular one, of course, because she was Cat Grant. Instead it was black slacks, and a black blazer with blue stripes over a blue ribbed sweater and black boots. The Blue Lantern emblem was
worn on the left side of the blazer like a badge.

“ Took you long enough,” Cat said.

Alex had to fight to keep from rolling her eyes. She walked past Cat and slapped her hand on the palm pad, and the door popped open. She stepped into the apartment and knew something was wrong the instant she did. There was a large steam tray of potstickers sitting on the coffee table alongside an unopened grape soda. She gave Maggie a quick hand signal and they both drew their pistols and moved through the apartment, clearing it with the same meticulous care they would use to clear a crime scene before returning to the living room.

“Nimda,” Alex said.

“Yes, Lady Alex?” Nimda asked.

“Where is Kara?” Alex said.

“Lady Kara is outside of communication range,” Nimda said.

“Be more specific,” Alex said.

“Lady Kara is outside of communication range. Further details are restricted,” Nimda said.

“Restricted by who?” Maggie asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“Nimda, when did Kara get home last night?” Alex asked.


“What happened after she returned home?” Alex asked.

“She inquired if there was any food left over from the Christmas party,” Nimda said. “She then requested one of the remaining trays of potstickers and a grape soda. She began to consume her food while I provided her with a status update.”

“A status update on what?” Alex asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“Nimda, what time did Kara leave the apartment?”

“Kara left the apartment at 3:41 AM Pacific Standard Time,” Nimda said.

“Why did she leave?” Alex asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“Nimda, play back a recording of everything that happened in the apartment between the time Kara arrived home, and the time she left again,” Maggie said.

“I’m sorry, Ms. Sawyer,” Nimda said. “I am unable to comply with that request, because the interval includes restricted material. Would you like me to play the unrestricted portion of the video logs?”

“No,” Maggie said. “Where did Kara go when she left?”
“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“Nimda, cease monitoring of this room,” Cat said. “Konex, what happened when Kara came home last night?”

The attendant floated into the living room. “Lady Kara returned home at 3:27 AM Pacific Standard Time. She inquired if there was any food left over from the Christmas party. She then requested one of the remaining strays of potstickers, and a grape soda. She began to consume her food, while Nimda provided her with a status update. She left the apartment at 3:41 AM Pacific Standard Time.”

“What was the status report about?” Cat asked.

“The status report included details about Project Dragon’s Teeth, Project Phalanx and Project Sunblade,” Konex said.

“What are those projects?” Cat asked.

“That information is restricted,” Konex said.

“Who has access?” Cat asked.

“Lady Kara El, Lady Alex Danvers, Agent Maggie Sawyer, Agent Susan Vasquez, Director J’onn J’onzz, Assistant Director Lucy Lane, Captain Sara Lance,” Konex said.

Cat gave Alex a pointed look.

“Konex, what are project Dragon’s Teeth, Project Phalanx and Project Sunblade?” Alex asked.

“Project Dragon’s Teeth is a follow-on to Project Seed Stock, in which the deep space construction drones manufactured during Project Seed Stock traveled to the outer solar system and harvested materials to construct a network of orbital defense platforms capable of withstanding sustained assault by the full might of the Green Lantern Corps. Project Phalanx is a multiphase follow-on to Project Dragon’s Teeth. In phase one, the orbital defense platforms are moved into Earth Orbit while cloaked. In phase two, the orbital defense platforms come online and create a defensive barrier which would prevent anyone from approaching or landing on Earth. Project Sunblade is the construction of a Hypertime-Travel-Capable Kryptonian Super Dreadnought with Metadimensionally-Augmented Armor,” Konex said.

“Holy fucking shit,” Alex said. “Konex, what is the status of these projects?”

“Project Dragon’s Teeth is complete. Project Phalanx is currently in phase one, with expected completion within seventy-two hours. A pause has been ordered at the end of phase one, and phase two will not commence without direct instruction. Project Sunblade has completed the construction phase and is currently in the fueling phase. It is currently expected to take thirty-one days to complete production of the exotic matter required to generate temporal displacement.”

“Konex, are you telling me that Kara is currently in possession of a fully-operational Kryptonian warship?” Alex asked.

“No,” Konex said. “The ship’s time drive is currently non-functional.”

“But all other systems are working?” Alex asked.

“Correct,” Konex said.
“Konex, where is Kara?” Alex asked.

“Lady Kara is outside of communication range. Further details are restricted,” Konex said.

“Who has access to that information?” Alex asked.

“Lady Kara and her mother,” Konex said.

“Alura In-Ze is dead,” Alex said.

“Correct. Lady Alura died during the destruction of Krypton,” Konex said.

Alex looked at Maggie and Cat. “What the hell is going on?” she asked.

-Kara Danvers’ Text Messages-

11:24 AM – Cat: Kara, please answer me. Whatever is wrong, whatever has happened, please just let me know you’re okay.

11:25 AM – Cat: Kara, please answer me. I mean it. Even if you’ve changed your mind about us, I promise I will understand. Just let me know you’re safe.

Cat set her phone down and looked up at the collection of people gathered in the conference room. Everyone who lived in the Solarium who was in on the secret that Kara was from the future was there, with the sole exception of Jeremiah Danvers. Alex, Maggie, Susan, Leslie, J’onn, James, Winn, Kaldur’ahm, Eliza, Lucy, Zatanna and Astra all sat around the table, trying to figure out where Kara could possibly be.

“Could she have gotten a lead on Cadmus?” Lucy asked.

“No,” Susan said. “No, if this was about Cadmus, she wouldn’t have shut us out like this.”

“Are you sure?” Cat asked.

“Yes,” Alex said. “She knows we all want a piece of Cadmus. If something had happened to you, I could see her going off the deep end and going for the takedown alone, but this doesn’t feel right.”

“Could Cadmus have gotten to her somehow?” Eliza asked. “Taken her out of the building?”

“No,” J’onn said. “Cadmus has surprised us before, but we’ve been very careful to keep the capabilities of Kara’s technology locked down. They know about the transmat and the attendants, but no one knows who or what Nimda is. Everyone at the DEO thinks Nimda is just another attendant.”

“Could they have hacked Nimda through one of the attendants or one of the drones?” Maggie asked.

“No,” Astra said. “Nimda’s a separate system, derived from future tech. There’s nothing in her that’s even remotely connected to Kryptonian tech. She issues instructions to the drones through an intermediary AI. Someone tapping the drones could hack the intermediary, but not Nimda.”

“Look, I hate to even ask this, and I’m gonna feel like an ass for doing it, but have we checked on Lena’s whereabouts last night?” Lucy asked.

“Lena was uninvolved,” Astra said. “I can vouch for her whereabouts.”
“Oh,” Lucy said.

“I left her in her apartment at approximately 2:30 AM and returned to my apartment. She remained in her apartment until we went to the coffee shop two blocks over for breakfast a little after 7:00 AM,” Astra said.

“I’m sorry, but that’s not exactly solid,” Lucy said.

“At the moment, Lena is sitting on her balcony, drinking tea and sketching a design for a dodecalateral compression unit to complete the assembly of omegahedrons. She’s humming A Thousand Years by Christina Perri. Her heart is beating sixty-two times per minute, and she’s wearing a new jacket which she doesn’t like because the edges of the tag are irritating the back of her neck,” Astra said.

“Okay, how do you know all that?” Lucy asked.

“I can hear her heartbeat, the sound of her sipping the tea, the sound of the stylus on the tablet, the song she’s humming, the sound of the tag scraping across her skin and the way she huffs every time it does. I know it’s a new jacket, because whenever she doesn’t like a garment, she has her assistant Jess donate it to charity,” Astra said. “I know she was in her apartment all night, because I could hear her. I can tell you what time she fell asleep, what time she woke up, what time she went to the kitchen to get a pint of Ben & Jerry’s Peanut Butter Cup Ice Cream.”

“You could hear all of that?” Leslie asked. “Cause, really, that’s taking stalker to a whole new level of creep.”

“Can you hear everything going on in the building?” Winn asked, turning a little green around the gills.

“Yes,” Astra said, “as can Kara, and now, Lucy. Most of the time we filter the noise out, because it would drive us mad otherwise.”

“If you’re filtering it out, then how do you know Lena was in her apartment the entire evening?” Cat asked.

“Some people slip through the filters,” Astra said, “or they do or say something which attracts your attention. The why is irrelevant. I know that Lena was in her apartment from the time I left her until the time I met her for breakfast. Also, we spent most of the night texting.”

“You could have led with that instead of the creepy stalker hearing,” Leslie said.

“Texts can be sent from anywhere,” Astra said.

“I think we’re looking at this the wrong way,” Cat said.

“What do you mean?” Maggie asked.

“One of the first rules you learn as a reporter is that what people won’t comment on is more important that what they will,” Cat said. “But people tend to think in terms of direct answers. If you feel around the edges, get them to comment on things that they think are unimportant, you can usually get a sense of the shape of what they are trying to hide.”

“That’s a good idea,” Maggie said. “Nimda. When was the last time Kara was in National City?”

“Lady Kara departed National City at 4:49 AM Pacific Standard Time, December 26th, 2015,”
“Was Kara in National City from the time she left her apartment until 4:49 AM?” Cat asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“That’s a no,” Cat said. “When was the last time Kara visited Sanctuary?”


“How long did she stay there?” Maggie asked.


“When was the last time Kara arrived in National City?” Cat asked.

“Lady Kara’s most recent arrival in National City occurred at 4:42 AM Pacific Standard Time, December 26th, 2015,” Nimda said.

“Where was she arriving from?” Maggie asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“When was the last time Kara was in [zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/],” Cat asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“Did Kara meet with anyone between the time she left her apartment, and the time she arrived at Sanctuary?” Maggie asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“Where did Kara go after she left Sanctuary?” Cat asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“Well, that gives us a timeline,” Cat said. “She left her apartment at 3:41, went to [zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/], met with someone, arrived back at her apartment an hour later, stayed seven minutes, went to Sanctuary, stayed fourteen minutes, then went whereever it is that she went.”

Maggie took out her phone and made a call. “Hey, M’gann, sorry to bother you, but did you see Kara last night? What do you mean? Okay. I’ll come by and pay for it. She did? No, I’m sure everything’s fine. She’s probably just sleeping off the hang-over somewhere with her phone turned off. Talk to you later.” Maggie hung up and slipped her phone back in her pocket.

“M’gann hasn’t seen Kara, but Kara broke into Darla’s last night and took five bottles of Bolovaxian whiskey. She left a note telling M’gann what she did, and five thousand dollars to cover the whiskey, which is about ten times what she normally sells it for,” Maggie said.

“Nimda, what time did Kara enter Darla’s bar last night?” Cat asked.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“Nimda, pull all access logs for all locations in [zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/]. last night and display
them,” Cat said.

“That information is restricted,” Nimda said.

“What building’s access logs are restricted?” Cat asked.

“Darla’s bar and the .eurredhuhs iahzrhim,” Nimda said.

“You should have been a detective,” Maggie said.

“I am good,” Cat said. “And now we have a rough timeline. Kara leaves my apartment and goes to hers. Nimda tells her something that sends her to the Genesis Chamber to meet with someone. Whatever happened there, it upset Kara enough to make her go silent, and enough to make her think breaking into a bar and stealing a large quantity of Kryptonian-strength alcohol was a good idea. She came back home, presumably to collect something, transmatted to Sanctuary, stayed there for fifteen minutes, and then went… whereever she went.”

“Why would Kara go to the Genesis Chamber?” Maggie asked. “She doesn’t… Does she have a child in there?”

“No,” Alex said. “No. She would have told me.”

Cat watched as Maggie took Alex’s hand in hers. “I’d like to think so too, but she didn’t exactly mention the giant Kryptonian warship or the network of armed space stations.”

“Nimda, how many children are in the Genesis Chamber?” Alex asked.

“Fifteen,” Nimda said.

“List parents of all children in the Genesis Chamber,” Alex said.

“Information on lineage of children gestating in the Genesis Chamber is restricted to parents and the child’s head of House,” Nimda said.

“Is that normal?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Astra said. “There was an incident shortly after the Unification. It ended with the execution of the House of Bant.”

“You executed an entire House?” Maggie asked.

“The Bant councilor used his access to retrieve the records of the children of the House of Ul and poisoned all their Birthing Matrices,” Astra said. “Since that time, not even the Council can access the records of parentage. The incident also began the trend towards Houses building private Genesis Chambers within their own strongholds.”

Okay, so we can’t retrieve the records,” Alex said. “Could we ask Fendra?”

“We don’t need too,” Astra said. “Fendra told me that fifteen of our people had decided to have children, and all of them were seeded on the same day.”

“And Kara wasn’t at the seeding,” Maggie said. “That was the same day Sara left, and she was with me most of the day.”

Okay, but who did she meet with?” Alex said. “And why meet at the Genesis Chamber? What else is housed there?”
“The Genetic Archive,” Astra said.

“What does that have to do with warships and defense satellites?” Alex asked.

“I do not know,” Astra said.

“If we knew who she met with it would help,” Cat said.

“It would have to be a Kryptonian,” Maggie said. “Alex is the only human allowed in.”

“Fendra,” Astra said.

“Nimda, call Fendra,” Alex said.

“Greetings, Lady Danvers,” Fendra said as the line connected. “What can I do for you?”

“Fendra, did you meet with Kara last night?” Alex asked.

“We spoke briefly at the party,” Fendra said.

“What about after the party?” Alex asked.

“After the party, I spoke with Astra about a security matter, then I returned home,” Fendra said.

“Fendra, do you know of any reason Kara might have turned off her comm?” Alex said. “I’ve been unable to reach her.”

“I’m afraid I don’t know Kara very well,” Fendra said. “I’m often confounded by her reactions.”

“I see,” Alex said.

“Is there anything else?” Fendra asked.

“No,” Alex said. “Thank you for your time, Lady Kann.”

“I am at your service, Lady Danvers,” Fendra said before disconnecting the call.

“Well, that wasn’t suspicious *at all*,” Leslie said.

“So, we know she met with Fendra,” Cat said. “Could Fendra have done something to her?”

“Doesn’t fit the timeline,” Maggie said. “Besides, why would Fendra set the restrictions so Alura would be able to access the information?”

“What?” Astra asked.

“The restriction on Kara’s location is locked down to Kara and Alura,” Alex said.

Cat watched as Astra leaned back in her chair and close her eyes, and knew something was very, very wrong.

“Alex, ask Nimda where Kara is, please?” Astra said.

Alex frowned. “Nimda, where is Kara?” she asked, giving Astra a puzzled look.

“Lady Kara is outside of communication range,” Nimda said.
Astra made a small gesture, urging Alex to continue.

“Be more specific,” Alex said.

“Lady Kara is outside of communication range. Further details are restricted,” Nimda said.

This time, Alex didn’t need any prompting. “Who has access to that information?” she asked.

“Lady Kara, and her mother,” Nimda said.

Cat knew what came next. Could see it as clearly as she could see Astra’s face.

“Nimda, where is Kara?” Astra asked.

“Lady Kara is at the Fire Falls on Krypton,” Nimda said.

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The Fire Falls, Krypton: May 7th, 1977

(Two Weeks Before the Destruction of Krypton)

“Oh,” Zor-El said. “Forgive me friend. I didn’t see you there.”

“A hazard of my training, I’m afraid,” Kara said as she stepped out of the small gap between the massive Hatuar deposits. “I’m so used to moving in the shadows that I do it by habit.”

Zor-El frowned. “Are you a Shadow Knife?”

“No,” Kara said. “Nothing so straightforward. But do not be afraid. I mean you no harm.”

Zor-El nodded and turned back to his work, loading the sample container onto the heat resistant drone.

“It won’t be long now,” Kara said as she stepped up beside him.

He looked over at her. “Long for what?” he asked.

“Until our world ends,” Kara said. “Until everything we love is burnt out of the stars.”

Zor-El’s hands froze. “You know?”

“Yes, Father,” Kara said. “I know, because I will watch it happen.”

“Father? I’m sorry. I think you have me mistaken for someone else,” Zor-El said.

“No, Father,” Kara said as she reached up and pushed back the hood which had been shrouding her face. “I am not mistaken. I remember this /zehtiahr/ very, very well. We were supposed to go to see Jerat, but you were called away to work. I remember you telling me you’d spent the /zehtiahr/ at the Fire Falls.”

Zor-El sat down the sample container and turned towards her.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“It’s me, father,” Kara said. “Kara, first born of the second born, daughter of Zor, son of Seg, son of Tel, son of Val, and daughter by uncounted fathers of Erok, founder of the House of El.”
“No,” Zor-El said. “That’s not possible. My daughter is only twenty-seven /ahmzehto/ old.”

“And I have passed a hundred more /ahmzehto/ since this one,” Kara said. “But it is possible.” She lifted her hands, pushing back the left sleeve of her robe to show him the device she wore on her left arm.

“This is a time courier,” she said. “A device which allows you to move easily through space and time. It brought me here, brought me home, because I have questions, and you are the only one in fifty-three universes who can answer them.”

Zor-El’s eyes dropped to the device on her wrist. “Time travel?” he asked. “Truly?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “And I did not come without proof.” She stepped forward and reached up, pulling her mother’s pendant from beneath her robe.

“Alura’s betrothal pendant,” Zor-El said in wonder. He looked up at her and smiled. “Kara?”

“Yes,” she said, feeling the tears start to spill from her eyes. “Father, I…” she stopped, choking on the words, and before she realized what was happening, he was pulling her into a fierce hug.

“Easy, my Little Star. Be easy. It can’t be as bad as all of that,” he said.

Kara slipped her arms around him, hugging him as if her life depended on it.

Saturday, December 26, 2015

“You’re Kara’s mother?” Eliza asked.

“Depending on how you view the matter,” Astra said. “My sister raised Kara, cared for her, nurtured her. She was her mother. But Alura had contracted an epigenetic disease during a visit to the planet Pheramon. In and of itself, the disease was harmless to her, but the changes it made to her genetic coding were easily detectible. The Birthing Matrix should have filtered out the contagion, but there was a non-zero chance that any embryo produced from her blood would be non-viable. By all rights, Zor-El could have severed the bond. My sister would have been disgraced, and it might well have meant a feud between two of the most powerful Houses on Krypton. Given the El’s conflict with the Zod’s, they were motivated to avoid that, but in order to cement the alliance, there had to be a child.”

“So, you donated the blood,” Cat said.

“Yes,” Astra said. “I went to the El stronghold in Argo, on the pretense of witnessing the seeding. When the time came, I stepped forward and touched my hand to the taking station. Zor’s brother Jor and his wife Lara pretended as if nothing had happened, and when Kara was born two /ahmzehto/ later, she was presented to the world as Zor-El and Alura’s son. No one could claim otherwise, since Jor, Lara and I stood as witnesses to the seeding.”

“Then why do the records show you as her mother?” Alex said.

“Even monozygotic twins have small genetic variances. Most tend to be epigenetic, but copy variation is common after the embryo splits as well. My sister and I were born from a single birthing matrix, but there was enough genetic variance that the Genetic Archive could tell my blood from hers. Since Genetic Archive information is heavily restricted, very few people ever knew, and those that did, had every motive to keep it well hidden,” Astra said.

“Why didn’t you tell her?” Alex asked. “When the two of you were re-united here on Earth, who not
tell her?

“Why would I?” Astra said. “It would only cause her pain. She loved her mother, and I did not want to take that memory from her any sooner than I had to. I did plan to tell her eventually, but only when she had decided to seed a child herself, and the discovery would be inevitable.”

“But how is any of this connected to warships and defense satellites?” Maggie asked. “We’ve missing something.”

“Agreed,” Cat said. “If she somehow discovered that you were her mother last night, why not come and confront you? Why did she go to Krypton?”

“A better question is how did she go to Krypton?” Winn asked. “If her enormous, scary time-traveling dimension-hopping warship of doom is still sitting there waiting to have gas put in the tank, how did she get to Krypton, because that’s two-thousand light years and thirty-eight years ago?”

“I don’t know,” Leslie said. “I mean, it’s not like Sunshine’s regular booty call has a fucking time machine, or some shit.”

“As much as it pains me to admit this, Ms. Willis does make a very good point,” J’onn said. “Do we have a way to contact Ms. Lance?”

Cat picked up her phone. “I never thought having my girlfriend’s ex on speed dial would come in handy,” she said.

“Wait, girlfriend?” Susan asked. “Is my copy of this week’s issue of ‘Crazy Shit Kara Has Done’ missing a page?”

The Fire Falls, Krypton: May 7th, 1977

(Two Weeks Before the Destruction of Krypton)

“A daughter?” Zor-El asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“But who’s the father?” he asked.

“There are a few of us,” Kara said. “The parent is from House Kann. We’re to be bonded in six /zehtiahro/. It doesn’t matter.”

“Of course it matters,” Zor-El said.

“Father, it doesn’t,” Kara said. “There isn’t time. I’m taking a huge risk coming here. If you don’t make it home on time, the entire timeline might be altered.”

“Okay, my Little Star. What is it you need to know?” he asked.

“What did you do to me?” Kara asked.

Zor-El looked away from her, his whole demeanor drawing inwards. “Nothing,” he said. “It’s nothing.”

“Father, I have to know,” Kara said. “Whatever you did, it’s affecting my daughter.”
Zor-El squeezed his eyes shut. “I’m sorry,” he said. “It shouldn’t do that.”

“What is it?” Kara asked.

He opened his eyes and looked up at her. “I just wanted to make sure you survived,” he said. “There are people out there who will hate you for who you are. For who your mother is. I only wanted to protect you.”

“What did you do?” Kara asked.

“I used your mother’s pass key to gain access to the evidence archives. Jindah Kol-Rozz’s research was all in there,” Zor-El said.

“Father, no,” Kara said, shaking her head as she began to come to a horrible realization. “No. Tell me you didn’t.”

“I had to,” Zor-El said. “I had to do it to keep you safe. And it worked. You survive.”

“You… You put filth in my veins,” Kara said. “You corrupted me.”

“No,” Zor-el said. “No, it’s not like that.”

“They were monsters,” Kara said.

“Yes, but they were made to be monsters,” Zor-El said.

“That’s what you did to me!” Kara said. “You turned me into… You…”

“No,” Zor-El said. “I never made you a monster, Kara. I never did that. The Worldkillers were weapons. They were designed for one purpose. But that’s not you. I made you something else.”

“I know,” Kara said, shaking at the horror. “I know what you made me.”

“A survivor,” Zor-El said.

“And you really think that’s better?” Kara asked.

“I couldn’t protect you any other way,” Zor-El said.

“This wasn’t protection,” Kara said. “I always thought it was the war that made me like this.”

“War?” Zor-El asked. “What war?”

“Doesn’t matter,” Kara said. “You’re dead. You’re dead, and I’m the rot you left behind.” She reached into the pocket of her robe and pulled out the Memory Flasher.

“Kara I—"

Saturday, December 26, 2015

“She gave her a what?” J’onn asked.

“A time courier,” Cat said. “Because apparently, some imbecile decided building a time machine into a wrist watch is a good idea.”
2:47 PM – Cat: Kara, I know you won’t get these until you return, and we *will* be having a talk about you not letting me know where you were going, but I want you to know I love you.

2:48 PM – Cat: Where ever you are, in time and space, you have taken my heart with you.

3:17 PM – Cat: That doesn’t mean I’m not pissed off at you. You were supposed to let me help you. Then you pull this ridiculous time travel stunt.

The Fire Falls, Krypton: May 7th, 1977

(Two Weeks Before the Destruction of Krypton)

Zor-El shook himself, fighting off a wave of dizziness. He checked his biomonitor and noticed there’d been a spike in his vitals and wondered for a moment if he’d gotten too close to the heat. He glanced up and saw the drone coming back with a full rack of sample containers and realized he must have lost a bit more time than he realized and cursed himself. He was getting sloppy, and that wouldn’t do. Not if he was going to save his daughter.

Saturday, December 26, 2015

4:47 PM – Cat: Why the hell are you on Krypton? Of all the places in the universe you could go to get drunk?

6:12 PM – Cat: You’re fired. You are so fired.

7:34 PM – Cat: That ridiculous dog you saddled me with went out for a walk and came back carrying a tree. An entire tree, Kara. Not a small one, either. There are coconuts everywhere. I demand you come home and clear up this mess.

9:43 PM – Cat: Kara Elaine Danvers Zor-El if you are not home in the next seventeen minutes, I will not be held responsible for my actions.

11:09 PM – Leslie: Jesus Fucking Christ, Sunshine. Cat just fell asleep crying on my shoulder. Get your shit together.

Sunday, December 27, 2015

7:32 AM – Cat: Kara, love, please tell me you’re home.

“Look,” Leslie said, “It’s simple. Fender Bender knows what happened. Marvin and Grumpy Butt can hold her down, and I’ll electrocute the shit out of her until she tells us what the fuck is going on.”

“I don’t hate this idea,” Cat said.

“We cannot torture Fendra for information,” J’onn said.
“Don’t roll your eyes at me” Alex said. “I’m on the torture train with Cat and Leslie.”

“Alex!” Maggie and Eliza both said.

Argo City, Krypton: May 10th, 1977
(Eleven Days Before the Destruction of Krypton)

Kara moved through the Grand Marketplace of Argo, taking in the sights and sounds of her home, and trying her best not to cry at how it felt to walk the streets of the City of the Long Twilight. Rao sat on the horizon, a comforting, constant presence in the sky, fixed and unmoving. It did her heart and soul good to be bathed in his divine light again.

She wondered, though, what Father Rao thought of her, of the poison and corruption running through her veins. She wondered what he thought of the things she’d done, the lives she’d saved and the ones she’d taken and the ones she hadn’t been able to save. She wondered, when the day came, if he would accept her into his light, to let her join the rest of her family.

She walked up to a booth, and selected a few twellian, a few jogan, and a basket of scarlet berries from the vendor, who put the fruit in a mesh bag for her. On a last-minute impulse, she added three oregus leaves before handing over a few of the coins she’d gotten in trade for the Bolovaxian Whiskey.

She broke the stem off one of the oregus leaves as she walked away from the vendor and tucked the end into her mouth, moaning happily at the long-forgotten flavor of oregus juice. It was just another of a million tiny little details she’d forgotten, and every one of them made her heart ache with the thought of leaving again.

She should have gone /zhehtiahro/ ago. She knew that, but she couldn’t bring herself to do it. She couldn’t, because the moment she went back, she would have to face her new reality.

Being a mother did not frighten her. She’d used to look forward to that. Even after Krypton was destroyed, she’d imagined what it would be like to have a child to care for. To teach that child what it meant to be Kryptonian. To watch them grow and learn.

It was everything that came with it that was crushing her down. Being bonded to Fendra might have been tolerable, or even pleasant, before. She had liked Fendra. The woman had a fierce mind, fast and cunning. It would have been a good partnership. One of friendship, certainly, though Kara doubted it would have ever grown beyond that.

Now, the thought was like the coldest shadow. A nightmare that would never end. The rest of her life would be spent bound to a person who had violated her, who had taken her agency and forced her to give up the happiness and the future she’d only just found.

Kara should have known better than to hope. The one constant of her life was that happiness never lasted.

She had wondered if it was a punishment. Wondered if the unending procession of loss and grief that made up her life was Rao’s judgement on her for the taint inside her, and if it was, how, then would Rao judge her daughter?

In her weaker moments, she had considered just staying. It would be a happy end, if she were honest. To stand on the streets of her childhood home and be swallowed by the cleansing fire. To pass through shadow and into Rao’s light.
The temptation grew stronger with each /wol/ that passed.

She should go home, she knew she should.

She kept walking.

Sunday, December 27, 2015

-Kara Danvers’ Text Messages-

1:43 PM – Cat: Why didn’t you come to us? Darling, we would have helped you.

2:16 PM – Winn: Hey, Kara. Not sure if you can get this where you are, or what’s going on, but maybe you could message Cat?

2:49 PM: She threatened to microwave my action figures Kara, and I think she means it.

Argo City, Krypton: May 14th, 1977

(Seven Days Before the Destruction of Krypton)

Kara knelt in the temple of Rao. Her cloak and her war suit and her day robes were folded neatly and tucked away in a cubby hole in the seeker’s station. She wore only a penitent’s shift, and the red light of Father Rao fell on her skin, bathing her in warmth as she recited the prayer for forgiveness, the prayer for guidance, the prayer for the dead, and the prayer for new souls over and over again.

She knew the priests were growing concerned. She hadn’t moved in almost five /wol/. Sweat beaded on her forehead, and her body raged against the abuse, but she couldn’t stop, because death stalked her, and it was winning in a way it never had before. It called to her, it teased her, it whispered to her of peace and an end to the pain.

All she had to do, was nothing. All she had to do was stay, and it would all be over.

No more suffering.

No more loss.

No more pain.

“Are you okay?” a voice asked, and Kara opened her eyes, and as if by some joke, she looked in a mirror, and saw her face from just a few /zehtiahro/ before her world died.

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “I don’t think so.”

“I could get my mother,” the younger Kara said. “She would know what to do.”

“I wish she did,” Kara said. “But I don’t think I know how to be okay anymore.”

“Why not?” the younger Kara asked.

“I keep losing things,” Kara said.

“Can’t you find them again?” the younger Kara asked.

“I-“
“KARA!” Alura called, and both of them turned. “Kara, leave her alone. She’s praying.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “She’s not bothering me.”

Alura stepped forward and knelt down next to her.

“Are you okay?” Alura asked.

“No,” Kara said.

Alura reached up and placed a hand on her forehead.

“You’re burning up,” Alura said. “When was the last time you slept?”

“I… don’t know,” Kara said. “Six /zehtiahto/, maybe.”

“Oh, Sweet Father, child. Why?” Alura asked.

“She says she’s lost something,” the younger Kara said.

Alura glanced at the younger Kara, then back at her. “What could you lose to leave you in a state like this?”

“My family,” Kara said. “My future. Everything I have ever had or wanted.”

“Oh, child,” Alura said, and she leaned forward, pulling her into a hug. “Come. We’ll gather your things.”

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Sunday, December 27, 2015

-Kara Danvers’ Text Messages-

6:48 PM – Cat: You told me that going back to Krypton was always hard, Kara. I know whatever must be going on there is difficult, but I believe in you, and I love you.

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Argo City, Krypton: May 18th, 1977

(Three Days Before the Destruction of Krypton)

Kara sat on a sidewalk in the rankless district, her back against the wall. Alura had taken her to the nearest Medical Hall, but Kara knew what would happen if the attendants got even a whiff of her DNA, so the moment Alura and her younger self’s backs were turned, she’d slipped out and vanished into the city.

After that, she hadn’t stayed in place for long, afraid there might be an alert out for her. She’d crawled in through the broken window of an abandoned shop on the edge of the slum and gotten a few /wolo/ sleep with her war suit in sun suit configuration. That and a few liters of water had put off the worst of what she was feeling, but the yellow sunlight had done what it always did, and left a gnawing hunger in her gut, and she’d spent most of the rest of her coins on enough food to feed a dozen people, and devoured all of it in one sitting.

Since then, she’d been more careful, rationing the yellow sunlight, using it to wash away the demand of sleep when it came.
Time was short.

She only had two and a half /zehtiahro/ left.

The ground shook, and around her, people screamed as the first Kryptonquake shocked her people to their core.

Kara smiled.

The fire was coming, and with it, an end to the pain.

Sunday, December 27, 2015

“Do you really think this is going to work?” Alex asked as she stared at the component the fabricator had just spit out.

“Sara assured me that this particular schematic will allow the trans-temporal communications array to transmit a signal to the time courier,” Astra said.

“Oh, okay,” Alex said. “Let’s go plug it in.”

-Kara Danvers’ Text Messages-

11:34 PM – Cat: I love you. Come back to me, Kara. Please. Whatever is going on, I want to help.

Argo City, Krypton: May 21st, 1977

(The Day of Krypton’s Destruction)

Kara sat on the roof of the House of El’s Argo City Tower. The very building she was born in. It felt right, that it should be here. It felt like a closing of the circle.

The ground shook, and the building shook with it, and she wondered, for a moment, if she would get to see the Waverider when it came, seeking the spy beacon. That would be nice, to have a chance to catch a glimpse of her Sara, one more time before the end.

The idea bothered her though. She thought of the letter Sara had left with the time courier. Sara who loved her. Sara who’d meant so much to her. Would Sara judge her for this? They had worked so hard to stop the war. They’d sacrificed too much, and she was going to throw it all away. She was going to walk away from her responsibilities. She was going to let everyone down, again.

The thought sat on her chest like a weight, making it hard to breathe.

She didn’t want to walk away, or let anyone down, or hurt anyone.

She just wanted the pain to stop.

She reached up and pushed back the left sleeve of her cloak, running her fingers over the device, suddenly unsure of the decision she’d thought she’d made days ago.

She still had time.

She could still get up and go home.
Did she want to go home? Did she want to go back to a world of sharp edges and emptiness and loneliness? Did she want to go back to be bound to a woman who’d violated her? Who’d stripped away her agency and destroyed her chance to be with Cat?

Did she really want to die without seeing Cat one more time? Without saying goodbye to Alex and Maggie and Winn?

Did she really want to give up, and let Darkseid hurt the people she loved?

She slid her thumb over the time courier, finding the power switch, flipping it on and bringing the device to life for the first time since she’d used it to travel from the Fire Falls to Argo City, and what happened next shocked her so much she almost screamed, as text alert after text alert sounded from her phone.

Confusion spread across her face as she unlocked her phone, and saw message after message from Cat, from Alex, from Winn, even one from Leslie, but it was the pleading tone of Cat’s messages that made the tears well up in her eyes. Cat begging and demanding she come home. Cat telling her she loved her. Cat telling her she would help.

Cat being Cat.

The first sob surprised her. The second brought the third and before she knew it, she couldn’t stop.

She felt it starting. The difficulty breathing, the tunnel vision. The panic attack was coming, and it was going to kill her. If she panicked, she was going to die, and she couldn’t die. Not here. Not now. Not when Cat was telling her to come home. So, she did what she always did when Cat told her to do something.

“Nimda, can you hear me?”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

“Feed Alex’s coordinates through to the targeting system of my time courier,” Kara said.

“Done, Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

Kara reached over and activated the time courier, and Sanctuary appeared in front of her and Alex and Astra both jumped back in shock.

“Help me,” Kara shouted.

Neither of them hesitated.

Monday, December 28, 2015

-Cat Grant’s Text Messages-

12:37 AM – Alex: We have her. She’s alive. Dirty, exhausted, dehydrated, and malnourished, but alive.

12:38 AM – Cat: Thank you.
Translated from the Kryptonian:

zhyygrhahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope

.eurredhuhs iahzrhim
Literal: Shrine of Beginnings
Semantic: Genesis Chamber

zehtiahr
A Kryptonian unit of time equal to 1.20 Earth Days.

ahmzehto (plural of ahmzeht)
A Kryptonian year. A unit of time equal to 180 Earth Days.

wol
A Kryptonian unit of time equal to 2.87 Hours

wolo (plural of wol)
A Kryptonian unit of time equal to 2.87 Hours

:zhaoohd zuv dovrrusho
Literal: Fuck the shadows
Semantic: Fucking Hell
The Lifesaving Properties of Coconuts

Chapter Summary

Kara tells Cat and Alex what happened after the Christmas Party. Cat, Alex and Astra try to figure out a solution while Kara talks to her therapist.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: This chapter deals with Kara's mental illness in a very big way. It depicts a therapy session which contains references to what happened in the last chapter, including self harm, suicidal behavior, suicidal ideation and attempted suicide. It also references past suicide attempts. There are also minor references to sexual assault. Please, please proceed with caution.

If you want to talk about Future Shock with me, or any of my stories, feel free to join my Discord Server.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Monday, December 28, 2015

Jeremiah squeezed his eyes shut trying to get rid of the spots the flash of the transmat left in his vision.

“It’s unpleasant, isn’t it?” a voice asked.

He opened his eyes, looking through the spots to see a tall, dark-haired woman in a pressed white suit. President Marsdin. Something he was still getting used to.

“It helps if you close your eyes during the transit,” she said in a kind voice as she stepped forward and extended her hand. “Olivia Marsdin.”

“Jeremiah Danvers,” he said as he took her hand. “Thank you for seeing me.”

“I’m just sorry it couldn’t have happened sooner, Mr. Danvers,” Marsdin said. “Unfortunately, making room in my schedule for a meeting is only slightly less difficult that getting a Republican to see past their wallets.”

“I understand,” he said.

“Did you bring the recording?” Olivia asked.

“Yes,” Jeremiah said. He reached into his pocked, noticing the Secret Service agents tensing up. They only relaxed a little when he held up a flash drive. “It’s about four and a half hours,” he said.

“Well,” Marsdin said, “It’s a good thing the kitchen stocks popcorn.”
The first thing Kara was aware of was the pain. It was a familiar pain. The gnawing, aching pain that never quite went away. The tedious pain of constant, starving hunger she’d felt since the first rays of the yellow sun drove her metabolism into overdrive that day decades ago.

The second thing Kara was aware of was a presence in the room. It was a familiar presence. One given away by the soft in and out of breathing, the faint rustle of silk on soft, well cared for skin, the gentle, steady thumping of a heart, and the comforting scent of a familiar perfume.

Cat was with her, and for a moment, everything was okay. For a moment, she could pretend this was her life. Waking up safe and happy with the woman she loved nearby. Lazy breakfasts shared with Cat and Carter, sneaking Krypto extra bacon when Cat wasn’t looking. It was a moment spent in paradise, like a tiny, all-too-brief foretaste of Rao’s encompassing light.

It didn’t last. That was the one constant of her life. The happiness never lasted.

This time, it was memory that brought it to an end. Memory which tore happiness away from her and smashed it on the cold, unyielding reality of what Fendra had done.

“How long?” Kara asked as she opened her eyes.

“How long were you gone, or how long have you been sleeping?” Cat asked softly from the chair she occupied next to the bed.

“Both,” Kara replied.

“Two days, and twelve hours,” Cat said. “You were gone for two days and you’ve been asleep for twelve hours.”

Kara sat up and looked around the unfamiliar room. She’d expected to find herself in the Medical Hall in Sanctuary, or the Medical Hall in the Solarium, but it only took her a moment to realize where she was.

“Is this your bedroom?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Cat said. “This isn’t exactly the way I imagined bringing you in here the first time, but I wasn’t about to leave you out at Sanctuary, and once you were cleaned up, I figured you could rest just as well here as you could in that stuffy little hospital you wedged in between the labs and other things a few floors down.”

Kara pulled back the sheets and started to climb out of the bed. “I shouldn’t be here,” she said, when the reality was, she never wanted to leave. “Just hand me my things, and I’ll go.”

“Like hell you will,” Cat said, standing up and moving in front of her. “You need rest. When Alex and Astra brought you back, you were half-starved and burning up with fever. You’re not going anywhere for a while.”

Kara closed her eyes, barely able to stand the sound of concern in Cat’s voice, knowing what had to happen. “Please, Ms. Grant,” she begged, “please don’t make this harder than it already is.”

She felt the bed shift next to her and opened her eyes in surprise to find Cat sitting at her side. There was anger there, but it wasn’t directed at her. Cat reached towards Kara’s face, and she wanted to lean into that touch, to seek the comfort Cat was offering, but she forced herself to pull away.

“Don’t,” Kara said. “Please, don’t.”
Cat drew her hand back.

“Please, Kara,” Cat said, “tell me what’s wrong.”

Kara stared at Cat, knowing what she had to do, what she had to say, but choking on the words. This was the moment she’d dreaded. The reason she hadn’t come back after she left her father. The reason staying seemed like a better choice. The moment she had to smash the future she wanted to absolve someone else’s sins.

She felt the weight of it pressing down on her chest, crushing the breath out of her. She recognized the incipient panic attack and twisted her hands in the sheets.

“I’m going to be married,” Kara sobbed.

“WHAT?” Cat shouted.

Kara cringed, backing away from Cat’s anger, waiting for the fury, the curses, the condemnation she had earned. She’d made promises she could no longer keep, and hatred would be the least of what she deserved.

And the hatred, the rage and the condemnation all came, as fast as she expected it, just not in the form she expected.

“Fendra,” Cat spat out, the name uttered with so much hatred it practically burned Kara’s ears just to hear it. She was so surprised, she looked up at Cat.

“How did you know?” Kara asked.

“Because you didn’t cover your tracks very well, and because that bitch is not nearly as good a liar as she thinks she is,” Cat said.

All Kara’s social training, thirteen years of it, and fifteen thousand years of Kryptonian tradition, demanded she speak up for her intended, but Kara couldn’t find it in her to utter a single syllable in Fendra’s defense.

“Kara, please, tell me what happened,” Cat said. “We managed to piece some of it together, but there are a lot of holes and the picture doesn’t make any sense. We know you went to the Genesis Chamber, we know you met with Fendra, we know you broke into Darla’s, and we know you went to Krypton, but we don’t know why you did any of that, and frankly, the idea of you marrying Fendra makes even less sense.”

“I…,” Kara started, then stopped, shaking her head. “I’m sorry, Ms. Grant. I know I made promises to you that night. I know I’m hurting you. I swear to you, I don’t want that.”

“Love, do you want to marry Fendra?” Cat asked.

“It doesn’t matter,” Kara said.

“Of course it matters,” Cat said. “Kara, please. I can’t help if I don’t know what’s happening.”

Kara dropped her eyes to the floor, not able to stand the possibility of hope that Cat was offering but knowing that no-one would accept what had to be without knowing why.

“Can…,” she stopped, her throat closing up. She cursed herself for being weak. She could do this. She had to do this. “Alex,” she said. “Please.”
“Okay,” Cat said. “She’s just downstairs. Do you want Astra, too?”

“No!” Kara said, cringing away from the thought of Astra seeing her like this. “Just Alex.”

“Okay,” Cat said.

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Olivia sat staring at the screen in front of her, trying her best to process what she’d just seen without melting down in gibbering terror. If this was real, and she knew from scales to bones that it was, then she had very nearly killed the world. If she’d sicced the Lanterns on Kara… It didn’t bear thinking on.

She couldn’t deal with this. Not alone. It was too much.

Every bit of anger and frustration she’d had with Kara for her failure to play the game had vanished, replaced by a swell of sympathy. She had been carrying all of this on her own for over a year. Understanding also brought rage. Rage at Cadmus for driving a wedge between humans and aliens, rage at herself for failing to purge the cancer in her administration that Cadmus was only a symptom of, and complete, utter contempt for Jeremiah Danvers.

She reached over and hit the intercom.

“Elizabeth, please send someone to tell Mr. Danvers that I am going to be sharing the video with a few select advisors. Tell him that I do understand that time constraints he’s under, but I’m afraid I’ll have to insist that he remain here so he’s available to answer questions. Once you’ve done that, get the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the National Security Advisor and the Attorney General to meet me in the situation room. I’ll also need a video tech.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Elizabeth said.

Olivia sat back and considered how this was going to play out. She was going to make enemies left and right and burn bridges and political capital and a rate that frightened her, but it didn’t matter. This wasn’t just about her people anymore. It wasn’t even about Earth. This was about saving all life, everywhere.

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Cat paced back and forth in front of the door, waiting for the chime, and toying with the ring. She wished, for a moment, she had the red one instead of the blue one. She somehow imagined the physical manifestation of rage would be better at tearing someone limb from limb than the physical manifestation of hope.

She didn’t know Fendra, not well enough to do more than give the other woman a casual hello, but over the course of the last two days, she’d come to hate her. She had known, beyond any doubt, the woman was somehow connected with Kara’s disappearance, and was very much on board with the idea of Astra and J’onn holding the woman down, while Leslie shocked the truth out of her. But if Fendra had somehow done what she was beginning to suspect, then Cat would absolutely destroy her.

She couldn’t imagine how it could have happened. She’d seen the way Kara fought. Fast, cold, and vicious. She couldn’t imagine her being overpowered, but all the signs were there. The aversion to touch, the shame she saw in Kara’s eyes.

She hoped she was wrong, but even if she was, whatever had happened after Kara left her apartment that night had clearly been awful. Kara was absolutely devastated.
The door chimed, and she opened it without even looking at the monitor and nodded to Alex.

“She’s in the den,” Cat said. “She wouldn’t stay in the bedroom.”

“Where’s Carter?” Alex asked as she closed the door.

“At Sam’s,” Cat said. She led Alex through the apartment and into the den where Kara was sitting on the couch, huddled up under a heavy quilt.

“Kara,” Cat said, in a gentle voice, using the same tone she used with Carter when he was having a bad day, hoping it would keep her from startling Kara. “Sweatheart, Alex is here.”

Kara looked up, and her face broke Cat’s heart. Her eyes were red and swollen, and her cheeks were wet with tears.

Cat had to swallow to get the lump out of her throat before she spoke. “I’ll go, so you two can talk.”

“Cat,” Kara said.

“Yes?” Cat asked.

“Stay,” Kara said. “Please. You deserve to hear this from me.”

“Of course,” Cat said. She started to walk over and sit down next to her, but she remembered how Kara had pulled away from her earlier and decided to check with her first. “Would you rather I sit with you, or in one of the chairs?”

It was the wrong question to ask, because Kara just squeezed her eyes shut and let out a sob. Alex was by Kara’s side in an instant, wrapping her arms around her sister and squeezing her tightly. It took a few minutes for Kara to cry herself out again, and she finally opened her eyes, looking up at Cat.

“I think…” she stopped and wet her lips with her tongue. “I think a chair would be better.”

Cat lowered herself into one of the easy chairs and hated it. She wanted to be where Alex was, holding Kara, comforting her, and had to tell herself over and over again that this is what Kara needed.

Alex glanced over at her as Kara burrowed in closer to her, and Cat could her own seething rage reflected back in Alex’s eyes. Could see the burning desire to find whoever had done this to her sister and destroy them utterly.

Cat decided right then and there that Alex was her third favorite person in the world.

Alex kissed the top of Kara’s head. “Whenever you’re ready,” she said.

Kara nodded and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly.

“I came home that night and Nimda informed me there was a developmental anomaly in one of the children in the Genesis Chamber,” Kara said. “One of the children was growing faster than she should. I asked Nimda who the parents were. I’m not supposed to be able to get that information, but when I designed the Sunstone for /zrhgyrhythsh im shahrehth/ I tweaked the protocols.” Her grip on Alex tightened a little. “I tweaked a lot of protocols. But it wouldn’t have mattered.”

“Why not?” Alex asked.
“Because it’s my daughter,” Kara said in a flat, dead tone.

The words were so unexpected, they landed like a physical blow, and Cat’s mind started racing. She couldn’t believe Kara was expecting a child and hadn’t told her. It didn’t make sense, and no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t fit that reality into the conversation they’d had three nights earlier. Kara was so concerned about everything she was asking Cat to take on as part of a relationship, that Cat couldn’t believe co-parenting a child wouldn’t have at least earned a mention. But as Cat turned it over in her mind, the marriage to Fendra suddenly began to make sense.

“I didn’t know you’d seeded a daughter,” Alex said, her tone carefully neutral, and Cat knew she was beginning to suspect the same thing as Cat.

“I didn’t,” Kara said, and Cat knew. She absolutely knew what had happened.

“I had to alter the lockouts, so we could seed from the Genetic Archive,” Kara said. “I excluded samples taken from living Kryptonians from the random matching algorithm. It never occurred to me that someone would do it deliberately.”

“Fendra,” Cat said.

Kara nodded.

“Why would she do that?” Alex asked.

“Strength,” Kara said. “Kryptonians admire strength, and I… I’m the Survivor.”

Cat frowned at the way Kara said it, like the word ‘survivor’ was a curse.

“I survived the destruction of Krypton, I survived Myriad, and throwing Fort Rozz into space, and Cadmus, and the Guardians and Darkseid and every other horror that fifty-three universes could throw at me and I came back to do it all again, and Fendra knows it. She’s seen me fight. She knows I’m the strongest Kryptonian alive. Maybe the strongest one to ever live,” Kara said.

“So she’s trying to what?” Alex asked. “Breed some sort of super-Kryptonian?” Alex asked.

“No,” Kara said. “She’s trying to breed a leader. One as strong as me, but one she can raise without any loyalty to humans.”

“Okay, we’re not going to let that happen,” Alex said. “But why marry Fendra?”

“To protect my daughter,” Kara said. “If I marry Fendra, she won’t be able to keep me from my daughter. If I don’t marry her, and I don’t tell anyone what she’s done, Fendra can raise her as she pleases. If I don’t marry her, and I do tell people what she’s done, my daughter will be a bastard orphan.”

“What does that mean?” Cat asked.

“The closest translation would be ‘bastard orphan’,” Kara said. “She’d be a pariah. An outcast. The others would consider her tainted.”

“You know, the more I learn about your people, the less I like them,” Cat said.

“I don’t like them very much either,” Kara said.

“Why go to Krypton?” Alex asked.
“The growth rate is due to a genetic abnormality,” Kara said. “On Krypton, once a /lorakh/, we would get sampled at the giving station. A small drop of blood would be sequenced and go into the Genetic Archive. When I pulled my record from the archive, I found out why my daughter is developing faster than she should. Someone began tampering with my DNA about twelve /lorakho/ before the destruction of Krypton. Two Earth years. Every /lorakh/, my sample showed more changes. It had to be someone with regular, close access to me. Someone I trusted. Someone who was an extremely skilled bioengineer.”

“There was only one person it could be,” Kara said. “I went to Krypton to ask my father what he’d done to me.”

“Did he tell you?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

Cat and Alex both waited, but Kara didn’t say anything else.

“What did he say?” Alex finally asked.

“That he made me into a monster,” Kara said.

“What?” Alex asked.

“Kara, you are *not* a monster.”

“I am,” Kara said. “He turned me into a demon.”

“Kara,” Cat said softly, “what did he do?”

Kara curled in on herself, huddling in even closer to Alex. “Yuda Kal is one of the old gods. The Mistress of the Moon. Once, she was Rao’s wife, but she went mad, and made a pact with Vohk to destroy Krypton. Her worshipers are monsters, and her cult has been outlawed for thousands of years. About fifty years back, Jindah Kol-Rozz, a priestess of Rao, was caught holding ceremonies dedicated to Yuda Kal. They discovered she’d found Black Zero’s headquarters and recovered enough of their data to recreate the Worldkillers.”

“What are Worldkillers?” Alex asked.

“Demons, monsters, bogeyman. No one’s really sure. The legends say they could fly, shoot fire from their eyes, spit ice from their lips, bend the strongest alloys with their bare hands, and couldn’t be cut by any weapon known to us. Black Zero engineered them during the clone wars. Their first attempt at a doomsday weapon, before the Eradicator. Five monsters meant to end all life on our world. Jindah meant to remake them and turn them loose as a tribute to Yuda Kal, but she was stopped before she could seed the Birthing Matrices.

“My father used my mother’s access privileges to get into the evidence archive so he could access Jindah’s research. He took genetic information from them and tucked it away in junk DNA loci in my chromosomes where the genetic filters wouldn’t spot it or would assume it was an epigenetic change.

“He put something foul and evil in me, in my blood and my bones and my cells. He poisoned me and turned me into something unholy, and now that filth is in my daughter,” Kara said.

Cat closed her eyes, taking the time to process what she’d just heard, letting the rage and the anger and the desire to smash everything flow over her and through her, using the same control she’d used for years to keep from just eviscerating the CatCo board, from throwing a stapler at Petty White’s head, from slapping Lois Lane in the face the day she’d realized what Lois had done to her.
This was not about her. Not right how. She could give vent to her temper and anger later. This was about Kara. The girl had discovered an enormous lie and two horrible violations of her person in a matter of hours, plus whatever she’d gone through on Krypton.

“Kara,” Cat asked as a sudden thought struck her, “how long were you on Krypton?”

“About eleven /zehtiahr/,” Kara said.

Cat did the math in her head. A /zehtiahr/ was a fiftieth of a Kryptonian day, and a Kryptonian day was about sixty days, which would mean Kara was on Krypton for about two weeks. She’d lived with this all for two weeks. She’d stayed on a planet that was doomed for two weeks, and Cat suddenly understood just how close she’d come to losing Kara. The thought was terrifying, and she knew it should be because of what it would mean to the Universe, but she couldn’t get past what it would mean to her.

She’d almost lost Kara.

Kara had almost killed herself.

Cat got up and walked over to Kara, sitting down on the coffee table.

“Kara, would you look at me for a moment?” Cat asked in a soft voice.

Kara lifted her head from Alex’s shoulder and looked at Cat.

“I want to call Doctor Foster,” Cat said. “Would you be okay with that?”

Kara nodded.

“Okay,” Cat said. “That’s good. I will call her in just a moment, but there are things I want you to understand, so if I explain them, will you listen?”

“Of course,” Kara said.

“Thank you,” Cat said. “First, I want you to understand that nothing has changed for me. I still love you. I still want a life with you. I still want to be there for you and help you with everything you have to do. Do you understand that?”

Kara nodded, and Cat saw the tears starting to well up again.

“Second,” Cat said. “You are not marrying Fendra. I don’t know how yet, but I am going to find a way to fix this. Do you understand that?”

Kara nodded as the tears started rolling down her cheeks.

“Third. Your daughter is not a monster. I don’t care what your father did to you, or to her. We are going to find a way to fix it, to make it right. And then, we are going to take her, and raise her to be a hero, just like her mother,” Cat said. She frowned slightly and gave a little bit of a shrug. “Maybe with better fashion sense.”

Kara laughed. The tears didn’t stop, but just the sound of it made Cat feel better.

“Kara, I’m not going to ask you to go through all of this again, but would it be okay if I explained the situation to Astra?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded.
“Okay,” Cat said. “We are going to figure this out. I promise you.”

Kara smiled at her, but Cat could tell she didn’t believe it. That was okay though. Cat believed enough for both of them.

“Doctor Foster speaking,” a voice said on the other end of the line.

“Hello, Doctor,” Cat said. “This is Cat Grant. We spoke once before about Ms. Lee.”

“Yes,” Foster said. “I remember.”

“Ms. Lee is having something of a bad time at the moment. I know it’s an imposition, but I wouldn’t have called if it wasn’t urgent,” Cat said.

“How bad is it?” Foster asked.

“I’m afraid I don’t really feel comfortable discussing that on an open line,” Cat said. “Ms. Lee’s privacy in this matter is very important.”

Foster let out a sigh. “That tells me enough, and it’s what I was afraid you would say. Unfortunately, I’m in Gotham at the moment.”

“If you’re willing to return, I assure you, I can handle the transportation arrangements at no cost to you,” Cat said.

“Can Ms. Lee wait that long?” Foster said.

“We’re watching her,” Cat said. “She’s in no immediate danger. Are you willing to make the trip?”

“If it were anyone else, I’d say no, but then, if it were anyone else, I wouldn’t have given her my cell phone. Let me speak to my wife, then I’ll head to the airport,” Foster said.

“No need. Speak with your wife, then go into a room with a closed door and text me back that you are alone, and ready. We’ll take care of the rest,” Cat said.

Ten minutes later, Foster appeared in a flash of light in Cat’s living room.

“That is awful,” she said.

“You get used to it,” Cat said.

“I’d rather not,” Foster said.

“Do you want me to give you the details of what happened, or do you want to get them from Kara?” Cat asked.

“I’d prefer to get them from Kara,” Foster said, “but if it’s as bad as it sounds, I’ll ask her if she would prefer someone else fill me in, so she doesn’t have to revisit the trauma.”

“Okay,” Cat said. “I can understand the benefits of walking into an interview without any pre-existing bias, but there is one thing I need to tell you, because I’m not sure she will.”

“Ms. Grant, I know you mean well, but-”
“I think she tried to kill herself,” Cat said.

“I see,” Foster said. Cat waited as Foster stared at her, and she could see the woman turning it over in her mind. “How did she make the attempt?”

“She put herself in a situation where she would be killed if she stayed. She had the ability to leave well in advance of the danger, but she didn’t. She did call for help at the last minute, but by that point her condition had deteriorated to the point where she couldn’t have removed herself from the situation,” Cat said.

“Okay,” Foster said. “Thank you. Where is she now?”

“She’s in the den,” Cat said. “Her sister, Alex, is with her.”

“I’ll go in,” Foster said.

Cat watched her go, then took out her phone, and called Astra. She’d done everything she could for Kara, and it was time to figure out how to deal with Fendra.

When Foster stepped into the den, she found Kara huddled up and pressed into the side of a tall, thin woman with dark auburn hair who she assumed was Alex. Kara was clinging do her, and had her face pressed against Alex’s chest while Alex held her and rocked her gently.

Alex looked up at her as she walked over to one of the armchairs and took a seat, then looked back down at her sister.

“Hey, Kara,” she whispered softly. “Doctor Foster is here.”

Kara shifted so she could look up at Foster, and Foster had to force herself not to react. In the five-days-a-week sessions she’d been having with Kara, she’d seen her in a lot of moods. She’d seen her angry, depressed, frustrated, nervous, upset, and exhausted, but up until that moment, she’d never seen her look hopeless.

“Hey, Kara,” Foster said.

“Hey,” Kara said in a small, broken voice.

“Cat gave me a call,” Foster said. “She thought you might want to talk to me.”

“I know,” Kara said.

“Would you like me to sit with you and talk for a bit?” Foster asked.

Kara nodded.

“Would you like Alex to sit with us?” Foster asked.

Kara shook her head.

Alex gave Kara a tight hug and a kiss on the cheek. “If you need me, I’ll be right outside with Cat,” she said. “I love you.”

“Love you too,” Kara said.

Alex smiled and stood up, heading for the door. She’d gotten about halfway there when Kara said,
“Alex.”

Alex turned around.

“No killing,” Kara said.

“You never let me have any fun,” Alex said.

“Maggie would be pissed,” Kara said.

“Maggie would help me dispose of the body,” Alex said. She walked back over to Kara and bent down, kissing her on top of her head. “We’ll figure this out,” Alex said. “I promise.”

Kara gave Alex a big, happy smile. Alex smiled back and left the room. The moment she was out of sight, the smile vanished, and Kara seemed to deflate.

“I’m sorry you have to interrupt your vacation,” Kara said.

“Don’t worry about it,” Foster said. “You actually saved me having to eat any more of my mother-in-law’s cooking.”

Kara gave her a weak smile, but it was easy to see her heart wasn’t in it.

“It’s okay, Kara. You don’t have to pretend for me. Just relax, take whatever time you need. We can start whenever you’re ready.”

Kara nodded and took a deep breath. “I went home after our last session and called my sister, and asked if she and Maggie could come up to my place for a sister night…”

“And Kara wishes to protect the child?” Astra asked.

“Yes,” Cat said.

Astra sighed. “I love Kara, but I sometimes think her compassion will be her undoing. The easiest solution would be to terminate the gestation and denounce Fendra for what she’s done.”

“I admit, the same thought had crossed my mind,” Cat said. “But if Kara wants this child, then we are going to find a way for her to have it, without spending the rest of her life married to the woman who did this.”

“Would the other Kryptonians really reject the kid?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Astra said. “What Fendra has done is… I don’t believe you have a cultural context for it. You have to understand how much of our society was bound up in the Houses. Wealth, power, social privilege. If there was no taboo against what Fendra had done, it would create chaos. Any House could get a genetic sample of the heir’s DNA, then seed a child with it. The heir becomes the head of House, not knowing he already has a child, but when he dies and his son is ready to inherit, an older brother, raised by and loyal to another House appears and usurps his birthright.”

“So, we’re in this mess because old rich men wanted to hold on to power. I’m shocked. Truly,” Cat said. “The question is, how do we fix this?”

“I am not sure we can,” Astra said. “Kara’s assessment of the situation is accurate. If she tells the truth, the child will be a vrazhium im udolzhygahs. If she hides the truth, then the child is Fendra’s, and Kara will have no access to her, or say in how the child is raised. If she wants to protect the child
and be involved in its upbringing, bonding with Fendra and telling everyone she consented to the seeding is the only answer I can see.”

“That’s going to be a pretty transparent lie, considering Sara was here at the time, and what happened at the Christmas party,” Alex said.

“The matter with Sara is easily explained away,” Astra said. “Sara departed when Kara chose to bond with Fendra instead of her. The Christmas party is a non-issue. Fendra was the only one of them there, and any of the Kryptonians who do hear about it will dismiss it as a casual dalliance before the bonding.”

“Would they?” Cat asked. “She wouldn’t even let me hug her. I thought it was because of some rule related to her engagement.”

“It is,” Astra said. “It was once considered unpardonable for someone to take a lover once a betrothal was made. Feuds were started over it and could last generations. But over time, it became more accepted. Bonding became little more than business arrangements. Kara is observing the old ways. Refusing physical contact with anyone who might be considered a potential suitor. It would be even more important in your case because you were courting her. She is trying to pay Fendra respect.”

“So, not only does she have to marry the bitch, but she’s got to destroy her own reputation. She’s obeying the rules, but to sell the lie, she’ll have to let everyone believe that she was cheating during her engagement.”

“You’re leaving out the best part,” Alex said.

“If I’m missing some reason Fendra deserves to have her heart cut out with a spoon, please enlighten me,” Cat said.

“Fendra knows Astra is Kara’s mother,” Alex said.

“Why does that matter?” Astra asked.

“Because, she can use it to blackmail Kara,” Alex said. “If Kara doesn’t do what Fendra wants, she can expose the fact that you’re Kara’s mother.”

Astra stared at Alex in confusion for a moment, but Cat could see the moment it clicked for her.

“You misunderstand,” Astra said. “The substitution was made with my full knowledge, consent, and willing participation, so it wasn’t illegal. It was not hidden to protect Kara. It was hidden to protect *Alura*. All exposing that information would do is cast shame on the memory of a dead woman most of them already hate. It might even raise Kara’s status with them, by divorcing her from the memory of Alura.”

Cat stared at Astra for a moment, feeling an idea tickling the back of her brain.

“Astra, how common was that type of donation?” Cat asked.

“It wasn’t common, but it was hardly unheard of. Alura’s case was an oddity because it was done due to actual genetic damage. Most such donations are done to shore up lines of inheritance, so that if a particular member of the House dies without heir, property doesn’t pass to a different House,” Astra said.

“So, if a child was conceived through donation, they stood to inherit?” Cat asked.
“Only if the donor died without another heir,” Astra said.

Cat sat back, chewing on her lower lip, considering the possibilities. There was one that jumped out at her, but it was more than a little terrifying, because she wasn’t sure she understood all the implications, and because of how much she wanted it, and how afraid she was of messing it up.

“There is another solution,” Astra said. “One that would protect the child, prevent Kara from having to bond with Fendra, and, I will admit, be immensely satisfying on a personal level.”

“What’s that?” Alex asked.

“We let Kara and Fendra announce their intention to bond, and that the child was seeded as part of the bonding agreement. Once the announcement has been made, and the idea is firmly set in the minds of the Kryptonians, I challenge Fendra to a duel. I demand Kandor Rules, and I drive a sword through her heart.”

“I like this idea,” Alex said.

“We’ll hold it in reserve,” Cat said as she stood up. “Call me if Kara needs me.”

“You have an idea!” Alex said.

“Yes, I do,” Cat said. “And if it works, not only will we be able to take the child away from Fendra, we’ll make her stand up in public and thank us for the privilege. But right now, I need to go have a conversation with my son.”

“I just want to be sure I’m clear on the timeline here,” Foster said. “You and Cat kissed around nine-thirty or so?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“You spent the next six hours with Cat, talking about the possibility of having a relationship?”

“Well, there wasn’t just talking,” Kara said, and Foster was happy to see a hint of a smile on Kara’s face.

“You arrived at your apartment around three-thirty, and that’s when you found out about this child?”

“Yes,” Kara said, the smile slipping off her face.

“You go to the Genesis Chamber, and over the course of the next hour, you found out that Astra is your biological mother, and your father tampered with your genes?”

Kara nodded.

“So, then you used the time courier to travel back to before Krypton was destroyed, and talked to your father?”

Kara nodded.

“And your father told you he’d modified you with this ‘world killer’ DNA?”

Kara nodded.

“And you stayed on Krypton up until a few hours before its destruction?”
“Yes,” Kara said.

“Is there any chance I can get a pen and paper, so I can take notes?”

“Hey, Mom,” Alex said as she answered the phone.

“Hey, sweetie,” Elizabeth said. “Any news?”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Cat was able to convince Kara’s psychiatrist to make a house call. She’s in with Kara right now.”

“Any idea what happened to set all this off?” Eliza asked.

“Yeah,” Alex said. “It’s complicated, and I don’t want to explain until I’m sure Kara’s okay with other people knowing about it, but it’s something one of the Kryptonians did, and it’s bad.”

“How bad?” Eliza asked.

“Bad enough that Astra suggested solving the issue by killing the Kryptonian in question,” Alex said.

“That sounds really bad,” Eliza said.

“Yeah, and given what happened, I’m not entirely opposed to the idea,” Alex said.

“Alex…”

“I know,” Alex said. “Kara made me promise I wouldn’t kill anybody, no matter how much they deserve it.”

“Alex, I know you want to protect your sister.”

“I know, Mom,” Alex said. “She just… She carries so much, and I want her to be happy. This might take that away from her, and it’s killing me that I can’t just fix this for her.”

“Just be there for her,” Eliza said, “and once she says it’s okay, you fill me in, and we’ll figure out how to fix it.”

“Okay,” Alex said. “How are you holding up?”

“Better, now that your sister is home,” Eliza said. “This research project keeps me busy, so I have something to do other than sit and worry.”

“How’s that going?”

“Fairly well,” Eliza said. “I think I’ve managed to find the locus for the genes which are causing the reaction to Kryptonite, but there’s a lot of strange junk DNA surrounding it.”

“If you want, I can come take a look when I have a minute,” Alex said.

“I’d like that,” Eliza said. “I think I could use a second opinion.”

“Okay,” Alex said. “See you soon. Love you.”

“Love you too,” Eliza said.
Cat smiled as she stepped into the den of Sam’s apartment. Carter and Ruby were both hunched over a board game and Ruby was listening intently as Carter explained the rules. Cat hated to interrupt the moment, given how lonely, isolated and shy Carter usually was, but Kara was suffering, and she knew it wouldn’t be a magic cure-all, but the sooner she could get her out of this ridiculous marriage to Fendra, the sooner Kara would start to heal.

“Carter,” Cat said, and when Carter looked up, Cat was surprised to see disappointment on his face.

“Is it time to go already?” he asked, in the closest thing to a whine she’d ever heard from him.

“Not yet,” she said, smiling a little as she saw the relief on his face. “But if Ruby would excuse us for a few minutes, I need to talk to you about something important.”

Carter looked at Ruby, who just smiled as she picked up the rule book.

“Top secret family stuff,” Ruby said. “I get it. I’ll be in the living room, figuring out how to kick your butt.” She got up and marched out of the room, looking smug, and Cat had to bite her lip to keep from laughing. Once Ruby was gone, Cat walked over and sat down next to Carter.

“She seems nice,” Cat said.

“Yeah,” Carter said with a huge grin on his face. “She came up with a plan Christmas night to lure Damian into a trap, and it totally worked. He jumped down to shoot me, and she got him in the back twice before he could even get off a shot.”

“The two of you got the drop on Damian Wayne in the nerf arena?” Cat asked.

“Yes!” Carter said.

“I’m impressed,” Cat said. “That’s not easy.”

“I know,” Carter said. “He beat us the first three rounds.”

“I bet he hated it when you got him,” Cat said.

“Yeah,” Carter said. “He’s kind of a brat. So, what did you want to talk about?”

“I need to ask your opinion on something,” Cat said. “You know I’ve dated women in the past.”

“Yeah,” Carter said. “Is this about Kara?”

Cat rolled her eyes. “Way to steal my thunder,” she said.

“I like her,” he said.

“I do too,” Cat said. “I like her a lot, and we’ve gotten very close.”

“Mom, if you’re asking for my permission to date Kara, I’m okay with it,” Carter said.

“Well, thank you,” Cat said. “That’s good news, but this is a little more than that.”

“Okay,” Carter said. “What’s up?”

“I’m not sure how to explain the details, but Kara needs to get married,” Cat said.

Carter glanced over at the door, then looked back at Cat. “Is this because of Supergirl stuff?”
Cat stared at Carter for a moment, torn between pride at how smart her son was, and frustration at how bad Kara was at keeping her secret. “How did you figure it out?” Cat asked.

“A lot of things,” Cat said. “She left for a meeting right before Supergirl showed up to drop off some paperwork and came back a few minutes after Supergirl left. The way she sat with us after the shooting. The way Sara called her Kara.” He grinned at the last one, and Cat had to laugh.

“Does Ruby know?” Cat asked.

“Yeah,” Carter said. “She took one look at the robots and figured it out. I don’t think either of the nannies have figured it out though.”

“Well, it’s good to know someone isn’t in on the secret,” Cat said. “But to answer your question, yes. It’s because of Supergirl stuff.”

“You’re going to marry her?” Carter asked.

“That depends,” Cat said. “I’m not sure she’ll want to marry me, but I would like to ask. I wouldn’t like it very much if I had to watch her get married to someone else. The thing is, this is a big decision, and it doesn’t just affect me. If I marry her, it will be a huge change for both of us. I mean, I know I should include your dad in that, but…”

“But he’s kind of a useless jerk?” Carter guessed.

“Not the way I would have put it, but only because the custody agreement specifically forbids it,” Cat said. “If this happens, she’d move in with us, and she’d be your mother too, and in a few months, you’d have a baby sister.”

“She’s pregnant?” Carter asked.

“No,” Cat said. “It doesn’t really work the same way with Kryptonians. She is going to have a child though. A daughter.”

“So, I’d have a little sister with superpowers?” Carter asked.

“Yes,” Cat said.

“Cool!” Carter said.

Cat smiled and resisted the urge to reach out and ruffle his hair. “It really is,” she said. “But Carter, I need you to really think about this. If you say yes, if we do this, there’s no changing our minds. Kara’s already lost one family, and it wouldn’t be fair to her to ask her to be part of ours, and then take that back.”

“I understand,” Carter said. “Can I ask a question?”

“Of course,” Cat said.

“Do you love her?” Carter asked. “Like, enough to marry her? I know you care about her, but this isn’t just because she needs help, is it?”

Cat felt herself getting a little misty-eyed at the concern in Carter’s voice. It was a weird little moment of realization, just how alike Carter and Kara were. Both of them were so full of compassion and love for other people, and it just hit her suddenly that one of the qualities she found most attractive in Kara was one of the qualities she was proudest of in her son.
“Yes, I do,” Cat said. “I love her very, very much. This isn’t how I pictured it, and it’s certainly a lot sooner than I pictured it, but Carter, honey, I want this so much.”

“Okay,” Carter said.

“Okay?” Cat asked.

“Did you really think I’d say no?” Carter said. “Kara’s amazing.”

“I wasn’t sure,” Cat said. “This is all happening so fast, I didn’t really have time to think about it.”

“Do you have a ring picked out?” Carter asked.

Cat shook her head. “I wanted to know how you felt first,” Cat said.

“Well, don’t get gold,” Carter said. “It’s soft and it will get messed up when she punches things.”

Cat laughed. “I’ll keep that in mind,” she said. She held out her arms.

“May I?” she asked.

Carter nodded, and Cat pulled him into a hug.

“Thank you,” she said, before kissing him on the top of the head.

“So, you turned the time courier on because you decided you wanted to go home?” Foster asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I wasn’t sure anymore, but I hadn’t changed my mind. I don’t know why I turned it on. Guilt, maybe. I felt like I was letting people down, like I was letting Darkseid win, and letting everyone I loved get hurt, but I hadn’t changed my mind about staying.”

“What made you change your mind?” Foster asked.

A small smile tugged at the corners of Kara’s mouth, and her whole face seemed to brighten, like she was remembering something wonderful.

“Coconuts,” Kara said.

“Coconuts?” Foster asked, completely baffled by the answer.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Alex had modified the trans-temporal communications array in Nimda so it could talk to my time courier, and when I turned the time courier on, it connected to my phone, and to Nimda, and I just started getting text alerts. One right after another. Cat inviting me to breakfast. Cat telling me she missed me. Cat telling me she loved me. Cat begging me to come home. But then I got this one, and it was just, Cat being Cat. She said Krypto had gone for a walk and come back carrying a tree. An entire tree, and she…” the smile on Kara’s face melted away as the tears started to flow again, and she started having trouble getting the words out. “She just… demanded I come home and clean up all the coconuts… and when I saw it… I just… I wanted to live… I wanted to come home, and I wanted her to yell at me and make ridiculous demands and be impossible and I wanted to live and I wanted to be with Cat, and I wanted to have sister nights with Alex and Maggie and I wanted to play video games with Winn and I wanted to have board game nights with Carter and I wanted to live and I wanted to be happy…”

“Kara,” Foster said, giving her a gentle smile, “that’s a good thing. You were down in that hole so deep you couldn’t see daylight, but you found a reason to want to climb out of it. That is a *good*
“It doesn’t feel like a good thing,” Kara said.

“I know,” Foster said. “Kara, what happened to you was terrible. You took an enormous risk by telling Cat how you feel, and for six hours, it was everything you hoped and dreamed it could be. Then, something horrible happened to you. You found out that people you trusted had lied to you your entire life, that someone had taken away your choice as to when or if you have children, and worst of all, your father had violated your body.

“All of that hit you when you were vulnerable, when you’d just opened yourself up to Cat, and all your defenses were down. It made you feel powerless, helpless and trapped, and Kara, those are not good feelings for you. Those feelings are tied to some of the most horrific events of your life. The destruction of Krypton, your time in the Phantom Zone, the Battle of CatCo plaza, your internment in the slave camp on Apokolips, your torture at the hands of Desaad. All of those feelings got dragged to the surface at the moment you were least prepared to deal with them. Of course it hurts.”

“But how do I make it stop?” Kara asked. “Please, I need it to stop.”

Cat stepped into the elevator, and pressed the button for the penthouse, then took out her phone.

“Nimda,” she said.

“Yes, Ms. Grant?” Nimda asked.

“Do Kryptonians exchange gifts when they get engaged?”

“Yes,” Nimda said. “If the betrothal occurs while the betrothed parties are adults, it is customary for the women to be gifted with a necklace. If the betrothal occurs during childhood, the necklace is presented the first time the betrothed meet after both have come of age. Lady Kara wears her mother’s betrothal pendant.”

“What about when they marry?” Cat asked.

“You are asking if Kryptonians have a tradition similar to the exchange of wedding rings?” Nimda asked.

“Yes,” Cat said.

“They do not,” Nimda said. “Among the Houses, it was expected that the husband would provide the wife with a new wardrobe bearing his House Coat of Arms, but there was no exchange of jewelry.”

The elevator reached the penthouse, and Cat stepped out of it. “Can you fabricate a betrothal necklace that would be able to stand up to being struck by a Kryptonian?”

“I can,” Nimda said. “There are sufficient quantities of the alloy used in Kara’s sword and shield remaining. With the proper treatment, it could be rendered in a finish similar in appearance to white or yellow gold, sterling silver, or platinum.”

“Send sample images of betrothal necklaces to my phone,” Cat said as she slapped her hand over the palm plate, unlocking the door to her apartment.

Alex and Astra both looked over at her as she walked in.
“Well?” Alex asked.

“I need a few minutes, but as soon as Kara’s done with Doctor Foster, I’ll talk to her. If Kara’s willing, I think I can end all of this,” Cat said as she sat down and took out her phone. She found an email that linked her to an image gallery containing hundreds of pendant designs. She started swiping through them, but she kept coming across what looked like a House glyph. It was the familiar diamond shape with a horizontal line about a quarter of the way up from the bottom. Above that line there were two vertical lines, joined by a horizontal line at the top making a squared off horse shoe shape that opened downwards. To each side of the horse shoe were three large dots. She’d taken the time to memorize all the Great House glyphs and their meanings, and this one wasn’t one of them, and she couldn’t think of any reason the glyph of a minor House would show up so often, and memorizing a few glyphs wasn’t the same as having a detailed enough understanding of Kryptonian heraldry to be able to interpret it.

“Nimda, what is this symbol I’m seeing?” Cat asked.

“The symbol is referred to as /tiv vrreiahv/,” Nimda said. “It translates into your language as ‘The Promise’, though it might also be translated as ‘The Oath’ or ‘The Vow’. It is a symbol used by the House of Ze as a sign that the wearer is cherished, and as warning of retribution and retaliation against any who would harm the wearer. Betrothal necklaces with this symbol sometimes include a homing beacon, so the wearer can always be found.”

“Does it work with time travel and other universes?” Cat muttered.

“I can make it do that,” Nimda said. “It will require a small quantity of Dwarf Star Alloy, but Kara has sufficient reserves.”

“I’m sorry,” Alex said, “but did Nimda just say betrothal necklace?”

Cat ignored Alex and looked over at Astra, who smiled and gave a small non.

“Nimda, pull up the Tiffany and Co. website. Find all pendants which include the “Please Return to Tiffany’s motif and display them.”

It took only a few seconds to find what she was looking for. She waffled for a moment between a plain disk and a heart shape before finally deciding on the heart shape. It might be tacky and cliché, but Kara would love it.

“This one,” Cat said. “Edit the text so that it reads ‘Please Return to Cat Grant, National City, Earth 38’, then run it off in the alloy we discussed, and add the additional locator features, and add the /tiv vrreiahv/ glyph on the opposite side.”

“What finish?” Nimda asked.

“Platinum,” Cat said.

“Working,” Nimda said.

“Cat?” Alex asked.

“Yes?” Cat said.

“Did Nimda just say betrothal necklace?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Cat said.
“I can tell you, but you might not like the answer,” Foster said.

“Please,” Kara said.

“First, you can’t marry Fendra,” Foster said.

“I don’t have a choice,” Kara said.

“Yes, you do,” Foster said. “You absolutely have a choice, but you have made a bad one. Now, that doesn’t mean you’re a bad person, it just means you made a mistake. You weren’t thinking clearly, and you picked a bad response. It happens. People make mistakes in the moment. But you are not in the moment anymore. Stop making the same mistake.”

“I can’t!” Kara said. “If I don’t do this, then I either let Fendra take my daughter, or I let my people cast her out in the street.”

“Kara, you are reacting to this situation as if this were Krypton, but it’s not. You’ve said to me, over and over again, that this is the world you have to live in, so live in it,” Foster said.

“What are you saying?” Kara said.

“I’m saying don’t sacrifice your future on an altar to a society and culture that you know to be unjust. You have told me more than once that you want to change Kryptonian society when you rebuild it. That you want to make it better. I think this is where you start. You have a problem created by the rules of Kryptonian culture. You’ve been looking for a way to get around the rules, but why get around the rules when you can change them?” Foster said.

It was a rare moment for a therapist when they could see a visible improvement in a patient in a single session, but as she sat and watched Kara take in what she’d said, it because clear that this was one of those moments. At first, Kara looked shocked, but then, her whole demeanor changed. She went from being curled in on herself, small and hunched, to sitting up straight, and the misery and hopelessness in her face seemed to melt away as her expression became set in a look of determination. It was like watching her come back to life.

She also knew Kara well enough to know the girl was going to get up and leave once she had her plan formulated, so she didn’t have a lot of time.

“Kara, before you go too far down that rabbit hole, there’s another topic we need to discuss,” Foster said.

“Okay,” Kara said, her attention shifting to focus on Foster again.

“I’ve been hesitant to bring this up because I’m not sure if it’s a viable option for you, and I was afraid if I broached the subject and it wasn’t, it might contribute to the depression and frustration you’ve already been feeling, but given what’s happened, I don’t think I can hold off anymore,” Foster said. “Can you tell me if Kryptonian medicine had anything equivalent to anti-depressants?”

Kara frowned slightly, and Foster could see her thinking. “We did,” she said. “A lot of our medicine was based on tailored self-replicating bioactive nanites.”

“Do you have access to those drugs?” Foster said.
“Yes,” Kara said. “I have our full pharmacological database.”

“Then I think it’s time we started considering adding that to your treatment,” Foster said. “I don’t know anything about Kryptonian neurophysiology, but I know that in humans, PTSD, depression, and trauma in general can cause physical changes to the brain. It’s one of the reasons treatment for these disorders is so difficult. Given everything you’ve been through, if the same holds true for Kryptonians, then I’m not sure we can move forward without pharmacological assistance,” Foster said.

Kara nodded. “Konex,” she said.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” came the immediate response, and Foster jumped a little, looking around for the source of the voice.

“I need you,” Kara said.

There was a flash, and suddenly a gold and silver robot was floating in the corner. It moved towards Kara.

“How may I be of assistance?” Konex asked.

“Doctor Foster, could you provide Konex with a diagnosis?” Kara asked.

Foster nodded. “Yes. Konex, Kara is exhibiting symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Clinical Depression. She’s also experiencing flashbacks, panic attacks, suicidal thoughts and impulses and dissociative episodes, and has engaged in self-harm.”

“Understood,” Konex said.

“Konex, perform a cerebral scan and have Nimda prepare an appropriate bioactive,” Kara said.

The robot shone some kind of light on Kara for almost a minute.

“Lady Kara,” a different voice said.

“Yes, Nimda?” Kara said.

“I have received the data from Konex. Preparation of the bioactive agent will take approximately ten minutes. However, while reviewing or medical inventories, I noted that you requested the preparation of bioactives for both Harleen Quinzel and Pamela Isley prior to my being brought online, but the bioactives were never distributed,” Nimda said.

“Thank you for the reminder, Nimda,” Kara said. “Finish preparation of my bioactive. Continue to hold the ones for Pam and Harley. Remind me again on Saturday.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

Kara looked back and Foster, and she looked like a completely different person. Not broken, not miserable, not at the end of her rope. She was wearing the face she showed to the public.

“Thank you, Doctor Foster. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have work to do.”

Cat looked up as Foster walked into the room.
“Where’s Kara?” Cat asked.

“She wanted to shower,” Foster said as she took one of the empty chairs.

“How’s she doing?” Alex asked.

“Better,” Foster said. She looked over at Astra. “You must be Astra.”

“I am,” Astra said.

“I’m Doctor Foster,” Foster said. “I’m Kara’s psychiatrist. You understand that term?”

“Yes,” Astra said. “From what I understand of it, your care model differs somewhat from ours, but we did have medical specialists specifically dedicated to mental health on Krypton.”

“Okay,” Foster said. “I want to make sure there’s no question of ethics here. Before I begin, I want to state that I specifically informed Kara that I would be having this discussion with Alex, who is listed as her next of kin and health care proxy. Kara informed me that I had her approval to discuss this with all of you, so I’m not violating confidentiality with what I’m about to say.”

“Okay, that’s ominous,” Alex said.

“Kara had a suicidal episode,” Foster said. “She didn’t go to Krypton with the intention of dying there, but at some point in her time there, she made the decision not to leave. To stay and die with her people. While I’m not sure there would be universal agreement among my peers, in my view, what she did constitutes an attempt to commit suicide. It’s the same, basically, as someone who deliberately overdoses, but then changes their mind and calls nine-one-one for help.

“My professional opinion as the mental health specialist charged with Kara’s care, is that she should be committed to a mental health facility for a period of at least seventy-two-hours.” Foster raised her hand when Alex opened her mouth to speak.

“I completely understand the impossibility of that. First, the doctors, nurses and orderlies would be completely unequipped to act if she did decide to do harm to herself, and secondly, if the government knew about it, their paranoia would not end well for anyone. That does not change the fact that there is a very real possibility that Kara is a danger to herself. I only agreed to let her shower if she took Konex with her and provided instructions to both Nimda and Konex that they were to inform all four of us if she tried to harm herself. Even with that, it’s a risk to allow her to be alone, because I have no idea how easily she can circumvent those instructions.

“The bottom line is, I don’t believe Kara should be alone for the immediate future. I believe someone should accompany her at all times. Nimda is currently preparing something called a bioactive agent for Kara. Essentially, it’s an agent which will regulate her brain chemistry in the same way an anti-depressant would for a human. Nimda says that, once administered, the agent takes four to six days to become fully effective. I’ll err on the side of caution and say that Kara needs constant monitoring for at least the next seven days.”

“That won’t be a problem,” Cat said.

“It will,” Foster said. “It’s not a question of how much you care for her. The reason we commit people after a suicide attempt is that no one person, no family, no matter how well intentioned, can match a strictly controlled environment with a full psychiatric staff.”

“Your point is taken,” Astra said, “but I assure you, we will allow no harm to come to her.”
“Okay,” Foster said. “Now comes the part that will be difficult to hear.”

Cat had to bite her tongue to keep from making a snarky comment.

“This is not the first time Kara’s had a suicidal episode,” Foster said.

“What?” Alex and Cat both asked.

“There have been at least four other attempts,” Foster said. “Two of them involved Kryptonite bullets.”

Cat stared at Foster for a moment, processing the information, squeezing the phone in her hand in a white-knuckled grip as she remembered what it felt like when she’d gotten the news that her father had killed himself.

“The reason I’m telling you this is because I don’t want you to think that getting through the next seven days means this is all over,” Foster said. “Kara’s mental health is fragile, and in all honesty, she has no business ever putting on that suit again. Unfortunately, that is not an option, and I recognize the reality of the situation. What that means is, even past the seven days, you need to watch her. The primary triggers for crisis are feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. If she’s unable to stop something, or in a position where she can’t help someone, she will likely go into crisis again. If that… When that happens, make sure she isn’t alone again until the crisis has passed.

“Finally, my recommendation is to find her a partner,” Foster looked over at Cat. “I don’t mean a romantic partner. I mean someone who can go out with her when she’s being Supergirl. Astra, Lucy, or one of the other Kryptonians. Someone who can keep up with her.”

“Good luck finding that,” Alex said.

“You could do it,” Kara said.

Everyone in the room turned around to see Kara leaning against the wall, and Cat was taken aback by what she saw. Kara was dressed in a suit she’d never seen before. There was something harsh about it. It was a dark navy blue coat with blood-red shoulders which flowed down into the House of El Coat of Arms on her chest. A wide black panel ran down from the bottom of the coat of arms down to her waist. At the waist, the coat flared open slightly, and a wide blood-red stripe ran along the edge of each side of the opening down to mid-thigh where it connected to a band of the same blood-red which wrapped around the lower third of the coat. Underneath the coat, Cat could just see pants of the same dark blue, and knee boots of the same blood-red as the shoulders and trim on the coat.

“So could Maggie,” Kara said. “Lucy would be a good choice too, though honestly, you and Maggie are better in a fight.”

Cat sensed movement and turned to see Astra standing up, a look of pride and approval on her face.

“I never thought to see you wear those robes,” Astra said.

“Neither did I,” Kara said.

“They suit you,” Astra said.

“Thank you, Mother,” Kara said.
The video on the screen stopped, and the six people in the briefing room just sat in silence for a few moments, until one of them couldn’t take it anymore.

“My god,” Durgan said. “Is this real?”

Olivia looked over at her National Security Advisor, taking in the look of sick panic on his face. She understood it completely, because she wanted to vomit herself. Her second viewing of the recording hadn’t been any less terrifying than her first.

“I think we have to operate on the assumption that it is,” Olivia said.

“But…” Pierson sputtered, “seventy-five percent of Earth’s population?”

Olivia closed her eyes, mentally reviewing potential replacements for Pierson. The Secretary of Homeland Security had done a decent enough job so far, but he obviously didn’t have the stomach for stakes this high.

“If it isn’t true, that’s almost worse?” Reed said.

Olivia looked over at her new Secretary of Defense. The woman was tall and this, with long straight black hair and delicate features hidden behind black cat’s eye glasses. Hardly the image of a battle-hardened warrior, until you looked down and saw the utilitarian steel rod where her right shin should be.

“What do you mean?” Vice President Baker asked.

“If it’s true, we can predict her actions and responses because we know her objectives. If it isn’t true, she’s so delusional she was able to fool Wonder Woman’s Lasso, and has managed to convince Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman that she’s telling the truth, which means the entire Justice League will be on board with whatever she does. Add to that the Martian Manhunter, the twenty-nine pardoned Kryptonians from Fort Rozz, and a handful of other powerful metahumans. Not to mention Cat Grant, who now has a Blue Lantern ring, because apparently, she wasn’t terrifying *enough* when she *just* owned sixty percent of the news outlets in the free world. Oh, and as a bonus, Supergirl apparently has the ability to make magic bracelets that give anyone who wears them all the powers of a Kryptonian, and can make anyone she likes into a Kryptonian, because thirty-two of the crazy fuckers running around with the powers of a god just wasn’t a big enough shit show,” Reed said.

“That… just adds a whole other level of terrifying,” Attorney General Wellesly said.

“We also have to consider what Jeremiah Danvers’ motivation is in bringing us this,” Baker said.

“God, what an asshole,” Reed said. “Can we just disappear him?”

“What?” Pierson asked. “He’s on our side. Without him, we wouldn’t have any of this.”

“That man, if you can stomach calling him that, is selling out his own daughter,” Reed said.

“Enough,” Olivia said in a mild tone, but everyone in the room knew better than to push back on it. “For now, we absolutely have to keep this contained, so none of this leaves this room. Understood?”

“Yes, ma’am,” everyone responded.

“Good, because the sad fact is, Supergirl is right. There are still Cadmus supporters in the Administration, and I do not want Lillian Luthor getting wind of this,” Olivia said. “Our first course
of action has to be threat assessment. We have to know if this is real. Once we know that, we can begin taking steps to deal with it, one way, or the other.”

“How do you plan to figure that out?” Baker asked.

“Simple,” Olivia said. “I have Supergirl on speed dial.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope

vrazhium im udolzrhygahs
Literal: orphan of sin
Semantic: Translation is inexact. Orphan Bastard would be the closest. Literally, a child whose conception is a crime.

zehtiahr
A Kryptonian unit of time equal to 1.20 Earth Days.

tiv vrreiahv
The Promise
Self Inflicted Wounds

Chapter Summary

Cat offers up a plan to deal with Fendra. Kara finds out about Jeremiah's trip to DC, and takes steps towards building a new government for the Kryptonians.

Chapter Notes

If you want to talk about Future Shock with me, or any of my stories, feel free to join my Discord Server.

Monday, December 28, 2015

Kara watched as Astra dropped her gaze.

“You do not need to call me that,” Astra said. “I-”

“Astra,” Kara said, cutting her off as she stood up. She walked over towards Astra. “I’m not angry. I pulled Mother’s genetic profile. I understand why it was done. And if it had to be someone other than her, then I’m glad it was you. I’ll never forget Alura, and however much I may be angry with her for the things she’s done, she will always be my mother, but I am so very, very proud to be your daughter as well.”

Astra looked up at her, eyes glistening, and when she spoke, her voice shook. “I never expected to love you so much,” she said. “That day, all I wanted was to help my sister, but from the moment you were born, you were the most important thing in my entire world.”

Kara reached out, wrapping her arms around Astra, hugging her tightly. She felt Astra’s arms wrap around her, squeezing her back, just as hard, and it felt wonderful to hug and be hugged without fear, without having to moderate her strength.

“/ukiemodh w rrip/,” Kara said.

“/ukiemodh w rrip/,” Astra replied.

Kara let her go. “We’ll talk,” she said. “As soon as we can take the time, we’ll talk.”

“I would like that,” Astra said. “There are things I want to tell you, and things I want your help understanding.”

Kara nodded. “Anything,” Kara said. “Just as soon as we deal with this mess with Fendra.”

“Your Cat has devised a solution,” Astra said. “One I think you will find most agreeable.”

Kara smiled as she turned towards Cat, knowing that whatever Cat had come up with, it would be
both brilliant, and spectacular, and the absolutely smug smile on Cat’s face told her she was right.

“What did you have in mind?” Kara said.

“I thought I would take a page from your book and go with blackmail,” Cat said. “From what I gather, Fendra’s original intention wasn’t to force you into a marriage.”

“No,” Kara said. “Kryptonian culture was frighteningly heteronormative. There’s technically no law against bonding between two people of the same sex, but in the thousands of years since the founding of the five Houses, it’s never happened among the Great or Minor Houses. It happens on occasion among the rankless, but it would never have occurred to Fendra.”

“That’s something to correct for the future, but for now, it works in our favor,” Cat said. “Fendra will probably jump at the chance to avoid the bonding, so we provide her with an out.”

“Okay,” Kara said, curious as to where this was going.

“We offer her a choice. We will either tell the other Kryptonians what she’s done, or she will agree to declare publicly that she’s a genetic donor, in the same way Astra was for your mother,” Cat said.

“That’s an interesting idea,” Kara said, “but why would I need a donor when I have the entire genetic archive?”

“Inheritance,” Cat said. “Fendra currently has no legal heir. If she dies, there’s no one to inherit the House of Kann. By publicly acknowledging the child as hers, she establishes a line of inheritance. Since the child is also yours, this one child provides a single line of inheritance for all of the Great Houses, while still leaving Fendra the option to have a child of her own who will supersede your daughter in the line of inheritance should that happen.”

“It’s thin, since I’m already next in line to inherit House Kann, but it might work,” Kara said.

“I’m not done,” Cat said. “The other reason you needed a donor is simple. You intend to marry a human in order to cement the alliance between Kryptonians and humans. Sara was your original choice, however, she had to return to her duties in her own universe. At that point, you considered two candidates. The first was Lucy, but that option lost its symbolic value when she became a Kryptonian. At which point, you and I reached an arrangement.”

Kara stared at Cat for a moment, not quite able to process what she’d just heard, because Cat couldn’t be saying what she thought Cat was saying. It absolutely wasn’t possible.

“Cat?” she whispered.

Cat rolled her eyes, because of course she did. She reached into her purse and pulled out a small aqua-colored box with ‘Tiffany’s & Co’ on the top and opened it up. Inside, there was a small drawstring bag, and when Kara saw the necklace as Cat emptied the bag into her hand, Kara felt her heart stop.

Cat stood up and walked over to her, and Kara felt herself shaking like a leaf the whole time.

Cat lifted the necklace, gently placing it over Kara’s head.

“/?ta uvrreoshu w khap , eh ,kahrah,zor,ehL,”’ Cat asked.

Kara just stared at Cat, trying to find the words, but every language she knew seemed to have deserted her, and all she could do was reach out and pull Cat into her arms, and kiss her like the
world was ending.

When the kiss was over, Cat looked up at her with a brilliant smile on her face, and it broke Kara’s heart, because she knew what was coming next.

“Is that a yes?” Cat asked.

“No,” Kara said, with a shake of her head, and the crestfallen look on Cat’s face nearly killed her. “Cat, I love you. I love you so much. I want a life with you. I want to wake up every morning next to you. I want to help you get Carter off to school, and ride across town to work sitting next to you. I want lunches together every day, and evenings together every night. I want my daughter to be your daughter, and I want every moment we can squeeze out of the future for just us and our family. But I don’t want it to start like this. I don’t want to marry you because of a lie, or because it’s politically expedient. I want to marry you because neither of us can imagine spending another day apart. I want to marry you because it’s what we both want, and because it would make us happy."

She let Cat go and reached up and lifted the necklace back over her head, then took Cat’s right hand in her left, and placed the necklace in it, gently and reverently, before closing Cat’s hand around it.

“Ask me again,” Kara said. “When you’re ready. When it isn’t about rescuing me. Ask me when you can’t go another day without the promise that I’ll marry you, and then, I’ll say yes. Because that’s what I want too.”

Cat started back and her, tears welling up in her eyes, and she nodded.

“Astra,” Kara said. “I need you to gather our people.”

“Where shall I assemble them?” Astra asked.

“We will do this in Kandor Tower,” Kara said. “Sanctuary would be inappropriate. It belongs to the House, and this affects all Kryptonians, but it’s an internal matter, and the Embassy lacks the prying eyes of the Citadel.”

“Very well,” Astra said.

“Kal-El, Lois Lane, and Lucy El will be needed as well,” Kara said.

Astra nodded, and headed for the balcony.

“Alex,” Kara said.

“Yes?”

“You’re the head of one of the Great Houses,” Kara said. “I’ll need you there, along with Eliza and Maggie.”

“Okay,” Alex said. “When?”

“As soon as you can,” Kara said. “I’ve already wasted too much time wallowing in self-pity. It’s time to be done with this.”

“See you soon,” Alex said as she headed for the door.

Kara turned back to Cat. “Will you stay with me?” she asked.

“As long as you like,” Cat said.
“Forever is good,” Kara said. She leaned forward and kissed Cat on the forehead before turning to the other occupant of the room.

“Doctor Foster,” Kara said, “thank you, again, for taking time out of your schedule. When you’re ready, Nimda can send you back to your wife.”

“Will you be okay?” Foster asked.

“I think so,” Kara said. “Thank you, for reminding me of who I am.” Foster smiled. “You have my number,” she said. “If you need me, call.”

“I will,” Kara said. “Why don’t you step into the den. Nimda will transmat you from there.”

“Okay,” Foster said, and headed for the den.

Kara turned back to Cat. “Thank you,” she said. “For what you offered to do.”

“I love you,” Cat said. “I couldn’t do anything less.”

“You are amazing,” Kara said. She pointed at Cat’s closed hand. “Don’t think I’m going to forget that.”

“You better not,” Cat said. “I—” Cat was cut off by Hail to the Chief blaring out from Kara’s phone.

“What does she want?” Kara asked as she reached for the phone. She pulled it out and hit the accept button.

“Hello, Olivia,” Kara said.

“Hello, Kara,” Olivia said. “Do you have a moment?”

“Honestly, I don’t,” Kara said. “I’m dealing with an issue with the Kryptonians right now.”

“I understand you’re busy, but I need you to make time for this,” Olivia said.

“What’s going on?” Kara asked.

“Jeremiah Danvers came to the Whitehouse this morning,” Olivia said.


“He brought me a flash drive with a recording on it,” Olivia said.

Kara didn’t have to think about it, or guess. She knew exactly what recording Olivia had to be referring to. The only one that would warrant her attention.

“!/zhaolium im zhaoghao/” Kara said. “!/iovis zhikuvaium !zharivves tulem voiehd w dovrroshof/”

Cat reached out and placed a hand on Kara’s arm, giving a gentle squeeze. “Easy, love,” she said. Kara closed her eyes, and nodded, taking a deep breath.

“Are you done?” Olivia asked.
“Sorry,” Kara said. “I’ve had a bad couple of days.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, Kara, but if you know the recording I’m talking about, which you obviously do, then you know that we need to talk,” Olivia said.

“I do, but I literally cannot do it now,” Kara said. “I’ve just called all the Kryptonians, including my cousin, to a meeting. If you’d called fifteen minutes ago, I could take the time, but right now, I’m in the middle of what amounts to a Constitutional Crisis.”

“Damn it, Kara, what the hell is going on?” Olivia snapped.

“It’s an internal Kryptonian matter,” Kara said. “Fendra knowingly and willingly violated Kryptonian Law, and I’m about to lay the evidence in front of the other Kryptonians.”

“Kara, if one of the Kryptonians has violated parole-”

“She hasn’t,” Kara said. “You don’t have a law on the books for what she’s done, though we probably need to change that. As I said, this is an internal matter. I will handle it. Can you give me four hours?”

“Not a minute more,” Olivia said.

“Okay,” Kara said. “And Olivia, I have to ask you a favor.”

“What’s that?” Olivia said.

“I need you to hold Jeremiah,” Kara said. “I’m going to need to know if he’s talked to anyone else.”

“Done,” Olivia said. “You have three hours and fifty-eight minutes.”
Kara hung up and shoved her phone back in her pocket.

“What’s going on?” Cat asked.

“Jeremiah took the recording of me reading everyone in to Olivia,” Kara said.

“Oh, shit,” Cat said.

“That about sums it up,” Kara said.

“Are you going to be okay?” Cat asked.
Kara nodded. “Yeah,” she said. “Yeah, I’ll be fine. But Alex won’t be.”

“Kara-”

“Let’s deal with Fendra first,” Kara said.
Cat nodded. “Okay,” she said. “Fendra first. You have a plan?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “I’m going to do what I always do when I don’t know how to handle something. Ask Cat Grant, then do whatever she says.”
Cat narrowed her eyes. “I’m pretty sure you already shot down my best idea,” Cat said.

“Second-best,” Kara said. “You had a better one, a long time ago. You told me I could change the world, so that’s what I’m going to do.”
Kara and Cat were the last two to enter the Council chambers, and all eyes turned towards them as they marched down the central aisle. Voices whispered in fear at the sight of her, and what she was wearing. That was good. That was exactly what Kara expected. Twelve of the people in the room were rankless. Four more from minor Houses. Of the fifteen Kryptonians in the room who were from Great Houses, only she and Astra had ever been in the same room with a member of the Council prior to the destruction of Krypton, so this was the first time any of them had ever seen Councilor’s robes first-hand.

Kara spotted Alex, Maggie, Lucy, Eliza, Kal and Lois sitting near the front of the chambers with Astra. She also spotted a very confused Fendra sitting in the same spot on the opposite side of the central aisles. She ignored Fendra and went to her family.

“Hey, Sweetie,” Eliza said.

“Hey, Eliza” Kara said, smiling as she knelt down in front of Eliza. She pulled a war suit cuff out of her pocket and held it up. “This is a war suit,” Kara said. “Normally, they’re only issued to soldiers, but I didn’t have time to prepare proper robes for you, and these can be configured into almost any pattern. This one isn’t like Alex’s and Maggie’s, no superpowers, but it will protect you. I’ve programmed it with a formal outfit with the House Danvers Coat of Arms. Would you wear this?”

Kara could see the confusion and concern on Eliza’s face, but Eliza must have sensed the urgency of the situation, because she took the cuff and slipped it on.

“Touch this glyph here to activate it,” Kara said. “I’ll show you the rest of the functions later.”

Eliza nodded and touched the spot Kara had indicated, and the war suit spread out, covering her clothes and leaving her in a green, ankle-length dress with a silver belt, and a mantle that fell almost to her elbows. The House Danvers Coat of Arms was embossed into the fabric of the mantle and sat just above her heart. Kara smiled and hugged Eliza.

“Stay close to Cat,” Kara said, as she stood up. She took the couple of steps necessary to reach Lois and produced another war suit cuff. “This one’s for you,” Kara said. “Same thing, except it’s programmed with the House of El Coat of Arms.”

“Thanks, Short Stuff,” Lois said as she slipped the cuff on. When she activated it, the dress she was left in was identical to the one Alura had worn the day she put Kara in the pod. It was a surprisingly good look on her.

“Stay close to Cat,” Kara said.

Kara looked over her family for a moment. Everyone except Lucy and Cat now wore either the El, Danvers, or Ze coat of arms.

“Lucy, I need you in the standard war suit preset,” Kara said.

Lucy nodded and touched one of the glyphs on her cuff, and a moment later, she wore a uniform identical to Kara’s black, red and yellow suit.

Kara glanced over at Cat.

“You ready?” Kara asked.

Cat just smiled as she reached down and touched her cuff. A small murmur went through the room as everyone there saw the House of El Coat of Arms, but Kara wasn’t looking at everyone else, she
was looking at Fendra, and Fendra was staring right back at her with an expression of anger that made it clear she understood the very deliberate insult Kara had just given her, even if no one else did.

Kara turned and walked up to the Council podiums, stepping behind the center one, which was embossed with twenty-four different Coats of Arms. The El Coat of Arms was at the top, larger and more prominent than any of the others, and Kara was torn. The House of El had been the first, and for much of Krypton’s history, the most powerful of all the Houses, but she also knew that the Houses were part of the reason that Kryptonian society had come to an end.

She took a deep breath, and let it out slowly, steeling herself for the work to be done.

It was time to change the world.

“Fellow Kryptonians,” Kara said, “I have come here today to address a matter of grave importance. I ask that you forgive me for addressing this assembly in English, but there are several people here today whose lives and futures are impacted by what has happened who are not fluent in /kryptahniuo/, so in the interest of justice for all concerned, I address you in a language everyone can understand.”

“I come before you today, because I have been wronged,” Kara said, looking down at Fendra, and feeling nothing but satisfaction at the look of pure terror on her face. “My freedom and my autonomy have been violated, and I seek justice.

“Several weeks ago, as all of you know, fifteen birthing matrices were seeded in the Genesis Chamber. The last of us to seed one of those matrices was Fendra Kann, head of House Kann. I have discovered that Fendra used her access as a member of the Council to override the random selection process created for the seedings and accessed a specific record in the Genetic Archive. My record,” Kara said.

“Fendra of House Kann took my genetic profile, without my knowledge or consent, and used it to create a daughter of our mingled blood.”

The reaction in the chamber was immediate. Everyone in the chamber except for Kara, Cat, Alex and Astra turned towards Fendra. Murmurs went through the chamber, quickly turning into angry grumbling, and the mood turned downright hostile.

“Enough!” Kara thundered, the volume alone enough to rattle even Kryptonian teeth. When her voice finished echoing off the walls, the room was silent. “I am speaking now,” she said in a soft voice, which carried through the entire chamber.

“By tradition and by law, what Fendra has done is a crime. One punishable by exile to the Phantom Zone. Also, by tradition and by law, the child must be /vrazhium im udolzrhygahs/. An outcast, a pariah. An Orphan of Sin. I know this. I knew this the night I discovered what Fendra had done. And I will tell the truth of what happened that night.

“When I found that I had a daughter, I was shocked. I was horrified. I had not given consent to this. I had been violated. I went to the Genesis Chamber, and I looked at the birthing matrix, and at the child inside. I could have settled the matter then and there. I could have purged the birthing matrix and been done with it. I could not bring myself to do so. No matter how this child came to be, she is my daughter, and as I looked down on the birthing matrix, my only thought was how to shield her from what Fendra had done.

“Earlier that very night, I had entered into a formal courtship with Cat Grant. She has been my
friend, my confidant, and dear to my heart a very long time. It has been my very great desire to spend my life at her side. As I stared down at my child, I understood that to protect her from the law, I would have to give that up, along with the joy that Cat’s presence in my life brought me. I understood that to protect my child from the law, I would have to bind myself to the very woman who wronged me. I summoned Fendra to the Genesis Chamber, and we struck a bargain. I would keep secret what she had done. We would bond to each other. We would lie to you all. We would tell you that we had planned the bonding and the seeding as a way to assure unity and stability for our people. We were to bond this Friday.

“I spent the time between then and this morning grieving for the life I believed I had lost. For the future I believed I had to cast away. But today, someone reminded me of something very important.

“I may be Kryptonian, but this is *not* Krypton. Krypton burned and died because of unjust rules and a corrupt government which lied to its people. I will not make the same mistake. Fendra Kann is a criminal. She stole my genetic profile in order to create a child of our mixed blood, and for this, I condemn and denounce her. My daughter is an innocent. I will not condemn her, nor will I allow her to be condemned for Fendra’s crimes.”

Kara reached up and touched a control on the podium, and a hologram appeared above her head, showing a lengthy section of text in both Kryptonian and English.

“This is the law that would turn my child into an exile. This is the law that states that no child born without the consent of both parents to the seeding shall have right of inheritance to either House. When we decided to open the genetic archive, Fendra and I sat together, and we amended the law, allowing children to inherit from their living parent if the child was born from a seeding using the genetic archive.

“As of this day, and this moment, by twenty-four votes of the Council, this law is struck from the books. So it is spoken, so it is done. I will claim her, I will name her, I will raise her, I will love her, and if anyone wishes to challenge her right to be called a daughter of the House of El, I will stand as her champion by Kandor rules.”

Kara turned and focused all of her attention on Fendra, and the other woman shrank back. “As for Fendra, what she was done is punishable by exile into the Phantom Zone, and I would be well within my rights to cast her into the timeless void, but I am feeling generous today. Fendra of the House of Kann, stand up.”

Fendra came to her feet.

“Fendra of the House of Kann, I, Kara of the House of El say to you that our betrothal is broken,” Kara said. “What say you?”

“Our betrothal is broken, but our blood has mingled. A matter which must be settled before we part ways,” Fendra said.

“Very well,” Kara said. “I claim the child of our blood.’

“I will honor you claim,” Fendra said, “but for what is taken, something must be given.”

“What payment would you have?” Kara asked.

“My safety, my freedom, and my House,” Fendra said.

“I offer you your choice of two of these,” Kara said.
Fendra stared back at her, and Kara watched as she did the mental calculus, and knew the moment when she made her decision from the way her face fell.

“Very well,” Fendra said. “My safety, and my freedom.”

“Then a bargain is struck,” Kara said. “Fendra of House Kann, in exchange for yielding your claim to the child of our blood, and for your confession to the crime you have committed, I will demand only that you be stripped of House and Name, and will foreswear my right and the right of my Houses to challenge you for your life in recompense for your actions in this matter. Does the Council have your confession to the charges laid before you today?”

“You do,” Fendra said.

“Then House El, and twenty-three other Houses accept your confession, and Kara of the House of El’s demand for Justice,” Kara said. She turned to Alex. “House Danvers, do you also accept?”

“House Danvers accepts,” Alex said.

“Nimda, let it be noted that the High Council has accepted Fendra Kann’s confession of guilt, and consented to the punishment demanded by Kara of the House of El.”

Kara turned back to Fendra. “Fendra is hereby exiled from all Houses of Krypton. She shall live her life as vrazhium/. She shall face no other penalty for her crime. In this matter only, she shall be challenged for her life by no member of the great houses. So it is spoken, so it is done.”

Kara turned to speak to the entire chamber. “I, Kara of the House of Kann, heir primus by the blood of Shora Fon-Kann, and rightful heir stand today to request and demand my birthright as Head of the House of Kann.” She turned to Alex. “House Danvers, do you object?”

“House Danvers recognizes your right as Head of the House of Kann,” Alex said.

Kara gave Alex a small nod of thanks and turned back to the Chamber. “Nimda, let it be noted that the High Council has recognized my claim to the House of Kann. So it is spoken, so it is done.”

She stared out over the Chamber, waiting for the silence to settle in, and wondering if what she was about to do was the right thing. She wasn’t sure, but she also didn’t think she had a choice. What had happened with Fendra more than proved it.

“Now that that’s taken care of, I owe each of you an apology. I am used to commanding. I am not used to governing. To be honest, I’m not sure I have the temperament for it. However, fate and circumstance have given me the job, so I will do my best to do as well as possible. Our current reality is simple. I hold all but one vote on the High Council. I am, effectively, the entire government of Krypton. In the long term, this is untenable. The High Council of the Houses of Krypton is no longer a viable model for government. So, we must change it.

“Towards that end, I will be creating an Advisory Council. My sister, Alex of House Danvers, will sit on the Council, as will Lucy of House El and Astra of the House of Ze. There will be six more seats on the Council. You may choose from those among you who fills those seats, with the stipulations that two must be filled by Rankless, two must be filled from the Minor Houses, two must be filled from the Great Houses, and Fendra is barred from service.

“These nine people will help me draft a new Constitution for our government, so that when we rebuild Krypton, we do not make the same mistakes. While we work on the new Constitution, this Council will also function as an advisory board for myself. I will, for the present, continue to wield the power of the Council. Not out of greed, or avarice, but because war is coming. A war unlike any
you have ever seen. We will need to be ready, and we will need a strong leader to get us through, but when that war is over, we will build a new home for ourselves, and we will make it what Krypton should have been. I place of freedom, justice, and compassion for everyone who lives there.

“May Rao light our way,” she said.

The Kryptonians recognized the dismissal for what it was, and Kara watched as they got up and began to file out of the Chamber, wondering how this would play out. She hated to admit it, but over the last few weeks, she’d been relying on Fendra to act as the leader of the Kryptonians because she’d been the only one willing to challenge Kara on anything. Losing that was going to complicate things, because she didn’t have anyone she could easily slot into the role Fendra had created for herself. That, however, was a problem for another day.

Kara stepped down from the podium and headed over to the area where her family was sitting. Cat, of course, didn’t wait for Kara to get there. She stood up and met Kara halfway, pulling her into a fierce hug, and it felt wonderful. Just being in Cat’s arms made it feel like all the weight, all the stress, the grief, all the exhaustion just went away, and for a moment, the whole world was still.

“You were amazing,” Cat whispered in her ear.

“I just pretended I was you, chewing out the bullpen because Lois scooped us,” Kara said.

Cat laughed and gave her a tight squeeze before letting her go. “I thought I recognized that swagger and those icy glares,” she said as she smiled at Kara.

“Hey, I learned from the best,” Kara said. “Come on. We don’t have much time.”

Cat turned around and Kara rested her hand in the small of Cat’s back as they crossed the short distance to where everyone else was sitting.

“That was well done, Little One,” Astra said.

“I hope so,” Kara said. “Fendra is popular. I worry about backlash.”

“The others will understand,” Astra said. “Even the rankless will feel the horror in what happened, and they will admire your dedication to the child.”

“I hate that you let her walk,” Alex said.

“The only other option was to kill her,” Kara said. “And I’m not going to kill anyone today.”

“There were other options,” Alex said.

“Not really,” Kara said. “She hasn’t broken any human laws, so I couldn’t turn her over to the DEO for trial. I’m not willing to turn Sanctuary or Kandor tower into a prison, and I’m not going to send anyone to the Phantom Zone.”

“That’s a wise choice,” Astra said. “I don’t think there’s any way you could destroy their trust faster then sending one of us back to the Phantom Zone.”

“Yeah, that and sending someone in there is the second most horrible thing in the universe,” Kara said.

“I would have marked it as the worst,” Astra said.

“You’ve never met Indigo-1,” Kara said with a shudder.
“Indigo-1 is one of the good guys,” Kal said.

Kara looked over at him in disbelief, but he just stared back in honest confusion, and she finally just shook her head and turned back to Astra.

“With Fendra off the board, I’m going to need someone to step in and lead the Kryptonians. I know it’s a lot to ask on top of the work you’re doing with Lena, but I don’t know who else could do the job,” Kara said.

“I fear I would not be the best choice,” Astra said. “My connection with you will only make them see bias, and my closeness with Lena has not gone unnoticed.”

“Who would you suggest?” Kara asked.

“Ursa,” Astra said. “And make Aethyr her second. Both are rankless, but well respected, and Ursa inspires no small amount of fear.”

“Oh, that’s encouraging,” Kara said.

“You seem skilled at taming dragons,” Astra said, her eyes drifting towards Cat.

Cat reached up and hooked her arm around Kara’s. “This particular dragon doesn’t share.”

Lucy let out a small laugh. “Nice one,” she said. “But I would have gone with ‘the bitch can get in line.’”

Cat raised an eyebrow. “That would suggest I plan to be done with her at some point,” Cat said in a smug voice.

“You two do realize you are having this conversation in front of my Moms, right?” Kara asked.

“Don’t worry, Sweetie,” Eliza said. “It’s nowhere near as bad as catching Alex and Maggie in the parking garage.”

Both Alex and Maggie’s eyes got big as dinner plates. Alex turned bright red.

“You saw that?” Maggie asked, looking a little green around the gills.

Eliza ignored her and looked up at Kara.

“How about you, sweetie. Are you okay?” Eliza asked.

“Much better,” Kara said. “Just a little tired is all.”

“Kara,” Eliza said, “lying has never agreed with you.”

Kara closed her eyes and let out a sigh. “I hate it when you do that,” she said.

“That’s okay,” Eliza said. “I hated it when my mom did it to me, and your daughter will feel the same way. Now, how are you really?”

“I’m holding together,” she said. “I’m really, really not okay, and want to go home and hide under a blanket. I just I don’t really have time to not be okay right now.”

“What do you mean?” Eliza asked.
“Olivia got ahold of the video of Kara’s little TED Talk,” Cat said.

Everyone but Eliza and Astra started asking questions all at once. Astra was her usual stoic self, but Kara watched as Eliza’s eyes closed, and Kara knew Eliza understood exactly what had happened. Alex picked up on it a moment later, and looked over at Eliza, realizing instantly that something was wrong.

“Mom?” Alex asked. The question was spoken softly, but it silenced the room more effectively that if she had screamed.

“Your father,” Eliza said.

“What?” Alex asked, taken completely off guard, but Alex was Alex, and it only took second for what Eliza was saying to sink in, but when it did, the look on her face was disbelief.

“No,” Alex said. “No. Dad wouldn’t do that.” She looked up at Kara, and the expression on her face broke Kara’s heart.

“Kara, tell her,” Alex said.

“Alex,” Eliza said, reaching out for her.

“No!” Alex shouted. “You tell her it wasn’t Dad!”

Kara pulled away from Cat and took a step towards Alex. “I don’t know what happened, Alex. I haven’t talked to him yet. I just know Marsdin has the recording, and that she said Jeremiah gave it to her.”

“But… No,” Alex said, and Kara saw the tears in her sister’s eyes.

“Alexandra,” Eliza said, barely louder than a whisper. Alex and Kara both looked over at her.

“Come sit with me.”

Alex approached the seat like she was sure it was going to bite her and sat back down. Maggie slid her arms around Alex’s shoulders as Alex looked at her mom.

“Your father and I started dating as undergraduates, and we kept dating when I went into Med school. I adored him, and we’d talked about getting married, but I told your father I wanted to finish my degree first. I was in my second year, and there was a sharps accident. Another student knocked over an instrument tray, and one of the scalpels cut my arm. I had it stitched, and the doctor prescribed a course of antibiotics, just to be on the safe side.”

“Your father and I had a date a couple of weeks later. There was wine and dancing and he put on Can’t Help Falling In Love, and I wasn’t really thinking about how antibiotics impact the effectiveness of birth control pills.”

“Six weeks later, I had a positive pregnancy test. I thought about it for a few days, then I told your father I was pregnant, and I was keeping the baby, and I told him that if he didn’t want to be tied down, he could walk away. He asked me to marry him, and I said yes. We got married a few weeks later, and I never regretted either decision. I loved your dad, and I love you, but your dad always had a bit of insecurity. No matter how much I told him otherwise, he thought the only reason I married
him was because I was pregnant. It made him a little bit jealous. Small things, mostly. I never really worried about it until I met Clark.

“You were about eight years old at the time. I don’t know if you remember that it got a little tense for a while. I kept telling him Clark was just a friend, but Jeremiah didn’t really get over it until Clark met Lois. Couple of years later, Clark calls up and asks if we could take in your sister. Jeremiah didn’t want to do it.”

“What?” Alex said. “No. That’s not… Dad loved Kara.”

Eliza looked up at Kara, and Kara could see the apology in her eyes.

“He might have,” Eliza said. “I don’t know. He was good to her. He was kind to her. But he was always afraid of what could happen if she got found out. And then it happened, and Hank Henshaw blackmailed him into going to work for the DEO.”

“Why didn’t you call me?” Clark said.

“I wanted to,” Eliza said, “but Jeremiah wouldn’t have it. Every time he left on a mission, I thought about picking up the phone and telling you what was going on, but Jeremiah didn’t want your help, so I just let it go. I shouldn’t have, because his sixth mission, he just didn’t come back.”

Eliza turned back to Alex. “And then, you brought him back, and Kara was in a bad place. She’d just started having panic attacks and flashbacks, Sara, the shooting at CatCo, and she was going to go through everything again with Doctor Foster, and Jeremiah decided to push the issue. He went to see her, and she gave him the video from Sanctuary. She thought that would get him up to speed, and she wouldn’t have to go through telling the story again.”

“You told me he took it badly,” Kara said.

“He didn’t believe it,” Eliza said. “Just refused to believe it was true. So, I called Diana, and I asked her to come to the apartment, and bring the Lasso, and she did. I thought it would be a simple little test. Show him the Lasso works, and he’d have to believe.”

“But the Lasso compels the truth,” Kara said, suddenly understanding exactly what happened.

“Yeah. He told the truth,” Eliza said.

“About his feelings about me,” Kara guessed.

“Yes,” Eliza said.

“That was the day you asked me about sending him back to Midvale,” Kara said.

“Yes,” Eliza said.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said. “I-”

“It’s not your fault, Kara,” Eliza said. “You were trying to save people. You were trying to save everybody. But to Jeremiah, you were just a selfish little girl who couldn’t follow the rules, and you took ten years away from him. He’s mad because he didn’t get to watch Alex grow up. He’s mad because in the ten years he was gone, I moved on.”

“And the fact that he never wanted to adopt me in the first place just makes it worse for him,” Kara said.
Eliza nodded.

Alex looked up at Kara. “You’re going to see Marsdin?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“I’m coming with you,” Alex said.

“Sweetie,” Eliza said, “I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

“Eliza,” Kara said, waiting until Eliza looked up at her. “She needs to see for herself.”

Kara saw the relief in Alex’s eyes. She hated it, because she knew how much this was going to hurt, because she remembered when she’d found out that the virus Cadmus has stolen from Kal’s Fortress in the other timeline was engineered by her father. She looked over at Maggie, and Maggie just gave a small nod of understanding.

“Cat, Alex, Maggie and I need to get to the White House,” Kara said. She looked over at Kal. “I could use your help.

“Of course,” Kal said.

“Nimda,” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady Kara?”

“Put me through to J’onn and Susan,” Kara said.

There was a moment of silence, before J’onn came on the line. “Kara,” he said. “It’s good to hear your voice.”

“Thanks,” Kara said. “We’re waiting on Susan.”

“I’m here,” Susan said. “What’s up?”

“Adult Supervision,” Kara said.

“One moment,” Susan said.

Kara wanted for a minute, until Susan said, “Okay, I’m clear.”

Kara glanced at Cat. “Marsdin has a recording of my TED Talk from Sanctuary,” she said.

“How the hell did that happen?” Susan asked.

“Jeremiah Danvers gave it to her,” Kara said. “She wants me to come to the White House.”

“When?” J’onn asked.

“No later than two hours from now,” Kara said, “but I figure there’s no time like the present.”

“Give me five minutes,” Susan said.

“I’ll need the same,” J’onn said. “It would help if you could send some of my command staff back though.”

“I’ll send Lucy,” Kara said.
“Thank you,” J’onn said.

Kara turned toward Lucy, only to find her already on her feet, and before she could say anything, Lucy pulled her into a hug.

“I’m glad you’re safe,” Lucy said.

Kara hugged Lucy back. “I’m glad you’re here,” Kara said. “We’ll talk soon. I promise.”

Lucy let go of her and stepped back.

“Please inform President Marsdin we’re ready to travel,” Kara said.

“Of course,” Nimda said.

The flash of the transmat died away, and Kara looked up to find Olivia and two familiar but unhappy-looking Secret Service agents.

“Olivia, Sasha, Dakota,” Kara said.

“Supergirl,” Olivia said. “Superman, Cat, J’onn, Alex, Maggie, Susan.” Olivia turned back to Kara after acknowledging everyone in turn. “I admit I wasn’t expecting you to bring an entourage.”

“I have a bad habit of getting in trouble when I run off without telling anyone where I’m going,” Kara said.

“Well, I’m sure we can find somewhere comfortable for them all to wait while you and I talk,” Olivia said.

“I don’t think so,” Kara said. “Everyone here is directly involved. I think they deserve to be part of the conversation.”

“I’m afraid I really must insist on a private discussion,” Olivia said.

“Then I’m afraid we’ve wasted a trip,” Kara said. “We’ll just collect Jeremiah and the recording and be on our way.”

“Oh, stop it, both of you,” Cat said. “I swear you sound like a couple of MBA’s arguing over who gets the corner office neither of them deserve. Olivia, this place must have a conference room big enough for all of us, and last I checked, you were in charge, so make it happen.” Cat turned to Kara. “And you. This isn’t a battlefield. Quit trying to bludgeon your way through every problem.”

Olivia took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Kara looked over at her.

“Has she always been like this?” Kara asked.

“Since the day I met her, so for at least thirty years,” Olivia said. She shook her head. “Wait here. It looks like I have to go find a conference room.”

Kara watched Olivia go, then turned to Cat. “Thank you,” she said.

Cat just smiled at her. “How are you holding up?”

“I want to curl up in the back of a closet and pretend none of this is happening,” Kara said.
“You haven’t done that in a long time,” Alex said.

“Pat Brice,” Kara said.

“Another old girlfriend I need to worry about?” Cat asked.

“No!” Kara and Alex both said together. “He was the class sleeze at Midvale High. Tried to cop a feel. I broke his nose and got suspended for two weeks.”

“When she came back, the entire cheerleading team picked her up and carried her for a victory lap around the cafeteria,” Alex said.

“Closest I ever came to being one of the popular kids,” Kara said. “But when it happened, Eliza was so mad I thought she going to murder me, so I crawled into the back of the closet and hid for hours.”

“Danvers girls and closets,” Maggie said. “I’m sensing a trend.”

“Shut up,” Kara and Alex both said.

Cat reached up and rubbed Kara’s back. “We’ll get through this,” she said. “Just remember we’re all here if you need us.”

“Thank you,” Kara said. “Thank all of you.”

They ended up in the Roosevelt Room, with Kara sitting on one side of the table, with Cat, J’onn and Kal sitting to her right and Alex, Maggie and Susan sitting to her left. Olivia sat on the opposite side of the table, with Vice President Baker and Secretary of Defense Reed to her right, and Secretary of Homeland Security Pierson, Attorney General Wellesly, and National Security Advisor Durgan on her left.

“I’m honestly not sure where to start,” Olivia said.

“How about with where my dad is,” Alex snapped.

Olivia actually flinched slightly at Alex’s tone, but Kara reached over and took Alex’s hand.

“He’s okay,” Kara said. “He’s in the Yellow Oval Room on the second floor of the residence. He looks a little impatient and he keeps checking his watch, but he’s fine.”

“Supergirl’s right,” Olivia said. “He’s not happy at being held. He wanted to get back before he was missed.”

Alex seemed to relax a little, and Kara let go of her hand.

“You’ve already seen the recording,” Kara said. “I hope you didn’t ask me here to go through it all again.”

“Well,” Durgan said, “it might be helpful to walk through it step by-”

“Oh, fuck off, Durgan,” Reed said. “We’ve already got the debrief on tape. There’s no reason to make the girl relive all that shit just so you can ask something stupid like what color her toenail polish was the day her sister died.”

“There are things that need clarification,” Durgan said.
“Bullshit,” Reed said. “The recording told us what we need to know. Shit is going to hit the fan and we’re all going to get sprayed. If it’s all the same to you, and even if it isn’t, I’d rather we spend our time asking the lady making the raincoats how we can get one.”

Kara stared at Reed for a moment before she glanced over at Maggie and Susan. The three of them shared a look that brought a smile to Kara’s face, right up until Cat slapped her arm. Kara glanced over to find herself the target of one of Cat’s glares, and quickly turned back to Olivia.

“Why don’t we start with how you got the recording,” Kara said.

“Jeremiah called me about five o’clock on the morning of December twenty-sixth,” Olivia said. “The call came in from your number, so I answered it. He told me you had been withholding information regarding an alien threat to Earth. He said he would trade a recording of the information in exchange for immunity from any charges for himself, Alex and Eliza Danvers, and for protection for all three of them.”

“Protection from what?” Alex asked.

“Me,” Kara said. “He wanted to protect you and Eliza from me.”

Alex looked at her for a moment, and Kara could see the warring emotions on her face. Alex turned away and looked at Olivia, who confirmed what Kara had said with a simple nod.

Alex sank back into her seat. Kara wanted to stop the meeting so she could hug her sister and tell her everything would be alright, but she couldn’t. She had to deal with the consequences of what Jeremiah had done, and she’d promised herself she’d never lie to Alex again.

Kara looked at Olivia. “What do you want to know?”

“Let’s start with Myriad,” Olivia said.

Jeremiah checked his watch again, huffing in frustration. He’d left National City at 7:00 AM that morning, and he was only supposed to be gone five hours. It was coming up on fifteen, and he was torn. Part of him wanted to go ahead and text Alex and tell her not to worry. That he was okay, and he’d be home later. The other part of him thought it would be better to just wait and see if anyone noticed he was missing.

All of him resented that the latter was even an option.

He knew Alex was trying. She stopped by for at least a few minutes most nights to say hi, but she worked long hours, and she was always so anxious to get home to Maggie that she never stayed as long as he would have liked.

He hated what this was going to do to Alex, she was so hung up on Maggie, but when he had made the deal, he’d been afraid to push. Afraid that if he did, Marsdin would just have them all arrested, and let the FBI find the recording when they searched the building. He had planned to see if he could get Maggie included in the immunity deal and witness protection after Marsdin had seen the video. He wasn’t sure Maggie would accept, given how close she was with Kara, but for Alex’s sake, he’d planned to try. The problem was, Marsdin hadn’t come to see him yet.

Maybe he should have gotten the deal in writing before he had handed over the video. He’d just been so afraid of getting caught, because he had no idea how Kara would react. Waiting didn’t seem like an option. No one had told him anything about what was going on, but he could sense some new crisis brewing, and the thought of Alex getting dragged into some fresh danger by Kara just
because he waited was unbearable.

The door finally opened, and Jeremiah looked up, expecting to see President Marsdin, or someone coming to escort him to see her. Instead, Alex walked into the room carrying a large manila envelope, and Jeremiah felt like the floor had fallen out from under him.

“Alex?”

She didn’t answer him. She just sat down on the sofa across from him and stared at him.

“Alex, honey, what are you doing here?” he asked. When she didn’t answer him, he asked, “What’s going on? Where’s President Marsdin?”

She didn’t say anything. She just sat there, her face a blank mask as she stared at him. Second stretched into minutes, and he grew more and more uncomfortable under the weight of her gaze until he couldn’t take it anymore. He started to stand up.

“Sit down,” Alex said, the words spoken at a volume barely above a whisper, but with such authority Jeremiah fold himself back in his seat before he even realized he had changed direction.

“You know, it’s funny,” Alex said. “I used to be so jealous of Kara. When we took her in, she got all the attention. You and Mom spent so much time with her, and I hated it. I thought you loved her more than me. I mean, who wouldn’t? She could fly, she could bend metal with her bare hands, she could see through walls, and shoot lasers out of her eyes, and her breath could freeze anything solid. How could I ever compete with that?

“I hated her. I hated her for being there, I hated her for taking your attention away from me, I hated her for being better at everything than me, and I blamed her for you dying. We fought all the time, and I did everything I could to make her life miserable.

“Then I got into trouble. The serious kind of trouble. I found out something, and a man was going to kill me for it. Funny thing was, I wasn’t scared. Not for a second. Because when push came to shove, I never doubted she’d come for me. Not that night when was I seventeen. Not that night when my plane was going to fall out of the sky.

“And the thing is, now, I’m just like her. I’ve got the superpowers, the mother who loves me more than I ever realized, and the father who’s an absolute bastard.”

“Alex-”

“You sold her out!” Alex shouted.

“That’s not what happened,” Jeremiah said.

“Then please, enlighten me,” Alex said.

“I just wanted to protect you,” he said.

“From what?” Alex demanded.

“From her!”

“You wanted to protect me from Kara?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Jeremiah said. “She’s dangerous, Alex. We took her in, and she tore our family apart.”
“She is my family!” Alex growled. “She’s my sister. She’s the best thing in my life, and she’s my favorite person in the whole world, and you sold her out.”

“Alex-”

“You want to know the best part?” Alex asked. “She defended you. She said you just made a mistake. Said I should forgive you.” Alex reached up, tapping her ear. “I can still hear it. ‘Alex, he’s your dad. He loves you.’”

“Alex, please,” Jeremiah said.

Alex threw the envelope she’d brought with her down onto the table. “There’s your witness protection deal. Just like you wanted.”

Jeremiah looked down at the envelope like it was a snake, ready to bite him.

Alex stoop up. “Goodbye dad,” she said. “Enjoy your life.”

She turned and walked out the door. He scrambled to his feet to follow her, but as she walked through the door, he heard her speak.

“He’s all yours,” Alex said.

J’onn appeared in the door a moment later.

“Jeremiah,” J’onn said.

“J’onn,” Jeremiah said. “What’s going on?”

“President Marsdin has agreed to honor your request to be placed in witness protection,” J’onn said. “I’m just here to make sure that the classified information in your head stays that way.”

“J’onn,” Jeremiah said. “Don’t do this. We’re friends, remember. I saved your life.”

“I remember,” J’onn said. “And I promise, this won’t hurt.”

Kara sat on a sofa in the Lobby in the West Wing, leaning against Cat. She had her eyes closed and was just enjoying the feel of Cat’s arms around her. They had spent hours answering questions, and while it hadn’t been as bad as having to go through the entire story again, it had been painful enough. More so every time she looked at Alex because Alex seemed to take every question they were asked as some fresh betrayal from Jeremiah.

The worst part had been at the end, when the topic of how to deal with him came up. They had to do something, because he was a security risk. Kara had suggested a telepathic compulsion to keep him from talking to anyone about any of the secrets her held, then setting him up somewhere in National City with a secure apartment, so Alex would be able to visit him whenever she wanted.

Alex’s response had been more than a little terrifying. She’d suggested using the Memory Flasher Sara had given Kara to completely erase his memory and leaving him in a hospital somewhere as a John Doe.

Kara hadn’t been the only one horrified by her suggestion, and the argument between Alex and Kal had gotten so bad, she’d been afraid she was going to have to punch Kal to shut him up before Alex decided to do it herself.
It was Maggie who’d saved the day. She’d come up with a workable compromise. J’onn would plant the telepathic compulsion Kara had suggested. Then, Jeremiah would go into witness protection, just like in the deal he’d worked out. The trust fund Kara had set up for him would be emptied, the funds passed through several government cut outs, and a new trust established under his new name. Once Darkseid was dealt with, he’d be given the option of leaving witness protection.

Alex had asked for the chance to see him before J’onn put the telepathic block in place, and Kara hadn’t been able to stop herself from listening in. Every word Alex said had broken Kara’s heart, and it took every bit of self-restraint she had to keep from super-speeding her way through the halls of the White House to get to her.

“They’re back,” Kara said as she heard Alex, J’onn and the Secret Service agent escorting them round the last corner. She opened her eyes and stood up, then helped Cat to her feet as Susan, Maggie and Kal stood up. Alex, J’onn and the agent entered the Lobby a moment later.

“It’s done,” Alex said.

Kara took a step towards Alex, planning on hugging her, but Alex put up a hand to stop her.

“Let’s just… Let’s just go home,” Alex said.

Kara nodded and turned to Kal. “Nimda can send you back to Metropolis,” she said. “We’ll talk tomorrow.”


“Thanks,” Kara said.

“Anytime,” Kal said. “Listen, about what happened with Fendra-”

“Not here,” Kara said.

“Okay. Tomorrow, though,” Kal said. He gave her a quick hug, then stepped back.

“Nimda,” Kara said. “Send Kal home and send the rest of us to Cat’s apartment.”

There was a flash, and they were gone.

Cat’s living room reappeared as the flash faded, and Kara immediately turned to Susan and J’onn.

“I know I owe you both an explanation for the last few days, but everyone is exhausted, and today has been brutal. Can we talk tomorrow?” Kara asked.

“Of course,” J’onn said. “It’s late. Get some rest, all of you.”

“Good night, ma’ams,” Susan said.

Susan and J’onn both gave Alex a concerned look on the way out, but neither said anything. Kara waited until the door closed, then turned around and wrapped her arms around Alex. Alex stood there stiffly for a moment, before wrapping her arms around Kara and returning the hug. When the first sob came, Kara reached up and started stroking Alex’s hair.

“How are you doing?” Kara asked.

“I’m fine,” Alex said.
“It’s okay not to be,” Kara said.

Alex sobbed again, and Kara could feel her fighting it, trying to hold it in, but when Maggie slipped her arms around Alex from behind, the dam gave way and Alex broke down completely.

Kara had thought, after all that had happened, that she was all cried out, but she found herself crying too. For the father who had betrayed her because he loved her, and for the father who betrayed her because he never loved her, but most of all, for the sister she couldn’t seem to stop hurting, no matter how hard she tried.

“Thank you,” Maggie said, as Cat pressed a tumbler of scotch into her hand before sitting down next to her.

“You looked like you could use it,” Cat said.

“That bad, huh?” Maggie asked.

“No worse than me,” Cat said.

“Then you deserve some kind of award,” Maggie said. “If I’d been through the shit you have the last three days, I’d be a complete wreck.”

“Who says I’m not?” Cat asked before taking a sip of her scotch.

“Well, if you are, you’re hiding it well. Me, I don’t know whether I want to strangle Kara or hug her and never let go,” Maggie said. “Suicide attempts are always a mind-fuck though.”

Cat stiffened and looked up slowly from the scotch glass she’d been staring at. “How did you know?”

“Detective,” Maggie said. “I knew as soon as Alex described how they found her. Seeing the way you were careful to make sure she was never alone just confirmed it.”

“Damn,” Cat said. “I thought I was being subtle about it.”

“You also thought I was Kara’s booty call the first time we met,” Maggie said.

“You mean you weren’t?” Cat asked. “That’s disappointing. I had just assumed Alex and Kara shared everything, and I was getting a twofer.”

“What?” Maggie sputtered. “NO!”

“Pity,” Cat said. “If she fucks the way she fights, Alex could give her sister a run for her money.”

Maggie stared at Cat for a full minute, her mouth hanging open in shock, right up until she caught the slightest hint of amusement in Cat’s eyes. A smile spread across Maggie’s face.

“You… are fucking with me,” Maggie said.

Cat just raised an eyebrow and took a sip of her drink.

Maggie chuckled and downed the rest of her scotch. “Do you mind if I crash on the floor in the guest room?” she asked.

“Take the bed in the second guest room,” Cat said. “There’s no reason for both of us to sleep on the
“Thanks,” Maggie said, “but I’d rather be close enough to hear them if they start crying again.”

“Suit yourself,” Cat said. “I have a spare camping mat you can use.”

“You camp?” Maggie asked.

“No,” Cat said, and her tone made it clear that topic of conversation was closed.

“I think I’ll turn in,” Maggie said.

“Guest bathroom is on the left,” Cat said. “Carter’s spending the night with Sam and Ruby, so you can send Gonk down to your apartment to get whatever you need.”

“Thanks,” Maggie said.

While Maggie was washing up, Cat sent Kleenex to get the camping mats she kept in Carter’s closet. It had been years since she used them. Years since her anxiety or Carter’s nightmares had sent her into her son’s room to sleep on the floor where she could protect him. Tonight, she was glad she still had them.

She waited until Maggie disappeared into the guest room where Kara and Alex had finally fallen asleep a little after 1:00 AM, then slipped out onto the balcony and closed the door, hoping the walls would keep her from waking Kara.

“Nimda,” Cat said.

“Yes, Ms. Grant?” Nimda asked.

“Set an alert for thirty minutes from now,” Cat said.

“Of course, Ms. Grant,” Nimda said.

Cat sat down on one of the couches and picked up a throw pillow, squeezing it tightly as she finally let three days’ worth of stress and fear out.

The tears weren’t far behind.
iovis zhikuvaium
Literal: *That Big Idiot*
Semantic: *That fucking idiot*

zharivves tulem voiehd w dovrrosho
Literal: *I don't need these shadows*
Semantic: *I don't need this shit*

kryptahniuo
*Kryptonian (Language)*

vrazhium im udolzrhygahs
Literal: *orphan of sin*
Semantic: *Translation is inexact. Orphan Bastard would be the closest. Literally, a child who’s conception is a crime.*

vrazhium
*exile/rankless. One who has no house.*
Band-Aids Don't Fix Bullet Holes

Chapter Summary

Cat and Kara have a talk about what happened over the weekend. Lena solves a problem. Alex and Maggie spend some quality time together. Kara replaces Fendra, briefs everyone on what happened to her, and gives Leslie a new job. Susan deals with an unpleasant co-worker, and Cat makes a suggestion about how to help fund the City of Hope long term.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: While definitely not as heavy or as intense as previous chapters, this chapter does address Kara's mental illness and Cat's previous trauma. It references past suicide attempts, as well as an actual suicide. Please, please proceed with caution.

Also, some of you may already know this, but last week I discovered that someone plagiarized The Shape of Things to Come. The story was posted to Wattpad under another user's name, and that person was claiming credit for it. Needless to say, I was, and still am, incredibly angry over this. To be clear, Future Shock is Posted on AO3, Fanfiction.net, and my Tumblr only. If you see it anywhere else, or you see it on those sights under any name other than Argyle_S, please let me know, because someone is stealing my work.

If you want to talk about Future Shock with me, or any of my stories, feel free to join my Discord Server.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tuesday, December 29, 2015

“One sesame seed bagel, dry, double-toasted for me, and one potato bagel with chive cream cheese for you,” Maggie said as she sat down, placing plates in front of herself and Alex.

“Thanks,” Alex said in a flat, lifeless tone.

“Wow,” Maggie said. “Not a single comment about my ‘burnt bread breakfast’?”

Alex just shook her head and hunched down over her bagel.

Maggie frowned as she picked up her own bagel, and the two of them ate in silence. Maggie sat there, watching Alex for any signs of life, but there had been a strange tension between them ever since they left Cat’s apartment, and the longer it went on, the deeper the frown on Maggie’s face got.

“What?” Alex snapped, looking over at her, and Maggie finally realized what the tension was. Alex was expecting a fight. She shook her head and reached out, resting a hand on Alex’s arm.
“You want to talk about it?” Maggie asked.

“What is there to talk about?” Alex asked in a defeated tone, turning back to her breakfast.

“Come on, Babe,” Maggie said. “Don’t shut me out. I can’t help if I don’t know what’s wrong.”

Alex looked up at her, and Maggie smiled at the hopeful look that had replaced the blank expression on Alex’s face.

“You’re not still mad at me?” Alex said.

“No,” Maggie said, a little puzzled. “I mean, don’t get me wrong. I think you and Kara both need a serious sit down about personal boundaries, but you apologized to Lucy, and she wasn’t upset, so it’s done. Besides, you just spent two days looking for your missing sister, then found out she tried to kill herself, and you lost your Dad again. Even if I was mad, that shit can wait. If you think I’d let a little argument like that, or any argument we had, get in the way of my being here for you when you’re going through something like this, you haven’t been paying much attention.”

Alex smiled and shifted to take Maggie’s hand in hers.

“I’m sorry. I don’t think I’ve ever had a relationship survive the first argument before,” Alex said.

Maggie stared at Alex for a moment. “Babe, have you spent the last three days waiting for me to break up with you?”

Alex nodded.

Maggie shook her head and got up, pushing Alex’s chair back so she could straddle Alex’s lap. Alex looked up at her as Maggie rested her arms on Alex’s shoulders.

“You listen to me, Alexandra,” Maggie said, smiling at the pained groan from Alex at the sound of her full name. “We are going to have disagreements. We are going to have arguments. We are going to have fights. Sometimes, we are going to get on each other’s nerves. But I will always be here for you. You’re my ride or die. I knew the first time we kissed that you were it for me.”

Alex wrapped her arms around Maggie’s waist and pulled her closer.

“Ride or die, huh?” Alex asked. “I think I like the sound of that.”

“You better,” Maggie said. “Because you are stuck with me.” She leaned down and kissed Alex, drawing a low moan from her when Maggie rocked her hips. She broke off the kiss a few moments later, leaving both of them breathless.

“Much as I like where this is going,” Maggie said. “We’re going to be late for work if we don’t stop.”

“We can quit,” Alex said. “My sister’s rich.”

“What would we do with all our time?” Maggie asked.

“I can think of a few things,” Alex said.

“I’ll bet I could too,” Maggie said. “But they might make you give back all the guns.”

“Don’t care,” Alex said.
“Wow. It must be love,” Maggie said.

“Definitely,” Alex said.

“We could take the morning,” Maggie said.

“We could call in sick,” Alex said. She raised her hand to her mouth, fake coughing into it. “I have the black lung.”

Maggie let out a laugh before she leaned down and kissed Alex again. “That works,” she said, just before their lips met.

“Good morning,” Astra said as she entered the lab. Both Eve and Lena looked up from their workstations and smiled in greeting, but Astra only had eyes for Lena. A fact which was apparently obvious to Eve.

“I think it’s time for a coffee run,” Eve said as she stood up and grabbed her purse from her desk drawer.

“I would appreciate that,” Astra said.

“I’ll bet you would,” Eve said, an amused look on her face. “I’ll be back in fifteen minutes.”

Lena waited until Eve was out the door before she stood up and walked over to Astra, immediately leaning in for a kiss. Astra slipped her arms around Lena, cradling her gently as she returned the kiss.

Technically, the kiss was an impropriety, something she shouldn’t have done while still bonded to Non, but she couldn’t bring herself to care. She’d felt something from the first with Lena, and in the beginning, she thought it was suspicion, then admiration, and even affection. She hadn’t really understood what it was until Kara had pulled her aside and asked if she intended to court Lena. The idea had seemed ridiculous in the moment, but once the thought was in her head, it wouldn’t go away. By the end of the night it was all she could think about, and when she’d held Lena in her arms and kissed her, it had felt right in a way none of her youthful fumbling back on Krypton ever had.

This kiss was different than that one. The first kiss had been exciting and new, like opening a present. This was familiar and comforting, like coming home after a long campaign. All the stress and worry of the last three days just melted away in the circle of Lena’s arms.

The kiss ended far too soon for Astra’s liking, but Lena smiled at her and it was a sight that was almost worth the end of the kiss.

“I missed you,” Lena said.

“I’m sorry I was away,” Astra replied. “I’m even sorrier I will have to miss lunch.”

“Is everything okay?” Lena asked. “I thought you’d found Kara.”

“We have, but there was trouble with one of the other Kryptonians. I’m meeting with Kara to reorganize our chain of command, to remove the problem element,” Astra said.

“That sounds like it will be unpleasant,” Lena said. “Is there anything I can do to help?”

“Not unless you can think of some way to find my husband,” Astra said. “His continued captivity is causing tension between Kara and the others.”
"You know, I’ve been giving that some thought," Lena said. "And I have something that might help."

"Really?" Astra asked.

Lena backed away, taking Astra’s hand and pulling her along. "Come here," she said. "Let me show you something."

Astra followed Lena across the lab to her workstation. Lena sat down and opened a program Astra hadn’t seen before and pulled up a graph.

"What is this?" Astra asked.

"This lab is equipped with the absolute best safety sensors on the market, and pretty much every kind that’s made. All of them feed into a monitoring program, and I kept noticing a slight increase in gamma flux during working hours," Lena said.

Astra felt a small surge of fear for Lena’s safety. Kryptonians, even without the powers given by the yellow sun, were largely immune to X-Ray and soft gamma radiation, but she knew humans were much more susceptible to it.

"Are the levels dangerous?" Astra asked.

"Maybe with a few thousand years of cumulative exposure. I only ran it down because unknowns bother me, and I found this," Lena said. She entered a command into the computer, and the lights in the room dimmer. A moment later, a red hologram of a skeleton walked right through the door.

"That’s a Kryptonian skeleton," Astra said almost immediately.

"How can you tell so quickly?" Lena said. "It took me almost two hours to realize it wasn’t human."

"It took time to learn to control our powers," Astra said. "During those weeks, I saw more of the human skeletal structure than I really cared for. The shoulder and hip joints are different, and you have two fewer ribs."

"That actually warrants more exploration, but it will have to wait," Lena said. "That is your skeleton. Based on the numbers from the gamma emissions, your skeleton contains a small amount of uranium."

"Of course," Astra said. "Krypton had a uranium core, and it was a common environmental contaminant. That’s one of the reasons Krypton didn’t export food. It was impossible to keep the uranium content low enough to pass most world’s import standards for heavy metals."

"That would definitely be a problem," Lena said, "but in this case, it might actually be the solution. Because if Non has the same levels of uranium in his skeleton…"

"We can track him," Astra said.

"Not with any instrument made on Earth," Lena said, "but you have all the Kryptonian tech at your disposal."

Astra looked down at Lena. "This is brilliant," she said.

Lena smiled up at her. "I was motivated."

Astra smiled, and leaned down.
When Eve got back ten minutes later, they were still kissing.

Kara slowly drifted towards wakefulness as someone stroked her cheek with a belt sander. A loud, purring belt sander. And for some reason, whoever it was also felt the need to march in place on her chest.

She opened her eyes and nearly screamed at the sight of a huge, tooth-filled maw yawning into her face. When the mouth closed, Kara found herself face to face with a faintly-glowing blue and black cheetah. She was still trying to figure out what was going on when the cheetah leaned down and licked her face with a sandpaper-rough tongue, which she supposed explained the belt sander, and the purring. The cheetah turned around and leapt off the bed, then trotted over to the door where it stopped and looked back at her, letting out a meow, demanding she follow it.

Kara rolled out of bed and padded after the cheetah, which trotted out of the bedroom. She followed it down the hall and into the kitchen, stopping just inside the doorway to admire the sight of Cat in champagne-colored silk pajamas, setting a serving platter covered with bacon, ham, steaks and sausages down on the center of the table. The blue cheetah walked over and rubbed its cheek against Cat’s hip, purring loudly as Cat reached down and scratched it behind the ear.

It took a moment, but Kara suddenly realized she’d seen the cheetah before.

“Is that the statue from the bullpen?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Cat said. “Most people mistake her for a panther, but Alice here was my first big story for the Radcliffe school paper. One of the Harvard football boosters was mixed up with exotic pet smuggling.” Cat lifted her hand and Alice just faded away.

“You’ve been working on your ring constructs,” Kara said.

“I have.” Cat said. “The incident at CatCo made your point quite well. There’s no point in having the ring if I don’t learn to use it.” Cat gestured to the chair opposite her. “Go on and sit.”

Kara took a seat as Cat walked back over to where Kleenex was working.

“Where are Alex and Maggie?” she asked.

“They left around seven,” Cat said.

Cat took two plates from Kleenex and carried them back over to the table. She sat down opposite Kara and started piling one of the plates up with various items before passing it over to Kara.

“Alex said you’d been starving yourself, and I know you didn’t get anywhere near your calorie count yesterday, so I wanted to make sure you got fed today,” Cat said.

Kara smiled as she picked up her knife and fork. “Always taking care of me,” she said happily.

“Well, it’s not like you’ll do it yourself,” Cat snapped.

Kara stopped halfway through cutting a piece off one of her omelets and looked up. Cat was sitting there, eyes closed, both hands gripping the table.

“Cat?” Kara asked.

“I’m sorry,” Cat said.
“Cat, what’s wrong?”

Cat took a deep breath. “I’m trying not to be angry with you,” she said.

“Oh,” Kara said.

“Just eat your breakfast,” Cat said.

“But if you’re mad, we should-“

“Stop,” Cat said. “I don’t want to talk about it right now.”

“But-“

Cat held up a hand, and Kara stopped talking.

“Fine,” she said. “You want to talk about it… Fine. Do you know how my father died?”

“No,” Kara said, though from the context, she thought she might have an idea. “No, I don’t.”

“I got the call at the end of my first semester at Radcliffe,” she said. “It was the Sunday before Thanksgiving, and I was packing to fly home for the week when my phone rang. I picked it up, and my mother said, ‘Kitty, darling, your idiot father has gone and shot himself. See if you can get an earlier flight.’ That’s why I always work on Thanksgiving. I work so I don’t have to remember a closed casket funeral.

“And today, I’m trying not to be angry with you. I’m trying because I know depression is a disease, and post-traumatic stress disorder is a disease, and you have both. I’m trying because I know you’re sick, and I know you’re trying to get help, and I know that even when you want to get better, relapses happen. I’m trying because I know a day is not enough for you to have really recovered from what happened. I’m trying because I know my screaming at you is the last thing you need.

“But it’s hard to not be angry, because you almost killed someone I love, and not very many people fit into that very small category to begin with, and because you said you would stay with me as long as I wanted. I wanted a lot more than one night, and I’m angry because you left me and I didn’t know where you went, and I didn’t know if you were coming back, and it’s not fair of you to promise me everything I want and then just take it all away.”

Cat sat, watching Cat struggle to fight back tears as guilt settled into a massive knot in her stomach. She did this. She always did this. She got so caught up in her own pain, she ended up hurting people around her.

When the first tear rolled down Cat’s face, Kara got up and went to her. She knelt down and wrapped her arms around Cat, hugging her as tightly as she dared. Cat hugged her back, and Kara pressed a kiss to her temple.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

“I know,” Cat said.

“I didn’t go there to die,” Kara said. “I just meant to find out what Father had done to me. But I knew as soon as I came back, I would have to tell you about Fendra. I thought I would have to give you up, and I couldn’t face it.”

Cat jerked away from Kara and glared at her. “You do *not* get to use me as an excuse!” Cat said.
“No, that’s not what I meant,” Kara said, shaking her head. “I’m sorry. I just need you to understand. When I lost Sara the first time, it hurt so much I thought I would die. I couldn’t tell anyone about it. I couldn’t grieve for her. I had to hide it, to be happy little Sunny Danvers for everyone, so that no one would know something was off. Everyone could see how I felt about you. They kept telling me I should say something, but I kept holding you at arms’ length, telling myself you couldn’t want me back, because I was afraid that if I did say something, you would say yes, but then you’d see what it meant and you would change your mind.

“I know I’m not well. The panic attacks, the flashbacks, the bursts of anger, the depression. I was afraid that if I got to have you and you left me, I wouldn’t survive it. That it would be what broke me. And then it happened, and I knew what coming back would mean. It would mean I would have to tell you, and I would have to walk away from you, and I wouldn’t be able to grieve, because I would have to bond to Fendra. I would have to pretend it was what we wanted. What we planned.

“I stayed, because I couldn’t face doing that again. The idea of losing you was so horrible, I crawled down that hole to protect myself from the pain. But you saved me. I was lying there, waiting for the end, and I turned on that time courier, and all the texts you sent me just came through, and I read them, and I knew I had to come back. Because I knew you would never forgive me if I didn’t clean up those coconuts.”

“You know, that tree is still out there on the roof,” Cat said.

“Cat,” Kara said, “I’m sorry. I don’t know how to say it enough to make things okay between us again.”

“I know,” Cat said. “If we are going to do this, you have to promise that next time you will come to me first. No matter what, you come to me first.”

“You still want this?” Kara asked.

Cat rolled her eyes. “If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have asked you to marry me,” she said. “Of course I still want this. I love you. Horrible clothes, foul mouth and mental health issues included. But you have to promise.”

“I promise!” Kara said before she leaned in and kissed Cat. “I love you so much.”

“Good,” Cat said. “Now, eat. Astra will be here to escort you to your meeting with Ursa and Aethyr in an hour.”

“Are you coming with me?” Kara asked.

“No,” Cat said. “I have a session with Dr. Foster at one o’clock. She’s going to be transmating in. Normally, she wouldn’t treat both people in a relationship, but she agreed to make an exception due to the unique nature of our privacy concerns.”

“Okay,” Kara said. She kissed Cat on the cheek and stood up.

“Two more things,” Cat said. “First, Nimda has drones installing a second desk in my office right now, so when you’re done with your meetings, you can come to CatCo and work from there.”

“Okay,” Kara said.

“Second,” Cat said, “we start couple’s therapy with Doctor Foster next week.”
Susan sat at the operations station in the command center of the new DEO building with her legs crossed and a frown on her face as she stared down at the tablet in her lap, looking over duty rosters for the next few weeks. The twelve dead agents had left a hole in her operations team that was going to be a pain in the ass to fill. The ideal solution would be to go ahead and just shut down the desert facility and transfer the prisoners to the holding cells in the new building, but J’onn wanted to maintain the desert facility for the time being. Susan thought it was a waste of resources, at least until the new recruits were up to speed, but she hadn’t argued the point. That wasn’t her job. Her job was to take the shitty decisions other people made, and polish until you could see yourself in the surface of the turds.

“You got a minute?”

Speaking of shitty decisions. Susan looked up, forcing herself to keep the disgusted look off her face as she looked at Cameron Chase.

“What can I do for you, Ms. Chase?” Susan said.

“I wanted a word with you,” Chase said.

“Is that word about Agent Willis?” Susan asked.

“How’d you guess?” Chase said, sarcasm dripping from her voice.

“Ms. Chase, I thought I made my position on the matter perfectly clear,” Susan said.

“You did,” Chase said, “but everyone around here seems to think you eat monsters and shit gold, so I’m hoping you might listen to reason.”

“And what do you consider reason, Ms. Chase,” Susan said.

“A lot of things, but giving Leslie Willis a badge isn’t one of them,” Chase said.

“What makes you say that?” Susan asked, a smile spreading across her face as she noticed a faint flicker in the lights.

Chase rolled her eyes. “Look, I know she’s your pet project, or something, but the woman has no experience in law enforcement, she sleeps through half the training sessions, she’s foul-mouthed, rude, arrogant, and-”

“She’s standing right behind you, Cordelia,” Leslie said as she materialized out of thin air.

Chase jumped and turned, her hand reaching for the holster she wasn’t wearing.

“Stop doing that!” Chase said.

“I will, just as soon as it stops being funny,” Leslie said with a grin.

Chase spun around to face Susan. “You see my point?”

“Actually, in this case, I do,” Susan said. She looked at Leslie. “Please stop spooking the trigger-happy FBI agent. Sooner or later, she’s going to have a weapon on her, and whoever is standing behind you is going to get shot.”

Leslie let out a sigh. “You never let me have any fun,” she said.

“Disarming a nuke before it vaporized everyone inside of a one-mile radius isn’t your idea of a good
“time?” Susan asked.

“Well, okay, but what have you done for me lately?” Leslie asked.

“You got to fry the Jell-O mold,” Susan said.

“Old news,” Leslie said. “You said you had an assignment for me.”

“I do,” Susan said. She slipped a hand in her pocket, pulled out a small box and tossed it to Leslie.

“What’s this?” Leslie asked.

“Suit upgrade,” Susan said. “Supergirl sent it over this morning.”

Leslie opened the box and laughed. “I keep telling Sunshine she isn’t my type.” She pulled the ring out of the box. “Any idea why she sent me her class ring?”

“She said it’s a Valorium Flight Ring, whatever the hell that is,” Susan said. “All I know is, you’re supposed to put it on then report to the missile range for flight training with Wonder Woman.”

“Okay, I told Sunshine I don’t like flying,” Leslie said.

“I did mention that,” Susan said. “She said, and I quote, ‘She can learn to fly at the missile range with Wonder Woman, or she can learn to fly when I drop her from orbit.’”

Leslie’s eyes narrowed for a moment, and she practically growled as she tossed the box in the trash, then slipped the ring on her finger. As soon as she had the ring on, a line of black material extended out of the sleeve of Leslie’s war suit and touched the ring, which dissolved and flowed back up into the sleeve of the war suit.

“You know, sometimes Sunshine’s tech is just a little creepy,” Leslie said.

“Agreed,” Susan said. “See you later.”

Leslie nodded and headed for the transmat room.

“What the hell was that?” Chase asked once Leslie was out of sight.

“That was me giving one of our agents a training assignment,” Susan said.

“Yeah, I get that, but-”

“But you’re still under the impression this is the FBI, Ms. Chase,” Susan said. “And you are absolutely right. Agent Willis has no place in the FBI, which is why I am very glad this isn’t the FBI. And yes, I am aware that she sits through training sessions with her eyes closed, but she isn’t sleeping. She’s listening. She’s an auditory learner. She has every single line of DEO policy and procedure memorized. She’s also insightful, intuitive, and capable of reading a person or situation with a speed and accuracy that is frightening.

“As for Agent Willis’s place in the DEO, she’s not here to be an investigator, although I imagine she would make an excellent one. Agent Willis is here to be the hammer of God when I need to bring it down.

“Now, a word of warning. Skilled criminal investigators are much easier to find than women who can throw lightning bolts like the love child of Zeus and Thor. In short, you are replaceable. Agent Willis is not. So, I suggest you put aside whatever personal issues you might have with her, because
if it comes to a choice between you and her, you’ll find yourself banging on the door of the Hoover building begging for your old job back so fast your head will spin.

“Are we clear?” Susan asked.

“Crystal,” Chase said.

“Good,” Susan said. “Be somewhere else.”

Kara and Astra walked into the conference room to find Ursa and Aethyr already waiting for them.

“Hello,” Kara said as Ursa and Aethyr both started to stand up. “Please, sit. This isn’t a formal meeting.”

Both of them sat back down and waited as Kara and Astra took seats across from them.

“Thank you for taking the time to see me,” Kara said.

“When the Council summons, you do not say no,” Ursa said. “And you are the Council, Lady El. At least for now.”

“True,” Kara said. “And I sought the position out, though not because I particularly wanted it. I never had any desire to sit on the Council. Back on Krypton, I wanted to join the Science Guild like my father, but time and fate makes fools of us all.”

“So they do,” Ursa said. “Forgive me, Lady El, but why are you meeting with a pair of Rankless soldiers? Have we done something wrong?”

“No,” Kara said. “Our people need a leader. I would rather it be anyone else but me, but circumstances have forced me into the role. However, if we are to survive and to have a future, I cannot move my attention away from the things I am doing. My role as Supergirl is vital to the human’s perceptions of us. My role as the diplomatic bridge between humanity and the Kryptonians is equally important. My role in running the corporations I own is what will fund the reconstruction of our society. These are not things that can be dispensed with, but they, and other things I am doing to ensure the future of our people, take up a great deal of time, and I have very little to spend managing our day-to-day efforts. A lot of it such as the dispatch for the First Responder program is handled by the AI I use, but our people need a day-to-day commander. Someone who can make decisions when I am otherwise occupied.

“I had selected Fendra for that role. She was my Lieutenant. I chose her because she had the rank to sit on the Council and she had the willingness to challenge me for her right as head of House Kann. In hindsight, the choice was obviously a mistake. However, the fact remains, our people need someone present. Someone on the spot.” Kara looked directly at Ursa. “Astra recommended you, with Aethyr as your second.”

“Me?” Ursa asked. “I’m rankless. There are others who come from the Great Houses.”

“I don’t care,” Kara said. “Astra says that you are respected. That you would do the job well. She knows her people, and knows them well, so I have deferred to her judgement. You will be /krymgr ,uhrsah,/ and /pizhom ,aehthyhr,/.

Ursa and Aethyr looked at each other for a moment, before turned back to Kara.

“We accept,” Ursa said.
“Good,” Kara said. “That’s good. Astra will still act as my Military Chief of Staff, but the two of you will have authority over the day-to-day operations of the Kryptonians, as well as management of our people. You can feel free to approach me about any concerns you have, and I will do my best to address them. If I make a decision that seems questionable to you, you may ask me about it in private, and I will share my reasoning with you.”

“Very well,” Ursa said. “I will start by questioning your decision to elevate a human to the status of Head of House of a Great House. I will question your inclusion of two humans on this Council you are assembling. I will question your decision to use a Chrysalis Chamber to give a human Kryptonian abilities. I will question your decision to all but declare that you intend to bond with this Cat Grant. I will question your decision to allow non-Kryptonians into our enclave. I question your decision to neglect the fact that the humans have seized one of us, after you locked him in a cage.”

Kara sat back in her chair, and stared at Ursa for a moment, then looked over at Astra.

“You’ve made a good choice,” Kara said, a smile spreading over her face. She turned back to Ursa.

“I created House Danvers and made my sister the Head of House for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it was to keep my cousin Kal-El from seizing my Fortress and my resources in the event that I died during the Challenge of Strength. Second, I intended it as a symbol of my intentions. There were, at that time, thirty-two Kryptonians on Earth, not counting the handful of true criminals that are still in stasis cells. We will be living among the humans for decades, at a minimum. This world is a good refuge while we rebuild ourselves to the point where we can find a new world to settle and claim as our own, but I have lived in much closer proximity to humans than you have. I haven’t spent more than a decade holding myself apart from them. I understand what it will be like for the rest of you as you begin to assimilate into their culture.

“The reality is, if any of the Kryptonians were going to pair off, they would have done it long ago. Many of our people might look down on the humans, but it is not in our nature to be alone. Living in National City is not living in a hidden base in the desert. Sooner or later, our people will begin to take human lovers, and very likely, human bond mates. They will form families with the humans, just as I have, and just as my cousin has.

“When that happens, I will not see those humans relegated to second-class citizens within Kryptonian society. Human spouses will be given the option of using the Chrysalis chamber to become Kryptonian. Any children the human already has will be given similar privileges. The obvious and inevitable result is that the culture we carry with us when we found a new Krypton will be a fusion of our culture and the human cultures we take with us.

“Alex, and her intended bond mate Maggie, are some of the best people humanity has to offer. So, in addition to House Danvers serving to keep my estate out of my cousin’s hands, I used the opportunity to give a voice in the Council to the humans who will become a part of the new Krypton.

“My decision to use the Chrysalis chamber to add Lucy to our ranks was much less politically motivated. I simply sought to save my friend’s life. I will never regret it or apologize for doing so.

“My decision to include Alex on the Council is because I value her advice and her insight. My decision to include Lucy is because she is a gifted Advocate. I fully expect that she will write the bulk of the new constitution, unless one of you has some legal skills I am not aware of,” Kara said.

“No,” Ursa said. “We’re soldiers and technicians.”

“Then we’ll move on to allowing other aliens and humans into our society. It was
never intended as a Kryptonian-only enclave. Aliens walked the streets of our cities for thousands of years, and we welcomed them with open arms. I see no reason to behave differently here.

“As for Non, we have been searching for him, and we have not abandoned him. We will find him, and we will bring him home, but he will return to his cell. Non committed murder, and I do not believe he regrets it, nor do I believe he would ever live peacefully among the humans. His bigotry and intolerance would threaten the lives and safety of us all.

“You say you have been searching for him, yet you work with the daughters of those who kidnapped him,” Ursa said.

“Lena has nothing to do with Non’s captivity, or any of her mother’s actions,” Astra said in a tone that made Ursa flinch.

“It hasn’t passed notice that you’re enamored of the woman,” Aethyr said.

“I am,” Astra said. “I will make no apologies for that. When we find my husband, I will sever our bond, and I will be free to keep the company I please. But to answer your concerns, Lena has helped me devise a means of locating Non. If he is in the geographic region known as California, we should find him by Friday.”

Kara turned and looked at Astra. “Were you planning on telling me about this?” Kara said.

“I thought you approved of my relationship with Lena,” Astra said.

“I do,” Kara said. “I meant the plan to find Cadmus.”

“Ah,” Astra said. “Lena only proposed it this morning. She noticed the gamma signature from the uranium content in our skeletons and suggested using that as a means of locating Non. I gave Nimda the orders to manufacture drones equipped with the appropriate sensors before I transmatted back to the Solarium to meet with you.”

Kara smiled as she turned back to Ursa and Aethyr.

“Lucy is no more aligned with Cadmus than Lena is. In fact, she was the one who uncovered the evidence which implicated her father in the murders at CatCo and led to his arrest. Her loyalty is not in question,” she said. “Did I miss anything?”

“Cat Grant,” Ursa said.

“Is not a subject you want to test me on,” Kara said, her voice colder than her freeze breath.

“Women of rank do not bond with each other,” Ursa said, but Kara caught something in her tone that made her reconsider her immediate impulse to slap Ursa down.

“Why not?” Kara asked. “Because it’s never been done? The original purpose of the way we bonded was to ensure the mingling of the blood of the Houses,” Kara said. “Blood Bonds us all. The words that Zod and El spoke at the bonding ceremony of Erok and Milia. The idea that ties of blood would stop the wars. By the time the Birthing Matrices were created, the traditions had existed for thousands of years. No one ever stopped to consider that the Birthing Matrix doesn’t care if the samples taken are from a man and a woman, or two men, or two women. Our culture spent so long obsessing over blood, they forgot that it wasn’t blood that stopped the war between Zod and El. It was love. Erok’s love for Milia.

“I chose Cat for the same reason Erok chose Milia. I love her. I cannot imagine living another day
without her in my life. “pahskiles w :divi/,” Kara said.

“So, you would see anyone free to bond as they choose?” Ursa said. “No more bonding for political convenience.”

“Yes,” Kara said.

Ursa nodded. “Very well,” she said. “I have a few thoughts on how we can increase efficiency with our deployments for the First Responder program.”

“I would love to hear them,” Kara said.

“Excellent. Would you like to begin now?” Ursa asked.

“Shortly,” Kara said. “First, I would like to talk about organizing a militia among the alien residents of /zhrgvhrghs im shahrrehth/. I trust the current leadership of the DEO, and the Kryptonians have enormous fighting power, but recent events have reminded me that I have failed to set up appropriate contingencies for certain scenarios. I intend to address that oversight and would ask that you also point out to me anywhere you see a weakness in our planning.”

Ursa smiled for the first time since she had entered the room.

Alex glanced down at the head resting on her shoulder and smiled. It was a little past three in the afternoon, and she was laying in bed, naked, with Maggie pressed against her. The thing she couldn’t get over was how Maggie filled her senses. Touch was obvious, the weight of her soft skin pressing down where their bodies met, but sound was next, the faint, soft in and out of Maggie’s breathing. Smell followed, the faint scent of the lotion she used, mixed in with the fruity scent of her shampoo, and the sharp tang of sex that still filled the air. Taste, because Maggie’s lingered on her lips and her tongue, and that thought alone made Alex wet, all over again. Sight, finally. Silky black hair spread out over Maggie’s back and shoulders, the curve of skin stretched over muscle, the faint line of a scar, just there.

For that moment, Maggie encompassed the whole of Alex’s world and she was at peace.

“What are you smiling about?” Maggie asked.

“Just that I get to be here with you,” Alex said.

“Kind of happy about that myself,” Maggie said.

“I wish we could stay here forever,” Alex said.

“Well, we probably could,” Maggie said, “but I’m pretty sure your sister or your mother would come looking for us sooner or later.”

“Maybe your aunt, too,” Alex said.

“Or my brother,” Maggie said.

“How are you doing with that?” Alex said.

“I’ve got to admit, it was a bit of a shock,” Maggie said. “Mostly, I’m just mad at my dad for still being a complete shit after all these years.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “I’m guess I’m going to have to get used to that part.”
“Shit,” Maggie said. She lifted up off Alex’s shoulder, so she could look Alex in the face. “I’m sorry.”

“Not your fault,” Alex said.

“I know, but I didn’t mean to spoil the mood,” Maggie said.

“You didn’t,” Alex said.

“How are you holding up?” Maggie asked.

“I don’t know,” Alex said. “I mean, I just feel kind of numb.”

Maggie nodded. “I felt like that a lot, right after my dad kicked me out. Like it wasn’t real.”

“Can we talk about something else?” Alex asked.

“Sure,” Maggie said. “Anything you want.”

Alex smiled. “Anything, huh?” she asked as she rested her hand on the curve of Maggie’s hip.

Maggie grinned. “I like the way you think, Danvers.”

“John!” Kara said as she walked into the control room at the DEO.

Diggle looked up from the display he and Susan were studying and smiled.

“Hey, Kara,” he said, holding out a hand. Kara walked right past it and pulled him into a hug.

“I didn’t know you were here today,” she said, giving him a good squeeze before she let go.

“Well, you know, someone cleaned up our annual supervillain infestation early, so I’ve got time to spare. Sorry I missed the Christmas party.”

Kara waved it off. “You have a family. I get it. How are Lyla and Sara?”

“Good,” John said. “She loves the Supergirl doll, by the way.”

Kara smiled. “Are Oliver and Barry jealous?”

John laughed. “A little,” he said. “I think Laurel is trying to find someone to make her a Black Canary doll.”

“Little One,” Astra said.

“Oh,” Kara said. “Sorry, Astra, this is John Diggle, of Earth One. He’s a former soldier there, who specialized in counter-insurgency warfare. John, this is Astra In-Ze. She’s a general from my home planet, as well as my mother.”

“A pleasure,” John said, holding out his hand again. Astra shook it.

“You’re the one who’s been assisting with the hunt for Cadmus,” Astra said.

“Yes,” John said. “As much as I can. A lot of my skills were developed in a war zone, so we’re having to adapt to accommodate local law, but most of what I’ve been helping with is intelligence analysis. The DEO has been focused on aliens for so long, they really haven’t had the time to
develop the types of intelligence-gathering techniques necessary to track insurgents embedded within
the local population.”

“I understand,” Astra said. “On Krypton our military handled law enforcement as well, but we used
dedicated /vish/ battalions. We would often draw advisers from them when the expeditionary forces
had to engage in counter-insurgency work ourselves. Thankfully, that wasn’t often.”

“Susan, is everyone ready for our meeting?” Kara asked.

“Maggie and Alex aren’t here, but the rest of us are ready,” Susan said.

“Why aren’t Maggie and Alex here?” Kara asked.

“They called in gay this morning,” Susan said.

“What? Wait, is that a thing on this world?” John asked.

“Oh, yeah,” Susan said. “You know, four weeks paid vacation, two weeks of paid sick time, and
two weeks of ‘too gay to work’ days every year. Some places do three weeks of ‘gay time’, but
really, ever since they made pride week a national holiday, it just seems a little excessive.”

“Susan, be nice,” Kara said.

“What?” Susan said. “He asked.”

Kara turned to John. “What she means is, my sister and her girlfriend are playing hooky.”

“So they can get some nookie,” Susan added.

Kara closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “You have been spending entirely too much time with
Leslie,” Kara said.

“No,” Susan said. “I’ve always been like this. I just kept it to myself.”

“Really?” Kara asked. “What changed?”

“I got blown up,” Susan said. “Kind of used up all the fucks I used to give.”

“Getting blown up tends to do that,” Kara said. She blew out an exasperated breath. “I really don’t
want to do this briefing twice.”

“I got you,” Susan said, pulling out her phone. She pulled up a contact and hit send. “Hey, Danvers.
Your sister doesn’t want to have to do the briefing on this past weekend twice, so I’m having Nimda
video conference you in. I don’t really care whether you attend naked or not, but I figured you might.
Five minutes.” Susan ended the call without waiting for a reply, then made another call.

“Hey,” she said, and Kara was surprised by how soft her voice got. “Kara’s back. Briefing is in five.
Okay. See you soon.” She hung up again and looked up at Kara. “Leslie’s on her way. She’ll meet
us in the conference room.”

Kara turned back to Astra. “You heading back to L-Corp?”

“Yes,” Astra said. “The assembly tooling is being installed this afternoon.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “Love you.”
“I love you too, Little One.”

“Jesus, Sunshine,” Leslie said, “I thought I was the fuck up in this chicken-shit outfit.”

“Agent Willis,” J’onn said at about the same moment Kara laughed.

“No, J’onn, it’s okay,” Kara said. “Leslie’s right. I fucked up.” She looked around, taking in all the faces in the room. Susan, J’onn, Lucy, Leslie and Eliza along with holographic versions of Alex, Maggie, Cat, James and Winn. “I should have gotten everyone together and worked through the options and had a plan in place before I ever confronted Fendra, and I sure as hell shouldn’t have gone to Krypton alone.”

“Or at all,” Cat said.

“I don’t think we’re going to agree on that,” Kara said. “I needed to know what my father did to me, and he was the only person who could tell me.”

“Kara,” Susan said.

Kara turned to look at her. “Yes?”

“We have a problem,” Susan said.

“I know,” Kara said.

“You made me responsible for this,” Susan said. “I’m adult supervision. Your words.”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Well, the adult in the room doesn’t know how to deal with this,” Susan said. “Everything instinct I have is telling me to ground you, permanently.”

“You can’t do that,” Kara said.

“I know that, God damn it,” Susan said. “But you are a living, breathing weapon of mass destruction, and I’m not comfortable with the idea of sending a suicidal nuke out to get kittens out of trees as a PR stunt.”

“Susan.”

“I’m not fucking finished,” Susan snapped. “As scared as I am for what could happen if Supergirl lost it in public, you’re my friend. You need to be in therapy, not on the front fucking line of a fight against a bunch of fucking terrorists. I don’t want you to get hurt. And I don’t know how to reconcile that with the very real fact that we need you out there as Supergirl.”

“I do,” Kara said. “Doctor Foster suggested it. Well, the general idea. I had to work on the specifics a bit.”

“What are you thinking?” Susan asked.

“Someone to go out there with me,” Kara said.

“You want a fucking sidekick?” Susan said.

“No,” Kara said. “I want a partner. Someone I can trust in a fight.”
“I can do that,” Lucy said.

Kara turned to Lucy and shook her head. “Not you,” Kara said.

“Kara, I can-”

“It’s not that,” Kara said. “I would trust you in a fight. You’re not as good as Alex or Maggie, but that would come with practice. But it can’t be Alex or Maggie or J’onn, either.”

“Who then?” Susan asked. “Because after what you just told me, I’m not ready to trust any of the Kryptonians, aside from Astra, and I don’t think taking her off the tech adaptation project is a good idea.”

“Doesn’t matter. None of the Kryptonians are up to the job,” Kara said.

“Then who?” J’onn asked.

Kara looked over at Leslie.

“Me?” Leslie asked. “You’ve got to be kidding me.”

“I’m not,” Kara said.

“Why me?” Leslie asked.

“Because you’re the only friend I have who won’t cut me any slack,” Kara said. “Leslie, in that other timeline, you and I weren’t the best of friends, but I could always count on you. Didn’t matter if I needed backup or a reality check. I could go to you. I love that we’re better friends here. I’m *honored*. But right now, I need someone who isn’t afraid to shove a lightning bolt up my ass if I get back on my bullshit.”

“Well, that I can manage,” Leslie said, holding up her hand and letting electricity arc between her fingers. “How about we start right now?”

“Leslie-” Kara said.

“No!” Leslie said. “You said it yourself. You’re my friend. I’m not going to punch your ticket.”

“That’s not what I’m asking you to do,” Kara said. “What happened the last few days aside, I don’t actually want to die.” She looked over at Cat. “For the first time in a long time, I feel like I have an actual future.” She turned back to Leslie. “You are one of a very small number of people on this planet who can put me down without using lethal force. I’m asking you because I trust you.”

Leslie stared at her for a long time before she finally shook her head. “Fine,” she said. “But I’m not letting Bilbo over there put me in some red, white and blue nightmare like he did with Legally Short.”

“Hey!” Lucy and Winn both said indignantly.

“Your war suit is fine,” Kara said. “Although, if you want, Winn could probably design something a bit more punk for you.”

“I could,” Winn said. “I’m thinking dark blue, with ‘I’m a Great Big Jerk’ on the chest.”

“Watch it, Bilbo. I’ll fry all your hard drives,” Leslie said.
“Try it,” Winn said. Then thought about it for a second. “Actually, please don’t.”

“Winn, focus,” Kara said.

“Okay, yeah. I can work up a design, but she’s going to need a superhero name.”

“She’s already got one,” Kara said. “She’s Livewire.”

“Damn right I am,” Leslie said.

“Kara, you have a moment?” Susan asked J’onn, Lucy and Leslie filed out of the conference room.

“Sure,” Kara said.

“Close the door,” Susan said.

Kara pushed the door to and turned around to face Susan. “What’s up?”

“Is she going to be okay out there?” Susan asked, and Kara was surprised by the level of worry in Susan’s voice, because she hardly ever heard Susan sound worried about anything.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Leslie was always crazy powerful. She’s tough, too. The accident which created her carried a bit of my DNA into her metagenetic profile, so technically, she’s part Kryptonian, and damn near a brick. Besides, the training helps. She’s already doing things the other Leslie never even tried.”

“Like what?” Susan asked.

“Carrying someone with her through the power lines,” Kara said.

Susan smiled. “She saved my life with that little trick.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Blew me away when I heard about it.”

“Just do me a favor,” Susan said. “I know she’s out there to take care of you, but make sure you take care of her too.”

“Of course,” Kara said, looking at Susan and wondering what this was all about. She saw Susan glance out the window, and her face softened, and it suddenly clicked.

“You like her!” Kara said.

Susan turned back to Kara and gave her an eye-roll worthy of Cat. “On today’s episode of ‘things that are blindingly obvious’,,” she said.

“Susan-”

“I know, okay,” Susan said in a frustrated tone. “I have a type, too. Beautiful, smart, funny, amazing, and above all, completely unattainable.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

“It’s my problem,” Susan said. “Just don’t tell her, please. My inability to keep it in my pants shouldn’t be her problem.”

“My lips are sealed,” Kara said.
“Thank you,” Susan said.

“You know, I probably shouldn’t say anything, but I have it on pretty good authority that Cameron Chase is batting for our team,” Kara said.

“Yeah. So is Pam down in HR. Doesn’t mean I want to date… Oh no… No… FUCK ME!” Susan said. “Kara, please tell me I didn’t have a thing with Cameron Chase.”

Kara just smiled.

“Oh, gross,” Susan said. “Did I suffer some sort of head trauma?”

“No,” Kara said. “I mean, I don’t know how your relationship got started. The first time I met Chase, she was the FBI agent hunting Winn’s dad after he escaped from prison, and she didn’t really make a good impression. I didn’t like her much at all. But she transferred to the DEO after the Battle of CatCo Plaza. I honestly didn’t even know she worked here until I caught you two making out in the breakroom.”

“I hate my life,” Susan said. “I hate that I know this.”

“Oh, come on,” Kara said. “At least-”

She was cut off by her text alert. She pulled out her phone and saw a message from Cat asking where she was.

“I’ve got to go,” Kara said.

“Take care,” Susan said.

Lillian sat at her desk, looking at the numbers in front of her with increasing frustration. Whoever this new advisor the DEO had brought in was, he was good at his job. He was also dead, at least according to the official casualty list from the Starling City Earthquake, but then, there were a lot of things going on that didn’t make any sense. Like the fact that no one saw Supergirl for the two days following Christmas.

Whatever was going on, one thing was certain. With the shift in tactics, PHAN was taking a beating. Recruitment was practically non-existent, which was a problem because they kept losing established cells. It was more of a nuisance than any real threat. The PHAN cells weren’t connected to the core of the plan. That would be carried out by Harper and the rest of the troops who were loyal to Lane. She’d wanted the cells in place for the aftermath, so they could hit recruiting hard when the public recoiled in horror at what the aliens had done, but they would make do.

The chime of an incoming message drew her attention, and she pulled up her email client. She frowned at the ID code in the subject line, because that particular asset was supposed to be radio silent until after the plan was carried out.

She decrypted the message, which had a hand full of very large attachments, and read it quickly.

“DEO has a way to track the Kryptonian prisoner. Recommend immediate disposal of subject and all tissue samples. Killing subject will not prevent tracking. Details below. Review video after Kryptonian dealt with.”

Lillian looked over the nice, official report on DEO digital letterhead. The solution was impressive and elegant. Use the radioactive signature of trace amounts of Uranium in the Kryptonian’s skeletal
structure to localize him. She was a little surprised that Lena was credited for the idea, but she felt a little bit of pride in her adopted daughter. She was doing good work, even if it was for the wrong side.

Lillian picked up the phone and called Max’s lab.

“Hello, Lillian. What can I do for you?” Max asked.

“Clear the Red K and Brain nanites out of the Kryptonian’s system, and have him ready to move within the hour,” Lillian said.

“That’s ahead of schedule,” Max said.

“My daughter has figured out a way to track him,” Lillian said.

“How do you want to get rid of him?” Max asked.

“The most destructive way possible,” Lillian said. “We’re going to turn him loose in downtown National City.”

Kara sat at her new desk in Cat’s office, looking through the latest financials from /zrhygrahs im shahrrehth/. They made her want to scream at what she was seeing.

“What’s wrong?” Cat asked.

Kara looked up at Cat, who was sitting at her own desk wearing a pair of reading glasses as she stared down at some report or other, her favorite Mont Blanc pen in hand, making notations as she worked.

“Running a city is expensive,” Kara said as she looked back down at the report in front of her. “We’re not bankrupt yet, but I have got to find a revenue stream soon.”

“Well, that much is obvious,” Cat said. “Most cities pile on the taxes for exactly that reason.”

“Except I’d be taxing myself,” Kara said. “Unless I start selling chunks of the city off.”

“Which you obviously don’t want to do,” Cat said. “How bad is the current situation?”

“The Supergirl licensing fees feed right into the Beacon of Hope Foundation, which is the official sponsor of the free housing program, so on paper we’re actually getting paid for every apartment that’s currently occupied. We have rent coming in from all the businesses occupying space in the towers and the marketplace. It’s slowing the burn, but according to Nimda, the city will be bankrupt in just over two years,” Kara said. “Three if I direct my share of Danvers International’s profits into the city coffers.”

“Which you will absolutely not be doing,” Cat said with a note of finality that Kara wasn’t about to argue with. “What about transmat?”

“What about it?” Kara asked, confused by the seeming non-sequitur.

“As a profit generator,” Cat said.

“Too dangerous,” Kara said. “I can’t sell that kind of technology.”

“Who said anything about selling the technology?” Cat asked.
“You did,” Kara said, looking up at Cat, who was still reading her report.

“No, I said use it to generate a profit,” Cat said. “Sell transmat as a service. The overhead would be extremely low, so you could undercut the airlines while still making a huge profit for yourself. And since you own the facilities and the equipment, there would be no lead time for adapting the manufacturing to Earth technology. You could run off all the equipment on the fabbers in /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/.”

Kara sat, staring at Cat in open mouthed shock for almost a minute.

“Yes?” Cat asked.

“You are a genius,” Kara said.

“According to Mensa,” Cat replied.

“I’m going to get up, walk over there and kiss you now,” Kara said.

Cat reached over and touched the control on her desk to black out the windows and doors forming the front wall of her office. “Proceed,” Cat said.

Kara smiled as she stood up and walked over to Cat. She stopped next to her and waited as Cat capped her pen and carefully put it away before taking off her glasses. Finally, Cat looked up at her, and Kara leaned down covering Cat’s mouth with her own as she gently cradled the back of Cat’s head in her hand.

She hadn’t meant for it to be a particularly heated kiss. More of an expression of admiration, gratitude and love than passion. Cat, however, seemed to have other ideas, because she felt Cat’s teeth grip her bottom lip and tug for a moment. Then Cat reached up, hooking a hand behind Kara’s head and pulling her down even as Kara felt Cat’s tongue slip into her mouth, which was just about the time Kara realized neither of them were going to be getting much work done that afternoon.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

krymgr ,uhrsah,
Major General Ursa

pizhom ,aehthyhr,
Captain Aethyr

pahskiles w :divi
Literal: (She) makes me see light;
Semantic: No semantic translation is possible, because the sentiment being expressed is bound up within Kryptonian Culture. Light is a common metaphor for joy, peace, happiness, divinity and heaven. The closest it can be rendered is “She is the reason I am capable of feeling joy.”

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope
vish
A member of the military guild who works as law enforcement. In effect, a cop.
Non

Chapter Summary

Cadmus releases Non in the middle of National City. It doesn't go the way anyone expected.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tuesday, December 29, 2015

The box van stopped a block short of CatCo plaza, parking along the side of the street in front of a pizza parlor called Shabid’s which put it outside of the carefully-laid security perimeter that Kara had put in place in the wake of the CatCo shooting, and because it was outside of the perimeter, there was no warning. The weapons detectors didn’t detect the very illegal submachine gun the van driver was carrying under his jacket. The bomb detectors didn’t detect the equally illegal Semtex attached to the back door of the cargo box. And the radiological alarms didn’t detect the Kryptonite or the trace amounts of uranium that Lena had suggested they search for.

It was just after six in the evening when the driver got out of the van and walked away, not bothering to feed the meter. Two blocks away from the van, a black SUV with government plates pulled over to the curb, just long enough for the van driver to climb into the passenger’s seat. Then the SUV pulled back into traffic and disappeared. Ten minutes later, as a cop was tucking a parking ticket under the van’s windshield wiper, two timers in the back of the van went off. The first one deactivated and unlocked a pair of kryptonite handcuffs, and the second set off the Semtex attached to the back gate of the van, blowing shards of the wooden door out, freeing Non.

This time, the security perimeter did its job.

Kara had decided she wanted to spend every day for the rest of her life like this one. She’d spent most the afternoon on one of the couches in Cat’s office, with Cat sitting in her lap as they hashed out a business plan for a nationwide transmat system, taking frequent breaks when Kara was so overcome by Cat’s brilliance that she couldn’t go another second without kissing her.

The kissing had become heated more than once, and each time it had, Cat had backed them down, insisting that their first time wasn’t going to be some office quickie. Kara understood the sentiment, but patience had never really been her strong suit. The fact that Cat’s office, and pretty much every piece of furniture in it, had figured into so many of Kara’s idle daydreams and late-night fantasies, did not help at all.

“You know,” Kara said as she left a trail of kissing down the right side of Cat’s neck, “it’s after six o’clock.”

“Mmmm… Is it?” Cat asked, tilting her head to the side to give Kara better access.

“It is,” Kara said.

“I forget, why is that important?” Cat asked.
“I was just thinking we could go home,” Kara whispered before nibbling on Cat’s earlobe.

“That does seem like-”

The blaring of the perimeter alarm cut Cat off. Kara picked her up by the waist and sat her down on the couch next to her.

“Nimda, report,” Kara said as she stood up.

“A moving van parked a block from the Plaza just exploded. Sensor analysis indicates multiple human casualties and one Kryptonian within the blast radius,” Nimda said. “The Kryptonian is Lieutenant Non.”

Kara activated her war suit as she looked down at Cat.

“I can’t wait for Leslie,” Kara said.

“I know,” Cat said. “Go. Be careful.”

“I love you,” Kara said as she headed for the balcony.

She heard Cat’s answering, “I love you too,” as she lifted into the air.

Kara dropped into the middle of chaos. People running, people screaming, people lying on the ground bleeding. In the center of it all was a wrecked moving van.

What Kara didn’t see was Non, or any signs that the explosion had been caused by his powers. In fact, the air positively reeked of Semtex.

“Nimda, dispatch medical drones my location. Document and evac protocol, double time,” Kara said.

The area around her filled with the flashes of transmat arrivals as drones appeared and went to work, triaging and transporting the victims of the bombing to the Medical Halls. Kara ignored them, knowing they had the situation in hand. She was looking for Non, wondering what he had to do with this when she heard a whimper come from inside the van.

She turned towards it, surprised at how intact it was. It was almost as if the charge inside had been designed to just blow open the rear of the van, which meant the bomber was either very bad, or very good, and knowing her luck, Kara was sure it was the latter. She moved towards the van, looking inside. Her eyes went wide as she saw the figure huddled up against the front wall of the van’s cargo area. It was Non. Unkempt, filthy, pressing his hands over his ears in pain, but it was definitely Non.

Kara heard the sounds of turbulence and glanced back as six more figures dropped out of the sky. Alex, Maggie, Lucy, Astra, Diana and Leslie were all there. Alex immediately starting giving orders, taking control of the scene. Kara turned back to the van, satisfied that Alex could handle anything else that might happen while she dealt with Non.

“Non?” Kara said, only for him to curl in on himself, letting out a frightened whine that reminded her of a scared puppy. Kara frowned, wondering what was going on. She floated herself up into the van, touching down gently. Non looked up the second Kara’s feet touched the floor of the van, whimpering again.

“Supergirl?” Alex called from behind her, and Non howled in terror, scrambling back and putting a
massive dent in the front wall of the van’s cargo area.

Kara turned around, raising a finger to her lips to tell Alex to be quiet. Alex nodded, and Kara turned back to Non.

“It’s okay,” she whispered.

Non flinched as she spoke and Kara finally realized what was happening. He wasn’t in control of his powers. The noise was overwhelming him. She wasn’t sure what was causing it, but she recognized the signs.

She stepped towards him to try and help, and her foot bumped into something. She looked down and couldn’t believe her luck when she realized what it was. They were modified, but it was very clearly a pair of the DEO’s Kryptonite cuffs.

She picked them up, checking very quickly to see what the modification did. Someone had rigged a timer to the cuff’s power source, presumably to deactivate them at a specific time. She wasn’t sure why, but she’d take what she could get. She sat the timer for twelve hours, then stepped forward, clamping one of the cuffs around Non’s left wrist.

Non shied away from her, whimpering in fear, until the timer kicked in and the green light of the Kryptonite emitters came on, at which point, Non visibly relaxed. He lowered his arm, looking at the cuff on it, then looking up at her, and what Kara saw filled her with both pity and rage.

She’s seen it a few times during the war. People who survived head injuries, but had lost a lot of function, people whose minds snapped and broke and never healed. Whatever the cause, the result had always been more than a little disturbing. The expression of a child, simple and frightened, on what should be an adult face.

In the hours that followed, multiple brain scans would confirm it, but Kara already knew that the man she knew as Non was gone.

“I admit to a certain amount of disappointment, Max,” Lillian said as they watched the news footage of the scene around the van. “I had hoped for more damage than a few civilians with shrapnel wounds, and I had hoped that our former guest would cause most of it.”

“Are you sure the Kryptonite cuffs disengaged before the bomb went off?” Max asked. “Because if he didn’t have his powers, the explosion might have killed him.”

“Unless the Kryptonite radiation affected the timing circuit, which it couldn’t have done since I encased it in lead,” Lillian said.

“Then I don’t know what happened,” Max said.

Lillian sighed. “I suppose it doesn’t matter, as long as the other projects are working as intended.”

“Everything is on schedule,” Max said. “The girl is ready for deployment at any time.”

“And Lane’s men?” Lillian asked.

“They’ll be ready,” Max said.

“Good,” Lillian said. “If you’ll excuse me, I have a video to watch.”
“Brain damage?” Olivia asked. “You’re certain?”

“Yes,” Kara said, staring at the image of Olivia on the video conferencing wall. She was in one of the new DEO’s conference rooms along with J’onn, Astra, Lucy, Alex, Maggie, Leslie, Susan, and Cat. She should probably put her foul mood on the list too, because it seemed to be occupying half the damn room.

Kara reached down and touched the surface of the conference table and a control interface appeared. She entered a quick command, and the screen split, displaying a false color neural map of Non’s brain on one side and Olivia’s face on the other.

“The green areas are healthy brain tissue. The red areas are the damaged tissue and neural scarring,” Kara said.

“What’s a lot of red?” Olivia said.

“Nearly seventy-three percent,” Kara said.

“How bad is it?” Olivia asked.

“It’s hard to judge, since he apparently spent so much time screaming that he tore his own vocal cords to shreds, so he can’t actually speak,” Kara said. “Nimda’s best estimate is, he’s got the mental capacity of the average three-year-old.”

“A three-year-old who could throw Mt. Everest into orbit the next time he has a temper tantrum,” Olivia said.

“As long as we keep him under the red sun lamps, that isn’t much of an issue,” Kara said.

“Is there anything we can do for him?” Olivia asked.

“That depends on what you mean,” Kara said. “The man we knew as Non, the man who grew up on Krypton, who served in the Military Guild, who married Astra, and who murdered a guard while trying to stop the destruction of Krypton is gone. The regions of the brain responsible for memory and personality are mostly scar tissue now. The regeneration matrix can remove the scar tissue and restore full cognitive function, but without a brain mapping to work from, there’s no hope of restoring his memories or personality. Whatever comes out of the regeneration matrix will be very nearly a blank slate. He will have no memory of his life before he went into the matrix.”

“What about stripping him of his powers?” Olivia asked. “A reverse of the process you used on Lucy.”

“No,” Kara said. “That’s not going to happen.”

“Kara-” Olivia started to say.

“No,” Kara said, cutting her off. “I want to be clear, Olivia. What you are suggesting will never happen as long as I draw breath. I will destroy every single piece of Kryptonian tech on this planet before I let you use the Chrysalis chamber to strip one of my people of their identity that way.”

“That’s a bit of a double standard, isn’t it?” Olivia said. “You didn’t mind putting Lucy in there without her permission.”

“The two situations are not equivalent,” Kara said. “If Lucy hadn’t gone into the chamber, she would have died. Now that she’s healed, she can go back in any time she wants. Nothing was taken from
her. What you’re suggesting isn’t medical intervention. It’s the moral equivalent of forced sterilization. You’re asking me to deliberately cripple one of my people just because he’s inconvenient. That is not going to happen. I will *never* allow the Chrysalis chamber to be used as a punitive measure.”

“Well, then,” Olivia said, “I suppose that’s settled.”

“It is,” Kara said. “He’ll go into the regeneration matrix later this evening. It will take roughly a week for the process to be complete.”

“Do you have a cell ready for him at the new DEO facility?” Olivia asked.

“Why would we need a cell?” Kara asked.

“Because he’s a criminal in federal custody,” Olivia said.

“No, Olivia, he’s not,” Kara said.

“Kara…” J’onn said.

“I’m not through, J’onn,” Kara said. “Non has never been charged with, much less convicted of a crime on this planet. The Kryptonian government remanded one of our citizens into the custody of the US government with the understanding that he would be safe in your care while he served out the remainder of his life sentences in comfort. Instead, members of the very agency charged with his care kidnapped him and turned him over to people who tortured and mutilated him, who destroyed his mind, and who did lasting and irrevocable harm to him on such a fundamental level that he is no longer, and will never be, the same person. I will have to stand before my people and answer for that, but I will not make the same mistake twice. Non is currently in the custody of the Kryptonian government, which is where he will stay.”

“I see,” Olivia said.

“I really don’t think you have any fucking idea,” Kara said. “I-”

Kara stopped and looked down at the hand on her forearm, then looked up at Cat.

“Calmly, love,” Cat said.

Kara closed her eyes and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly.

“Tempers are running a little high,” Cat said. “Maybe we should finish this later.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said, opening her eyes. “President Marsdin, I apologize.”

“Apology accepted,” Olivia said. “I understand what it’s like, seeing one of your people hurt.”

Kara stared at Olivia for a minute, doing her best not to explode at what she’d just said. Not to tell her exactly who she blamed for what happened to Non. Instead, she took another deep breath, and let it out slowly.

“Cat’s right,” Kara said as she stood up. “I need a break. It’s been a long, incredibly stressful day, and I don’t think I have anything productive left in me. I’m going to excuse myself before I say something one of us will regret. We can talk later to discuss the terms of the pardon you’ll be issuing for Non.” She gave a small nod to Cat before heading out the door, leaving Olivia staring after her in shock.
Cat watched as Kara walked out of the room and had to fight the urge to get up and follow, because someone had to stay and do damage control. So, instead of going after her, she pushed a little bit of what she felt when she was with Kara into the ring. Alice appeared outside the door of the conference room and squinted at her for a moment before trotting off after Kara.

“She is really starting to scare me,” Olivia said.

Cat turned back to the conference screen and had to step on her temper, because the urge to reach through the screen and slap Olivia was strong. “Excuse me?”

“Look, Cat, I know you have feelings for the girl,” Olivia said. “I know all of you care a great deal for her, but you can’t tell me you haven’t noticed her behavior. She’s volatile, rash, impulsive, prone to outbursts of anger. Until I saw the video, I’d put it down to her age and to the rather legendary arrogance of members of the Kryptonian Great Houses. Knowing what I do now, I’m embarrassed that I missed it. She’s obviously got a severe case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.”

“That’s not an invalid concern,” J’onn said.

“We could assign a therapist,” Olivia said. “Someone with clearance.”

“I appreciate the offer, and I’m sure Kara would as well,” J’onn said, “but the matter has been addressed.”

“That’s good to hear, but I’m like a bit more detail on how it’s been addressed,” Olivia said.

“That’s not an appropriate question,” Cat said before J’onn could reply.

“Excuse me?” Olivia asked.

“Being President doesn’t give you the right you know the details of a private citizen’s medical care,” Cat said. “Something I would have expected you to know, given all the time and work you’ve put into strengthening HIPPA laws.”

“I am aware of that, and if it were anyone else, I wouldn’t be asking,” Olivia said. “But given the circumstances-”

“Given the circumstances, violating her right to privacy is liable to make matters worse,” Cat said.

“I’m afraid I agree with Ms. Grant,” J’onn said.

“J’onn,” Olivia said, “Kara’s wellbeing is a matter of national security. In fact, it’s bigger than that. It’s a matter of planetary security at the very least.”

“Madam President, you expressed a legitimate concern about Kara’s health. I have assured you that she is receiving appropriate care. That is as far as I am willing to discuss the matter,” J’onn said.

Olivia pursed her lips in frustrating, looking a bit like she’d just licked a particularly sour lemon. “Fine,” she said. “Have we had any luck tracing the moving van or the SUV?”

“Both trace back to Army Intelligence,” Maggie said. “Both went missing right after General Lane’s arrest.”

“So we have more people in Army Intelligence involved with Cadmus than just Lane and Harper,” Olivia said.

“It looks that way,” Maggie said.
“You people always bring me such delightful news,” Olivia said.

“There’s another issue that needs to be addressed, ma’am,” Susan said.

“What’s that?” Olivia asked.

“This happened within hours of my sending you a report notifying you that we had found a way to trace Non,” Susan said. “Aside from the people in this room, only Winn, James, Kara, Lena and two Kryptonians knew that on our end.”

“Lena as in Lena Luthor?” Olivia asked.

“Yes,” Susan said.

“Are you sure she didn’t pass the information to her mother?” Olivia said.

“Yes,” Astra said in a tone of voice that somehow managed to convey that she found the question insulting and thought poorly of the intelligence of the person who asked it all at once.

“You seem awfully certain of that,” Olivia said.

“Lena is the one who devised the method we intended to use to locate Non,” Astra said. “If she wanted to protect Cadmus, all she had to do was remain silent.”

“Damn,” Olivia said.

“How widely was that report disseminated on your end?” Susan asked.

“Not very widely,” Olivia said.

“That’s what I was afraid of,” Susan said. “I think we have to operate on the assumption that Cadmus now has a copy of Kara’s TED Talk.”

“That’s a lovely thought,” Olivia said.

“It was Kara’s stated reason for not reading you in with everyone else that night,” Susan said.

“In hindsight, it would seem that she had a point,” Olivia said. “I will see what I can find on my end, but I may need J’onn’s help finding the culprit.”

“Until you do, I’m afraid all information regarding Cadmus will remain internal to the DEO,” Susan said.

Olivia did not look happy about it, but she didn’t argue. “Just find the bastards.”

“We will,” J’onn said.

“Is there anything else?” Olivia asked.

“Yes,” Astra said. “I know Kara deferred the conversation, but for everyone’s sake, I would like to discuss Non’s legal status.”

“I’m not sure what more there is to discuss,” Olivia said. “Kara’s position is both perfectly clear and completely unacceptable.”

“On our world, we had laws that prohibited the prosecution of those who were not mentally
competent to answer for their crimes,” Astra said. “Agent Lane informs me you have similar laws here.”

“We do,” Olivia said. “But in cases where the accused was not suffering mental impairment at the time of their crimes, prosecution is only deferred until he is mentally fit to stand trial.”

“Non will never be mentally fit to stand trial for any crimes he committed before today,” Astra said.

“Kara said full cognitive function could be restored,” Olivia said.

“She also told you that all memory and all traces of his personality have been destroyed,” Astra said. “The regeneration matrix will essentially be re-growing most of his brain, and his mind will have to be retrained from scratch. The person who comes out of the regeneration matrix will not be the same man who Cadmus kidnapped.

“I am not sure of the limits of human law, but Kryptonian law is clear in cases such as these. The destruction of his mind and memory means he cannot be held responsible for his actions prior to his injury.”

“This isn’t Krypton,” Olivia said.

“No, but Non’s crimes were committed *on* Krypton, and Kara is the daughter of a Kryptonian Adjudicator,” Astra said. “President Marsdin, I understand the position you are in, but for everyone’s sake, I ask you to consider whether your desire to imprison a man for crimes committed decades before he came into existence is greater than your desire to work with Kara towards the safety and security of your world.”

“You really think she would push the matter that far?” Olivia asked.

“I think that Kara would face all the armies of Apokolips alone, unarmed, naked and stripped of her powers if she felt it was the right thing to do,” Astra said. “Her definition of right and wrong may be more flexible than Kal-El’s, but once she has chosen a path, she is relentless in her convictions.”

“Astra is right,” J’onn said. “Remember how she won the duel with Superman.”

“There’s also the fact that Kara has one hell of a lawyer in her corner,” Lucy said. “One who would eat the government alive were they to make any attempt to charge Non with a crime, and would go on to tear up the conditional pardons and have all charges against the Fort Rozz prisoners dismissed with prejudice due to lack of evidence, before eating you alive with your own laws if you decided to push the matter.”

Cat looked over at Lucy, impressed despite herself. She glanced back at Olivia, seeing the storm building there, and decided to derail it before Olivia turned Lucy into a grease spot.

“If it helps, it’s the right thing to do,” Cat said.

“You know it’s not that simple,” Olivia said.

“It damn well should be,” Cat said.

“We’ve been plastering his face all over the place, telling people how dangerous he was for weeks,” Olivia said. “What am I supposed to tell the public?”

“This is about public opinion?” Cat said.
“I can’t help you defend the planet if I’m not in office,” Olivia said.

“Just sign the papers,” Cat said. “I can sell it to the public.”

Olivia sighed. “Fine,” she said. “If Supergirl will go on record as supporting the pardon, I’ll sign one.”

The line cut before anyone could respond.

“God, I miss the days when all I had to worry about with Kara was her weird obsession with birds and her terrible taste in music,” Alex said.

“You say that like basically blackmailing the President isn’t a good laugh,” Susan said. “God, I can’t afford enough beer to put up with this job.”

“That’s because you drink that five-dollar-a-bottle Belgian shit,” Leslie said. “You need to learn to drink cheap beer like the rest of us.”

“I’m going to go check on Kara,” Cat said. “If any other world leaders call, let it go to voicemail. We can piss them off tomorrow.”

Kara stepped out onto the landing deck and leaned against the railing, looking out at the National City skyline and sighing at how different it was from even just a month ago. The towers of /zrzygrhahs im shahrrehth/ off to her left, and the faint shimmer down in the infrared range of the defense shields encircling CatCo and the Solarium.

Home, but not home, like so many places she’d been in her life. Krypton had burned, and Kara had been drifting ever since. Alex had been her first home, until Jeremiah and CatCo Plaza had driven a wedge between them. National City had come close. She’d loved it, until it took everything from her. Barry had been a brother almost from the moment they met, but much as she loved him, he’d never been home. Sara had been. For a long time, home was Sara and the Waverider, until they were gone too.

Now she had this new National City, with a different Alex, and a different Maggie, and Cat who finally, truly belonged to her. A chance to be happy, a chance to have a home again.

And she envied Non. Envied what he would become when he came out of the regeneration matrix. A blank slate. A life with no past, no decades of pain, no blood on her hands. A life where she didn’t have to carry the weight of an endless number of worlds on her back. A life where she didn’t wake up and remember all the times she survived while people she loved didn’t.

Peace. Beautiful, blissful peace.

She envied Non, and she felt guilty for it. The same way she felt guilty on the days when she longed to be back on the Waverider, where she could hate people in peace, where things were simple. Where the enemy was the enemy, and your friends never sold you down the river for political expedience.

She staggered slightly as something bumped her, and looked down, surprising to see Alice rubbing her cheek against Kara’s hip. Kara laughed and Alice looked up at her, letting out a meow. She reached down, scratching the spot behind Alice’s ear that she’d watched Cat scratch that morning, and the landing deck filled with a loud, enthusiastic purr. Kara turned around and sat down, leaning back against the stone railing and wrapping her arms around Alice, who immediately climbed into her lap. Kara buried her face against Alice’s neck and held on, feeling warmth spread through her.
The sound of Alice’s purr and the feel of her fur and the heat of her body and the way she smelled faintly of Chanel No. 5 seemed to work together to carry Kara away from the moment, to wash away her anger and her pain, and take her to someplace bright and beautiful. She saw red as far as the eye could see. Not the dark, angry red of spilled blood, but the bright, life-like red of the growing fields outside Argo. Cat was there, and they strolled hand and hand through the waist-high /dusylgiv/ stalks, arms around each other’s waists. Carter and Krypto were up ahead of them, sitting on a blanket near the skimmer, and their daughter was sitting in Carter’s lap, listing off to one side as Carter read to her, and Kara smiled happily at the perfect way he pronounced each of the /kryptahniuo/ words. She glanced up at the red face of the local star sitting on the horizon, and the towers of /ahr,go,jor,/ the in the distance. Impulsively, she leaned over and kissed Cat’s cheek, bringing a smile to her wife’s face. She wondered how much time they had before they had to head back to the city. Maybe they could take the whole /zehtiahr/ for themselves.

The dream faded away as someone approached, but it left the warmth and contentment behind.

Kara looked up, the smile on her face growing wider as she saw Cat approaching.

Cat stopped right in front of Kara and smiled down at her as she reached out, scratching Alice behind her ear.

“Are you okay?” Cat asked.

“I wasn’t,” Kara said, “but Alice here gives good hugs.”

“Should I be jealous?” Cat asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I mean, Alice is very sweet, but you’ll always be my favorite cat.”

Cat rolled her eyes. “I’m dating a child.”

Kara stood up and pulled Cat into her arms. “I promise you, what I’m thinking about right now is very, very grown up,” she said.

Cat gave her a curious smile. “You’re in a better mood than I expected.”

“I think I’m a little high on Alice snuggles,” Kara said.

“Is that what all those cute cat videos were all about?” Cat asked. “You looking for a fix.”

“No,” Kara laughed. “Your little friend is a physical manifestation of hope. Something probably made stronger because of what she represents to you. That first moment your dreams started to come true. The thing about hope is, it’s contagious.”

“Well, that does explain your effect on everyone around you,” Cat said.

“I don’t know about that,” Kara said, glancing out at the city. “All I seem to be lately is too little, too late.”

Cat smacked her on the shoulder at the same time Alice rubbed against her hip, purring loudly. Kara felt the guilt and frustration that had started to creep back in melt away again, and for a moment, she and Cat were alone, and all was right with the universe.

Kara leaned forward and rested her forehead against Cat’s. “I love you so much,” she said.

“That’s good,” Cat said, “because I love you too.”
“Can we go home?” Kara asked. “Please?”

“Of course,” Cat said. “Nimda, home please.”

Kara had just enough time to tilt her head to the side and kiss Cat before the flash of the transmat took them.

Astra stared through the window at the man who had been her husband. He was sitting on the hospital bed with his legs crossed, playing with a large, soft toy Kara had brought him from the gift shop in the lobby. A teddy bear, she’d called it. Some sort of fluffy thing dressed in the House of El livery Kara had worn as Supergirl before the missile attack.

The sight was unnerving.

She and Non had never been lovers. They had hardly been friends. But she had spent decades of her life with him. To see him reduced to little more than a simple-minded child disturbed her in a way that the idea of him confined to a cell hadn’t.

She couldn’t quite bring herself to feel the burning rage she’d seen in Kara’s eyes. Instead she felt a cold, implacable anger at the senselessness of what had been done. Lillian Luthor had murdered Non just as surely as if she had driven a blade into his heart.

“General.”

Astra turned to see Ursa approaching. “General,” she said in greeting.

“It’s true, then?” Ursa asked as she stepped up to the window. “Non is /shesur dhehraogh/?”

“It’s true,” Astra said.

Ursa sighed. “He was an /udol shesur/, but he did not deserve this. To be caged and tortured and have all memory and sense of self burned away.”

“It’s not the end I would choose,” Astra said.

“Will Lady El act?” Ursa asked.

“Yes,” Astra said, “I believe she will. The moment she has a clear target, I believe the people of this world will learn exactly what the anger of a daughter of the War Queens looks like.”

“Then we should find that target, and set it before her,” Ursa said.

“Agreed,” Astra said. “But it must be done quietly, so the humans and the Green Martian do not notice. We will observe the mourning period, but when it is done, we will call all those who are loyal and begin the search. We will find Cadmus, and we will end this.”

Lena picked up her phone at the sound of the text alert and entered her pin to unlock her phone, smiling when the alert popped up and she saw the text was from Astra. She tapped her text up and opened the message.

Astra: We have found Non. The situation is more complicated than expected. I will explain when we see each other tomorrow but please know that my intentions remain unchanged.

Lena wasn’t sure if she should frown at the fact that things weren’t going as smoothly as they had
both hoped, or smile at the fact that Astra had manners right out of a Regency romance. It made her weak in the knees.

Lena: We could see each other now, if you like.

Lena waited for a reply and frowned when the alert that popped up was for her email. She almost dropped the phone in shock when she saw her mother’s name. She opened her email program, and looked at the message, which was five words.

“You are being lied to.”

There was a video attached. The file was huge.

Astra: I would like nothing more, but duty prevents it. There are things I must attend to. You will be in my thoughts.

Lena smiled again and wondered what’s going on.

Lena: See you tomorrow. Eve doesn’t arrive until 8:45 AM, but I’m always in the lab by 7:30 AM.

Astra: Useful information. Sleep well /eh shed krighia/.

Lena smiled and tapped on the Kryptonese phrase, and her phone immediately translated it as ‘bright one’, and she found herself blushing and feeling something she hadn’t in a long, long time.

She closed the text app, still glowing inside from the simple exchange with Astra as she looked at the email from her mother. If her phone wasn’t Kryptonian tech, she would have hesitated to open it, afraid some virus or other might infest her it and spread to her other devices. As it was, the phone indicated the video was free of viruses. She would send it to Kara in the morning, but it was late, and curiosity got the better of her, so she used the remote-control app on her phone to switch on the TV, then sent the video to it.

The screen filled with an image of Kara sitting behind a table on some kind of stage.

“Kolex,” Kara said. “Seal the audience hall, implement privacy protocol zero and bring me the caskets.”

Nia looked around as she stepped into the foyer of the apartment. She wasn’t sure where she was, or why she was there, but she felt a sense of weight to the place. Like it was important. Like the fate of the whole world hinged on this place.

She heard a sound. It was muffled and indistinct, but she felt drawn towards it. She walked further into the apartment. It was beautifully decorated, with burnt orange walls, tan carpet, and sleek, modern furniture with sand colored upholstery and bronze trim. The sound came again, clearer this time. The sound of a baby crying. She followed the cries down a hall, past an open door that led to an art studio that smelled of oils and paint thinner, before coming to another open door that led to a nursery.

She stepped inside and couldn’t stop herself from smiling at the cheerfulness of the room. The walls and ceiling were painted a bright sky blue, with lovingly rendered clouds covering the ceiling and upper edges of the wall. One corner was dominated by a yellow sun with a smiling face looking down at the center of the room. The lower half of the walls were covered in brilliant sunflowers, each one unique, and all of which seemed to spring up from the green carpet. The furniture in the room was all stained white, and all of it looked hand-made. Two heavy duty rocking chairs with
strange symbols carved into the wood. A changing table. A bookshelf filled with baby toys and a Supergirl teddy bear occupying a place of pride. In the center of the room, a mobile hung from the ceiling with a colorful rainbow of dragons handing from the arms above a beautifully carved crib covered with more of the strange symbols.

The sound of the crying came from the crib, and Nia went over too it and looked inside. The crib was empty except for a dull gray blanket. Nia frowned at the blanket. It seemed out of place in the cheerful, colorful room. She reached out and picked it up and dull gray dust slid off of it, revealing a silky soft red blanket.

Nia looked up at the sound of laughter. It came again, calling out to her, and she followed it, carrying the blanket with her. The sound led her back to the living room and out onto a rooftop. The roof was covered with grass and a line of coconut trees ran along the edge.

A boy with curly hair and a girl with a long ponytail ran across the grass, chasing a white dog with a red collar and a golden tag.

The scene might have been idyllic, if it weren’t for the red sky and the woman floating above them. She had long, dark hair and pale skin. Her face was covered by a black mask, a menacing mix of curves and angles. She wore a black cape and a black suit like the kind favored by most of the Kryptonians. There was even a symbol on the chest.

The symbol looked like Supergirl’s from a distance, but as Nia approached, she realized it was different. It had the same diamond-shaped border, but the S was missing, replaced by a skull, its mouth open as if it were screaming.

Nia’s eyes started to water, and she nearly choked on the smell of smoke. She looked over the side and saw the whole city burning.

Nia climbed out of bed and stumbled through her apartment in the dark to reach the bathroom. She flipped on the light, splashed some water on her face, and rubbed her eyes, trying to wake up.

She was really, really starting to hate her dreams. Especially that one.

She looked at herself in the mirror, wondering again what the dream meant. It was obviously tied to Supergirl, but she couldn’t figure out how. After she saw the images of the City of Hope, she’d recognized the symbols she saw on the crib and the rocking chairs as Kryptonian writing, but she couldn’t remember the symbols well enough to try to translate them. Except for one, which was the one symbol she couldn’t find. The glyph with the screaming skull. She’d gone through the Coats of Arms for all the great Houses. Then she’d gone through the minor Houses as well and she’d turned up nothing. She’d even talked to her mother about it, and her mother had just told her to stay away from the Kryptonians, which wasn’t very helpful when she was dreaming about one every few nights.

She had, for one insane moment asking President Marsdin to introduce her to Supergirl. The idea had died quickly, because she couldn’t figure out a single reason for an intern speech writer to need to meet with a Superhero who was also the de facto head of an alien government.

Maybe it was time she registered as an alien.

She shook her head at how ridiculous that idea was. If she registered, she would not only out her family, she’d be admitting that she lied on all sorts of paperwork she’d had to fill out to get her job and her security clearance. She’d be admitting to perjury. She’d go to jail.
She’d already decided she was willing to do all of that if it meant stopping something like the DEO bombing, or the CatCo shooting, but not for something so vague, so distant.

So, instead, she turned off the bathroom light and went back to bed.

Kara pressed a feather-light kiss to Cat’s forehead before she slipped out of bed. She paused, barely two steps towards the door as Cat shifted, reaching out towards the spot Kara had occupied a moment before. When Cat frowned, it was almost enough to make her crawl back into bed, just to kiss away the frown. Instead she pushed her pillow towards Cat’s hand. Cat grabbed the pillow and hugged it tightly.

“/zhao w rip/” Kara whispered before slipping out of the room.

She smiled as she stepped out onto the balcony a few moments later, because sure enough there was an enormous coconut tree laying near the pool on the roof. She lifted off, flying over the side of the building and floating down to the balcony of her apartment. She let herself in, and grabbed her laptop bag, her weighted blanket and a few other odds and ends before returning to Cat’s balcony and settling in, the weighted blanket tucked up under her arms.

She opened her laptop and fired off a quick email to Nimda with a few instructions, then fired up Word and started writing. Within a few minutes, she was so lost in her work that she didn’t notice Alice curling up next to her, pressed against her side with a contented purr.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth
*City of Hope*

dusylgiv
*a common food crop from the twilight regions of Krypton. The plants themselves are red, like a great deal of Kryptonian foliage, and produce a small, spherical grain which is similar to rye.*

kryptahniuo
*Kryptonian Language*

,ahr,go,jor,
*New Argo*

zehtiahr
*A Kryptonian unit of time roughly equal to 28.7 hours, or 1.20 Earth Days.*

shesur dhehraogh
*Kryptonian term which literally translates as “soul dead” and is used to refer to people who have suffered and injury which destroyed all of their memories and requires the retraining of their mind.*

udol shesur
*Literal: Bad Spirit*
Semantic: Asshole

eh shed kriglia
*bright one*

.:zhao w rrip
*I love you*
Sympathy for the Devil

Chapter Summary

Supergirl makes a Facebook post, Cat, Kara, Carter and Krypto spend some time together, Sam and Lena have a talk, Astra needs some adult supervision, and Susan hates her life and needs a drink.

Chapter Notes

Be sure you have author alerts turned on. A have a Supercat one shot going up later today as part of the Super Cat Smut Games.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

From Facebook

Supergirl Zor-El

Wednesday, December 30th, 2015

Since I caught that plane back in October, people have had a lot to say about me. They have called me a hero, they have called me a villain, they have called me greedy or vain, they have called me an inspiration and a menace to society. Mostly, I ignore it and try to get on with the business of trying to make the world a better place for everyone who lives in it.

Today, I feel the need to address one of the accusations that has been leveled against me. I’ve seen it written in editorials, blog posts and discussion forums and I’ve heard it said on the streets, in cafes, bars and on news shows that I think Krypton was better than Earth, and that Kryptonians are better than humans.

I won’t lie. There was a time when that was true. When I first arrived on your world, it seemed like everything about it was wrong. The sky was too bright, the days were too short, the sun moved constantly, the plants were the wrong color, and then there were the people. Everyone on this world was so brash. They stood too close and had no respect for personal space. Perfect strangers would touch you without asking. You would talk about things in public that most Kryptonians were barely willing to discuss behind closed doors. Your clothes were wrong, and every time I saw someone with the House of El Coat of Arms on their shirt, or their notebook, or their backpack, I wanted to scream.

I hated this world at first. I missed my home. I missed my family. My powers, my mannerisms, my faith and my language all made me an outcast, a stranger in a strange land, and I clung to the world I knew with the desperation and love of a child, convinced familiar meant better, and different meant worse.

Disillusionment, when it came, was a bitter pill to swallow, and I had to swallow it so many times.
As a child of wealth and privilege, I never walked in the squalor of the rankless slums. I never felt the arrogance of the Houses and the Guilds as they looked down their noses at me. I was never beaten by the police for showing ‘disrespect’. I never had my home or my livelihood destroyed to make room for some pointless monument to vanity, wealth and power. But those things and worse happened on Krypton, and my people did them.

When I remember my people, I remember the wise teachers, the gifted scientists, the devout priests, the gentle and loving family and the millennia of art and culture and history. I still look back with the longing and the love of a scared and lonely child who more than anything just wanted to go home. Because those are my memories, and that is the Krypton that I experienced.

It is said on my world that one of the things that distinguishes a child from an adult is the understanding that your experiences are only a very small piece of a much larger reality.

Last night, a piece of that larger reality reminded me of the other Krypton. The one outside of my childhood experiences. The Krypton where oppression and poverty and police brutality were a daily fact of life. The Krypton that wouldn’t seem remotely alien to any of the inner-city poor right here on Earth.

Last night, Non, the Kryptonian kidnapped by the same Cadmus terrorists who broke Sam Lane and James Harper out of a DEO holding facility during the National City Earthquake, was found.

Some of you may wonder what that has to do with whether or not I believe Krypton was better than Earth, or that Kryptonians are better than humans, but that’s because you don’t know Non the way I do.

There are things that you probably do know about Non. You probably know he’s a Kryptonian. You probably know that he’s a criminal.

There are things you might know about Non. You might know that he was guilty of the murder of a security guard on Krypton. You might know that he was still in prison because I recommended President Marsdin not pardon him alongside the other Fort Rozz Kryptonians. You might know that Non was married to my Aunt.

There are things you don’t know about Non.

You don’t know that he was born ninety-six years ago to a rankless family in the slums of Erkol. That his father died at the hands of the cops who were clearing the tenement where Non’s family lived so that it could be torn down to make way for a new family citadel for the House of Vex. That his mother sold everything she owned to pay for two transport tickets to Argo. That Non joined the military guild at the age of thirteen. That he sent his wages to his mother, who used them to build a business selling hand-made goods to the Houses as luxury items. That with his help, his mother became one of the most powerful and influential rankless merchants in Argo. That his mother became powerful enough to arrange a marriage to the daughter of a Great House.

You don’t know that he was respected in the Military Guild. That he inspired loyalty in his troops. That he was fiercely intelligent. That he was a gifted engineer. That he was kind to me when he visited my home alongside my Aunt Astra. That I used to laugh at the shadow puppets he would make to entertain me. That he was censured on five separate occasions for protecting rankless from police violence. That when he discovered that Krypton was on the verge of destruction, he sacrificed everything he had spent a lifetime building to join with my Aunt in an effort to save our world and save thirty billion lives.

You don’t know that Non’s mother was arrested for aiding and abetting fugitives. That she was
stripped of her wealth, her business and all her possessions and died in jail without ever standing trial.

You don’t know that the name of the woman Non murdered was Morla Taf-Vex. That she was barely fifteen years old.

You don’t know that my mother used me as the bait in a trap that caught my Aunt and resulted in the death or capture of her entire organization. That I am responsible for Non receiving life sentences on two worlds.

You don’t know the horror that is the Phantom Zone. What it’s like for a person to spend decades in a cage, alone and frightened, with only the silence and the dark, endless void for company.

You don’t know what it is like to land on a strange world, to have your body turn against you, to be assaulted by your own senses, be betrayed by gravity, and to be filled with an endless, insatiable hunger that gnaws at you constantly.

You don’t know what it is like to spend more than a decade working towards what you believe to be a good and noble end, only to have the daughter of the woman who cast you into hell show up and render all of your work useless, and all of the blood and sweat you put into it meaningless, to convince your leader and wife that it had all been a mistake, and to find yourself back in prison, with no hope of release.

I am not writing this to excuse the crime Non committed. He murdered someone. I believed he was more than capable of murdering again. I would have felt no guilt or remorse had Non remained in prison until he died of old age.

But that is not what happened. Cadmus kidnapped him. Cadmus tortured him. Cadmus gassed him with toxic minerals from his own home world and let them seep through his body until seventy-five percent of his brain was burned and destroyed.

Kryptonian medicine is advanced. We can heal the most grievous of wounds provided the injured person lives long enough to reach the Medical Halls. We have machines which can repair the physical structure of his brain.

What is forever lost, what can never be restored, is the man he was. The man who grew up in a slum. The man who loved his mother. The man who risked his career to defend the oppressed. The man who sacrificed everything in a vain effort to save thirty billion lives.

The man who was kind to a little girl and put shadow puppets on the wall to bring a smile to her face.

That man is dead.

Some will say that is a good thing. That Non was a criminal and a murderer and the world is better off without him.

Some will say that he got what he deserved.

I do not believe that.

I look at Non, and I remember what it was like to have nothing and be in a world that is hostile to your very existence. I look at Non, and I remember a too-bright sky and too-short days, the constantly moving sun and plants that were the wrong color and people that stood too close and spoke casually of things that brought a blush to my face. I look at Non, and I remember every
moment this world hurt me, and every time I wanted to scream and couldn’t, and every time I didn’t want to cry and couldn’t stop myself.

I look at Non, and I think of Krypton, and I think of Earth, and I remember that I left one without ever facing the pain and cruelty it could inflict on you. I look at Non, and I remember that however much I loved my home and in spite of the privilege I was born into, if I had grown up there, if it had not been wiped from the stars, Krypton would not have been kind to woman I would have become.

I look at Non, and I think of Earth, and I remember that however much I loved my home and in spite of the privilege I was born into, if I had grown up there, if it had not been wiped from the stars, Krypton would not have been kind to woman I would have become.

I look at Non, and I remember the birds.

When I first arrived here, I hated this world and everything about it, except for the birds. Krypton had creatures who could fly, who filled the same ecological niche, but we didn’t have birds. I would stare up at them in wonder for hours. I would sit and day dream about flying with them, about following them off to some place far away, where the leaves were scarlet, and there were sweet green fruits and the sun stood still in the sky. In the middle of everything that was so wrong with this world, I found one thing to love, and that was enough. Because love spreads. It spreads to the stray cat who sits shyly on the edge of the porch and begs for food. It spreads to the boy who was kind to you in one of your classes. It spreads to the girl you hated for years, who suddenly becomes your best friend and the center of your world. It spreads to the man you meet on your way to a job interview. It spreads to the girl who does something stupid to make you laugh when you’re having a really bad day and ends up being the first girl you ever kiss, the first girl you ever fall in love with, the first person you give your heart to unreservedly. It spreads to so many people and so many things and it brings hope and joy with it.

I cannot forget that whatever else he was, whatever crimes he committed, Non had the capacity for love and hope, and I cannot forget that those things can heal even the most broken of people.

People say that I believe that Krypton was better than Earth, and I shake my head, because they’re wrong. Like Earth, Krypton was beautiful, and warm, and wonderous, and majestic, and kind, and cruel, and cold, and harsh, and ugly, and terrifying. Krypton could nurture a child, let her grow and learn and surround her with love and kindness. Krypton could take a man who was once kind and loving, and break him, make him bitter, and turn him into a killer. Earth could take a small girl, scared, alone, filled with unending grief and pain and loneliness, and surround her with love and fill her with hope. Earth could take a wounded man and break him utterly, give him over to horrors, let him die, alone and screaming, at the hands of his tormenters.

People say that I believe that Kryptonians are better than humans, and I shake my head, because they are wrong. Kryptonians can be kind and loving and gentle and wise. They can soothe a crying child, they can help a sick stranger to the hospital. They can rescue a woman and her child trapped in a burning car. They can hold their sister while she grieves for the father they’ve both lost. Kryptonians can be cruel, and cold, and brutal, and evil. The can drive the poor from their homes. They can ignore pain and suffering. They can turn a blind eye to injustice. And yes, they can murder. Humans can be kind, and loving, and gentle, and wise. They can take in an orphan. They can make friends with a stranger. They can comfort a scared woman. They can forgive you when you’ve made a horrible mistake. Humans can be cruel, and cold, and brutal, and evil. They can steal from the elderly. They can mock someone for being different. They can hate someone for an accident of birth. And yes, they can murder.

As I child, I was convinced that my world and my people were better than this world and the people here. Then I grew up, and I learned the truth. Your world and my world, and your people and my people are different, but different does not mean better or worse. Both have within them a limitless capacity for good and evil, for kindness and cruelty, for mercy and brutality. Both of them are wonderful, and neither of them is without flaw.
But this world, your world, is the world we all have to live in. It is the world that Non, whoever he becomes after his brain is healed and his mind is retrained, will have to live in. I hope that Earth will be kinder to this new Non than Krypton was to the old one.

Tonight, at sunset, my people will gather above /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ and we will say the prayer for the dead in honor of the Non that was. We will place a token of his life in a coffin, and we will commit his spirit to the long journey through shadow into Rao’s eternal light, and we will begin the period of mourning. For eighteen days, we will remember, and we will pray to light our brother’s path home.

I will not ask you to join us. Non was a stranger to you. But I will ask that you take a moment to remember a man who was as capable of good as he was of evil, who tried to make to save the world, even if he went about it in the wrong way, and who never got a chance to change, to make amends, because the hatred and cruelty of others took that chance from him. And perhaps to spare a prayer to your gods for his safe passage through their realm.

The Prayer for the Dead.

/.non rraop w tiv ehl i ehrosho im
.nim i enaiehdo w tiv ehl :divili iovis w i giehrehd tiv ehrosh zehdh ath
.paii kryp w rraop :zehtiahzrhimuju gem
.skulir bim w tiv zil serni kryp w rraop tiv ehsh gem
.nahzhgehni ,rao, i rregrhahs w shokh/
(You have been the sun of our lives.
Our prayers will be the sun that lights your way on the journey home.
We will remember you in every dawn.
And await the night we join you in the sky.
Rao’s will be done.)

“Well this is new,” Cat said as she stepped out onto the balcony.

Kara looked up from her laptop and smiled at Cat. “You like it?”

“I said I wanted you to clean up the coconut tree. Not turn the roof into a day spa for it and twenty of its closest friends,” Cat said.

“Twenty-three of its closest friends,” Kara said, looking out over the roof of the Solarium, which was now covered in a thick, lush layer of grass and had twenty-four coconut trees spread out around it. “Nimda was careful not to disrupt the views from your bedroom or office when she laid them out.”

“If that dog tries to bring them into the house…” Cat said in a warning tone.

“He won’t,” Kara said. “Krypto’s really smart. He’s just a brat. When he gets upset with Kal, he will fetch cars, then sit there and watch and laugh as Kal goes crazy trying to figure out where the car came from.”
“Really?” Cat asked.

“Oh yeah. It’s hilarious. He keeps thinking of Krypto as a dog, but the average Kryptonian hound’s IQ is somewhere around 130, and Krypto’s is probably higher than that,” Kara said.

Cat narrowed her eyes. “That little shit was retaliating for me telling him to get his fuzzy ass off the sofa.”

Kara snorted. “Yeah,” she said. “That sounds about right.” She watched for a minute, seeing the wheels turning behind Cat’s eyes, and wondered how much trouble Krypto was in. Whatever revenge Cat was going to inflict, it apparently didn’t take long to plan though, because Cat leaned down and kissed Kara on the top of the head.

“I missed you,” she said. “I don’t like waking up to find you gone.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara said. “I hated leaving you, but I had something I needed to do.”

“What would that be?” Cat asked.

“Supergirl made a Facebook post,” Kara said.

“I still say you should have let me set up a Supergirl blog on the CatCo website,” Cat said.

“You already get all the exclusive interviews,” Kara said.

“One of which you still owe me,” Cat said. “Don’t think I’ve forgotten.”

“I’d never make that mistake,” Kara said.

Cat waved her hand, and Alice vanished, leaving an empty space on the Chaise Longue where Kara was sitting. Kara took the hint and held up the blanket as Cat sat down next to her.

“Show me,” Cat said.

Kara reached for her laptop, and sat it on her lap, opening it and typing her password one-handed before passing it over to Cat. Cat took the laptop, pulled up Facebook, and started reading. Kara leaned in, tilting her head to rest against Cat’s and closing her eyes while she waited.

It took a while, as Cat read the post, making small noises here and there. A younger, less experienced Kara would have been biting her nails every moment, but those days were in the past. Instead, she just took the time to savor the quiet moment, Cat in her arms, the sun on her face, and a new day in front of her.

“This is good,” Cat said, waking Kara out of a light doze. Kara lifted her head and turned to smile at Cat.

“You think so?” Kara asked.

“I do, love,” Cat said.

Kara smiled. “I will never get tired of hearing you call me that,” she said.

“That’s good,” Cat said, “because I don’t think I’ll get tired of saying it anytime soon.”

Kara leaned in, covering Cat’s lips with her own and moaning softly as Cat kissed her back.
A loud bark interrupted them and they both broke away from the kiss, turning just as Krypto shot past them out onto the lawn, barking and yipping as he danced around on the grass. Kara considered heat-visioning his furry ass right off the building, until she heard something else.

“Mom?” Carter called.

“Out here, sweetheart,” Cat said.

Kara smiled as Carter came into view. “Hey, buddy,” she said. “Sorry I borrowed your mom before breakfast.”

Carter smiled. “That’s okay,” he said. “I can leave you guys alone for a while if you want.”

“Are you kidding?” Kara asked. “Come on. There’s plenty of room.” Kara lifted the blanket as she and Cat slid apart. Carter hesitated for a moment, but Kara patted the seat, and he climbed in, settling between Kara and Cat. Kara spread the blanket back over both of them, getting a slight grunt from Carter who hadn’t been expecting the weight.

“What is this?” Carter asked.

“It’s a weighted blanket,” Kara said. “It’s not too heavy is it?”

“No,” Carter said. “I kind of like it.”

“Me too,” Kara said. “It’s kind of like getting a hug all the time.”

“Yeah,” Carter said. “What happened to the roof?”

“I figured anyone can bring their girlfriend flowers,” Kara said. “If I wanted to impress your mom, I’d have to up my game.”

“Uh huh,” Carter said. He looked over at Cat. “Did it work?”

“Not even a little bit,” Cat said.

“Hmph! Fine. Be that way. See if I buy you any more global media empires,” Kara said.

“I promise I’ll be impressed if you buy me Disney,” Carter said.

“How about we buy you Disney tickets?” Kara said.

“I don’t think Rey hangs out in the park,” Carter said. “But if I owned Disney, I’d probably be able to set up a set visit for Episode VIII.”

“You know, let’s see what we can do without spending a hundred billion dollars, okay?” Kara said.

Carter let out a deep sigh. “Fine…”

Kara laughed and looked up at Cat, seeing the smirk on her face.

“Hey, do you guys have to go into work today?” Carter asked.

“I’m afraid so, sweetheart,” Cat said.

“Okay,” Carter said, and Kara could hear the disappointment in his voice.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said. “I know I’ve been kind of taking up all your mom’s time the last few days.”
“It’s okay,” Carter said. “I know you’ve had Supergirl stuff going on.”

Kara stared at Carter for a moment in complete terror before her eyes shot up to Cat.

“Oh, did I forget to mention that Carter and Ruby both figured out that you’re Supergirl?” Cat asked.

Kara glared at Cat for just a moment, but then sighed and shrugged. “I kinda gave it away when you kissed me Christmas night, didn’t I?”

“Well, I think Maggie’s family might have noticed,” Cat said, “But Carter had you figured out way before then.”

“The glasses aren’t that great a disguise, are they?” Kara asked.

“No,” Cat and Carter both said.

“The hair is a good trick though,” Carter said. “Is it a wig?”

“It’s magic,” Kara said. “Have you met Zatanna yet?”

“The lady who moved in last week and wears a tuxedo everywhere?” Carter asked.

“That’s her. She taught me a bit of magic. Watch this,” Kara said. “elprup!”

“That is so cool!” Carter said as Kara’s hair turned purple.

“Nrubua,” Kara said, shifting her hair back to the auburn she wore in her non-Supergirl hours.

“Do you think she’d teach me how to do that?” Carter asked.

“That’s a good question,” Cat said. “I’d save a fortune on foundation.”

“I’ll ask,” Kara said. “It might be a while though. She’s adding magical defenses to the building, to CatCo, to the new DEO tower, and to /rzhygrhahs im shahrrehth/, so she’s kind of busy, but she might be able to fit you in while she works with Leslie and Lucy.”

“Leslie and Lucy?” Cat asked. “You’re getting Zatanna to teach them magic?”

“Just a small illusion spell. Blue hair, black lips, white skin for Leslie. Maybe a slightly different face. Something like this. Eel Adnil,” Kara said, and suddenly Linda Lee was sitting in her place.

“ Enough to allow her to maintain a secret identity. The same thing for Lucy. We’re thinking Blonde hair.”

The expression on Cat’s face was a frightening thing to behold.

“Red hair?” Kara asked. “Black, greasy hair, green skin and warts?”

Kara heard a small noise from the yard and turned to see Krypto trying his best to look like he wasn’t laughing at her, but the way his tail was wagging gave him away.

“Kara?” Carter asked.

Kara turned to Carter. “Yes?”

“Would you like a shovel to help you dig that hole?” he asked.

Kara stared at him, then looked up at Cat who could barely contain her laughter.
“This is how it’s going to be with you two, huh?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Carter said.

“Absolutely,” Cat said.

Kara wanted to glare or pout, but she couldn’t quite manage to get the smile off her face.

“Cat?” Kara asked.

“Yes, love?”

“You think we could manage a half day?” Kara asked.

“If there are no surprises,” Cat said.

“In that case, how would both of you like to meet my daughter?”

“What do you think I should do?” Lena asked.

“How the fuck should I know?” Sam asked in a slightly hysterical tone as she paced back and forth in Lena’s living room. It was still early yet, but neither of them had slept, and the exhaustion showed on both of their faces. “Jesus fucking Christ, we never should have gotten on that plane.”

“Sam,” Lena said.

Sam turned towards her. “This is crazy, Lena.”

“I know,” Lena said.

“I mean, I know you want to save the world and get the girl, but this is some next-level bullshit,” Sam said.

“Sam-”

“I mean, it was one thing when it was just your mother and her anti-alien crazy train, but I’m a freaking soccer mom. An incredibly hot soccer mom, but a soccer mom, and you’re a businesswoman, and we should be sitting on my couch drinking crappy soccer mom booze and bitching about how long it’s been since either of us have gotten laid, and staring at each other and wondering if we should try dating again before we both come to our senses and remember what a hot mess we were, and wondering if we can get away with watching an episode of the Orange is the New Black so we can stare at Laura Prepon’s tits without Ruby catching us. We shouldn’t be sitting here discussing an interstellar war. Unless we’re debating whether Rey or Padme is hotter.”

“SAM!” Lena shouted.

“What?” Sam shouted back.

“You need to calm down,” Lena said.

“Look, I just found out that the world might end, and the only person who can stop it is a woman who thinks shopping at Old Navy and catching missiles with her face are good ideas. Give me five minutes to freak the fuck out, okay!” Sam said.

“Do you feel better now?” Lena asked.
“Much!” Sam said as she dropped down onto the sofa next to Lena. “What the fuck are we going to do?”

“I don’t know,” Lena said. “That’s why you’re here.”

Sam closed her eyes. “Call your girlfriend,” she said.

It was just past 7:15 AM when Astra walked into the City of Flowers. The flower shop was one of the first businesses to open in /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ that wasn’t run by an attendant and a group of drones. It did a thriving business in both Earth and alien flowers, and it was one of the few flower shops open so early.

“Good morning, ma’am,” the blue skinned Havanian woman behind the counter said, giving a slight spread of the wings. Astra returned the gesture by flaring her arms out briefly.

“Wind fill your wings, Miss,” Astra said.

The Havanian’s face lit up with a huge smile. “Thank you! I am Bliix. How might I help you?”

“I require advice,” Astra said. “It’s my understanding that humans give flowers as tokens of affection.”

“Yes,” Bliix said. “But normally, the gift is given to the woman in the exchange.”

“The human I wish to give them to is a woman,” Astra said.

“Ah,” Bliix said. “Forgive me. I find it best to state such details quickly. Human males have such fragile senses of masculinity that a woman giving them flowers is often enough to destroy their interest in the interaction.”

Astra laughed. “Kryptonian men are little different. Puffed-up creatures with fragile egos. But my requirements are specific, and I understand there is something of a language to this.”

“Indeed,” Bliix said. “What message do you wish to convey?”

“I wish to court this woman,” Astra said, “but I cannot begin for a period of time. I wish to express my gratitude for her patience, and my anticipation of the happiness our courtship will bring me.”

“Oh!” Bliix said. “A complex message, indeed. But it can be done!” She closed her eyes, and her wings flapped in thought.

“Hmmm…. Hmmm…. Yes. YES! I have it. Eleven roses always tells the recipient they are truly and deeply loved. Yellow roses are for friendship. Red are for love and passion. The combination means joy, happiness, and excitement. Anemones for anticipation. Campanula for gratitude. I see it. Six yellow roses in bloom. Five red rosebuds for love that is not yet but soon will be. Six anemones to stand for your anticipation of that moment, and six campanula to stand for your gratitude that she will wait for you. It will be wonderful!” Bliix said with a flap of her wings.

“How quickly can it be done?” Astra asked.

“Very quickly!” Bliix said, bouncing lightly on her feet and twitching her wings. “Shall I make it ready?”

“Please,” Astra said. Bliix did an excited little jump step as she rushed off, gathering flowers from various pots and bringing them back to the front. It was the work of a few minutes for her to arrange
the blossoms carefully and neatly and wrap them.

“You need them safe to fly with, yes?” Bliix asked.

“Please,” Astra said.

Bliix disappeared in back, and returned with a large box, placing the arrangement inside.

“Will you be delivering them in person?” Bliix asked.

“I will,” Astra said.

“Then a card is not expected,” Bliix said. She closed the box and set it on the counter.

“How much?” Astra asked.

Bliix stepped up to the register and rang up the flowers. “$80.99,” she said.

Astra reached into her pocket, taking out the wallet, and retrieving one of the credit cards Kara had given her. As she handed it over, her phone rang with the tone she’d assigned for Lena. She smiled as she answered the call, wondering if Lena was early, and impatient for her presence.

“Good morning, Bright One,” Astra said as she leaned over to sign the receipt.

“Astra, could you come by my apartment?” Lena said.

“I’ve already left the building,” Astra said. “I thought we were meeting at L-Corp at seven thirty.”

“Something has happened,” Lena said.

Astra straightened up, fear creeping in. “Are you in danger?” she asked.

“No,” Lena said. “No. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to alarm you. This is just something I would feel more comfortable talking about here, where I can be sure no one will overhear us.”

“I will be there shortly,” Astra said.

“Thank you,” Lena said.

Astra ended the call, and took her credit card back from Bliix, returning it to her wallet, and her wallet to her pocket.

“I wish you well, now and in your courtship. May the currents carry you far,” Bliix said with another flair of her wings.

Astra spread her arms again. “May the currents carry you far,” she said. She picked up the box of flowers, and left the shop, leaving behind the bright, cheerful woman, and leapt into the sky, heading towards the Solarium.

Lena looked over at the door at the sound of the buzzer. She stood up, and walked over, glancing at the monitor to confirm it was Astra before she opened the door.

“Hello,” Astra said as she held out a bouquet of flowers. It was a dazzling mix of yellow, red, white and purple, all stunningly arranged. “These are for you.”

“Oh,” Lena said, completely taken off guard. She reached up, taking the flowers, not able to stop
herself from smiling. “They’re lovely.”

“As are you, Bright One,” Astra said.

Lena felt her cheeks flush and she glanced up from the flowers, giving Astra a shy smile.

“For fuck’s sake, stop flirting like a middle-schooler and tell her to come in,” Sam yelled.

Lena closed her eyes and bit her lower lip, trying to decide whether the momentary joy of throwing Sam off the balcony would be worth having to explain to Ruby that she was an orphan because her mother was a smart ass.

“Please,” Lena said, “come inside.” She opened her eyes as she stepped back, admiring the sight of Astra walking into her apartment in one of the three-piece suits she wore so well.

“Hello, Sam,” Astra said as she stepped inside.

“Have a seat,” Lena said. “Vincent.”

“Yes, Ms. Luthor?” Lena’s attendant said.

“Place these flowers in a vase, please,” Lena said.

“Of course, Ms. Luthor,” Vincent said.

Lena handed the floors over somewhat reluctantly, and headed over to the couch, taking a seat next to Astra.

“You said something had happened,” Astra prompted.

“My mother contacted me last night,” Lena said.

Lena wouldn’t have believed it was possible, but Astra’s posture became even more upright, and her eyes began searching over Lena in a way Lena knew both Astra and Kara used to check for injuries.

“Are you hurt?” she asked. “Was she here? Why didn’t you call me immediately?”

“It was just an email,” Lena said, reaching out and placing a hand on Astra’s arm. “I’m okay. I was never in any danger.”

Astra visibly relaxed. “What did she have to say?”

Lena reached into her pocket and pulled out her phone. She opened up the email and passed the phone over to Astra.

Astra read it with a frown on her face. “Lied to about what?” she asked as she looked up at Lena.

“Play the video,” Lena said.

Astra looked back down at the phone, and tapped the video, and Lena could see from the expression on her face that she knew exactly what it was the moment it began to play. She didn’t even let the first words get out of Kara’s mouth. She just scrubbed to the end of the video to see where it cut off.

Astra let out a sigh. “We suspected she had this, but the confirmation will be helpful.” She looked up at Lena. “I imagine you must have questions.”
“Uh, yeah…” Sam said. “We have a bunch.”

“A moment,” Astra said. “Vincent, put me through to Nimda please.”

“Of course, Lady Astra,” Vincent said.

“Yes, Lady Astra?” Nimda said.

“Nimda, conference please. I will need Kara, Susan and J’onn,” Astra said.

“Vasquez here,” Susan said.

“What can I do for you General?” J’onn asked.

“Hey, Astra,” Kara said.

“I require Adult Supervision,” Astra said.

“SON OF A MOTHER FUCKING PUNK-ASS BITCH!” Susan said.

“/!:.zhao\odh w tov do\vrro\sho/, Susan, watch your language!” Kara said. “Carter heard that! OW! What did you hit me for?”

“Because I speak Kryptonian and know what you just said in front of my son,” Cat said.

“Oh,” Kara said. “I’ll just go in the other room.”

“Give me a minute Astra,” Susan said.

Lena, Astra and Sam all waited with varying degrees of patience for about three minutes.

“I’m clear,” Kara said.

“Me too,” Susan said a moment later.

“Lillian emailed the video to Lena Luthor,” Astra said.

The sound of Susan sighing echoed through the apartment. “What’s the rest of it?” Susan said, and Lena winced at the weary tone in her voice.

“Sam Arias has also seen it,” Astra said.

“Of course she has,” Susan said. “Are they on the conference with you?”

“They are,” Astra said.

“Kara, how do you want to handle this?” Susan asked.

“I’ll go talk to them,” Kara said. “We should have done it before now anyway.”

“I know,” Susan said. “But none of us can avoid getting blown the fuck up long enough to catch a breath.”

“Yeah, which honestly brings up another point,” Kara said. “It might be time to read in the rest of the Kryptonians.”

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” Susan said.
“No,” Kara said, “but I think if they knew what was at stake, they would have a much better understanding of why I’m making the decisions I am.”

“I hate it when you’re right,” Susan said.

“I know,” Kara said. “It’s almost as bad as when I’m wrong.”

“You said it,” Susan said. “When do you want to do this?”

“No time like the present,” Kara said. “My plans for the day are shot anyway.”

“Can you handle it alone?” Susan asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I mean, I’d rather kiss Rip Hunter than go through all of this again, but when have I ever had a choice?”

“We could probably spare Alex and Maggie,” J’onn said.

“I appreciate the thought,” Kara said, “but if I’m pulling the Kryptonians from the field, you, Alex, Maggie and Lucy are going to have to cover the high-impact missions for the First Responder network.”

“Good point,” J’onn said. “I could probably get M’gann to help out.”

“No, because this is the last fucking time I’m doing this shit. I’m pulling in M’gann, Koriand’r, Donna Troy, Cassie Sandmark, Gar Logan and Raven while I’m at it.”

“Understood,” J’onn said.

“Confirmed,” Susan said. “I’ll tap Diana to fill in for the first responder calls as well.”

“Good,” Kara said.

“Ms. Luthor, are you there?” Susan said.

“Yes,” Lena said.

“I feel like I should point out that if not for my specific veto of your presence, you would have been in the room the night that video was made. I had concerns about you because of your last name, and for that, I apologize. I can only say that, given the nature of the information that was to be disclosed, and I don’t just mean Kara’s little TED Talk, but also the identities of a great many people whose safety and security depends on anonymity, I felt it a prudent precaution. Kara had informed me weeks ahead of that date that you had her complete and total trust, so your exclusion is *entirely* on my head, and I hope you can forgive me for that decision. I should have corrected it before now,” Susan said.

“Thank you, Agent Vasquez,” Lena said.

“You’re welcome, Ms. Luthor. Now, if you will excuse me, I need to go explain to my boss that we need to revisit the DEO policy regarding workplace consumption of alcohol if I’m going to be expected to work under these conditions. Vasquez out.”

“General, Ms. Luthor, Ms. Arias, I’m going to exit the line as well,” J’onn said. “Thank you for bringing this to our attention.”

“Of course, Director,” Lena said.
“Lena, I’ll be down in a few minutes. I just need to have a word with Cat and Carter and make a few calls first,” Kara said. “Call Eve and let her know you’ll be out of pocket for the day. Sam, you will be as well. The Nannies can bring Ruby up to Cat’s for the day.”

“Oh okay,” Sam said.

“I hope the two of you don’t mind sitting through the video again,” Kara said. “These briefings involve me reliving a lot of really horrible crap, and today will be the sixth time in three months. I want to make sure it’s the last.”

“Oh of course,” Lena said. “We understand.”

“Thank you, Lena,” Kara said. “You’ve always been a great friend.”

“Nimda, end conference,” Astra said. She looked over at Lena. “I am sorry I couldn’t say anything, but this was not my secret to tell.”

“I understand,” Lena said. “But is there anything else you’re keeping from me?”

“Nothing I am keeping from you, but something I do wish to discuss while we wait,” Astra said.

“I’ll just go let Ruby know I’m going to be gone for the day,” Sam said.

Lena smiled at Sam in thanks as she got up to leave. Once she was gone, Lena turned back to Astra.

“We located Non,” Astra said. “I’m not entirely sure how to describe his condition in your language. His mind is gone, and the memories cannot be restored. Physically, we will be able to restore the structure of his brain, but he will be like an infant. His mind will have to be completely retrained.”

“I’m sorry,” Lena said. “My mother did that?”

“Yes,” Astra said. “With our level of medical technology, the situation is not unprecedented on Krypton. I’m told it’s not entirely unprecedented on Earth, either. However, we have long since codified how it is dealt with. Legally, the man who was my husband is dead, and thus, our bond is dissolved. While this is not the way I had hoped it would happen, it means that I will be free to court you, once I have observed the mourning period.”

“This is what you wanted to talk about this morning?” Lena said.

“Yes,” Astra said. “To tell you that my intentions have not changed and ask if you would be kind enough to wait.”

“Of course I will,” Lena said. “How long will I be waiting?”

“The formal mourning period is fifteen /zeitiahro/. Eighteen of your days,” Astra said. “Time enough to show respect for the dead, and to send prayers to light their journey home to Rao’s light.”

“Oh okay,” Lena said. “Is it still okay for me to kiss you?”

“If we were on Krypton, I would have to say no,” Astra said. “But as Kara has reminded me, this is not Krypton.”

“Good to know,” Lena said as she leaned forward to claim Astra’s lips.

Chapter End Notes
Translated from the Kryptonian

city of hope

You have been the sun of our lives.
Our prayers will be the sun that lights your way on the journey home.
We will remember you in every dawn.
And await the night we join you in the sky.
Rao's will be done.

Fucking Hell!

A Kryptonian unit of time equal to 1.20 Earth Days.
Family Moments

Chapter Summary

Winn and Cat have a talk. Kara, Cat and Carter take a trip to the Genesis Chamber, Astra and Lena have a quiet moment, Sam spends some time with Ruby, and Alex asks Kara for a favor.

Chapter Notes

In case anyone missed it, I published a new Supercat One Shot called To The Rescue. Go read it. It's good.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wednesday, December 30, 2015

Somehow, Cat wasn’t surprised when Winn turned up at her door. She was a little surprised when he closed the doors to her office, then came over and sat down in one of the chairs in front of her desk.

“I realize I’m probably about to get fired for coming in here like this, but before you destroy my career and crush me like a bug, hear me out.”

“Okay,” Cat said. “I suppose I can take a minute to enjoy your pleas for mercy.”

“I spent some time in the foster system when I was younger. I had a foster sister I really liked. Things got really bad for her at one point. It got out that she was gay, and the kids in our school were tormenting her. It got so bad, she tried to kill herself.

“Afterwards, everyone was there to support her. Our foster parents, the social worker, even some of the people at school. It was good for her to have all of those people who cared about her doing everything they could to take care of her. But what I remember was how hard it was. I almost lost someone I cared about, and no one talked to me about it. No one checked on me to see how I felt. And I felt like I couldn’t say anything, like I couldn’t ask for help, because it would be selfish. Because we should all be focusing on helping her get well.

“Right now, everyone is focused on Kara, asking about Kara, worrying about Kara, making sure Kara is okay. But I keep thinking about what it was like for me, and what it must be like for you. I don’t know if anyone has asked you yet if you’re okay. So, I’m here, asking. Are you okay?”

Cat couldn’t stop herself from smiling, touched that he cared enough to open up like that, and to take such a huge risk coming into her office the way he did.

“Well,” she said, “I might not be my usual unbelievably magnificent self, but Kara and I had a talk about what happened, and about how I felt about it, and we’re both seeing a therapist we can be completely honest with.”
“That’s good,” Winn said. “But if you need someone to talk to, a friend…”

“I know where to find you,” Cat said. “And Winn.”

“Yeah?”

“Thank you for asking.”

“Any time.”

“Well, not any time,” Cat said. “I presume you do still do some actual work around here.”

Winn smiled. “I’m going to go play with my dolls before you change your mind about firing me,” he said. He stood up and headed for the door.

He’d made it about half-way there, when Cat said, “Action figures.”

Cat frowned and looked up at the sound of muttering running through the bullpen, only to see Kara and Leslie come into view a moment later.

“Hey, Cat,” Leslie said as they entered the office. “I found her wandering around loose and figured I’d bring her back.”

“Thank you,” Cat said. “She does have a bad habit of running off.”

“You might want to think about a collar,” Leslie said. “Maybe a leash.”

Kara gave Leslie a backhanded smack and a glare.

“Oh, I’ve thought about it,” Cat said. Kara stumbled, and Cat had to bite her lower lip to keep from laughing at the expression on Kara’s face, which was about halfway between scandalized and turned on. She reached over and hit the button that closed the doors, blacked out the windows and sound-proofed the office.

“How’d it go?” Cat asked.

“It went,” Kara said as she and Leslie sat down in the chairs in front of Cat’s desk.

“I thought that Kori chick was going to burn the place down,” Leslie said.

“I can’t say I blame her,” Kara said. “When I found out the Guardians were responsible for the destruction of Krypton, I wanted to bring them back, just so I could kill them myself.”

“Kori is Starfire?” Cat asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “She’s a Tamaranian princess. The Guardians are behind her exile and they turned her sister into her bitter enemy. She’s got good reason to hate them.”

“Why are all Superhero origin stories so melodramatic?” Leslie asked. “Why is it never, ‘some jerk snatched my grandma’s purse?’”

“Because most purse snatchings aren’t a big deal,” Kara said. “It takes a lot of trauma before your damaged enough to think that putting on a Halloween costume and punching bad guys in the face qualifies as a good life choice.”
“Kind of scary what that says about you,” Leslie said.

“Hey, you’re out there too,” Kara said.

“Yeah, but I’m getting paid,” Leslie said, “and the costume was your idea.”

“Good points. I hate them,” Kara said.

“When you two are done,” Cat said, not able to stop herself from smiling at the playful grins on Leslie and Kara’s faces, “I’d like to know how Sam and Lena took it.”

“Sam was a little freaked out,” Kara said. “Lena wanted to know why I was so sure Lillian ordered Henshaw to kill her. I told her there was security footage of the whole thing.”

“Please tell me you didn’t show her the footage,” Cat said, already knowing the answer.

“I did,” Kara said. “I spent fifteen minutes trying to talk her out of it, but once she found out I had a copy, she wouldn’t let it go.”

Cat sighed, but she didn’t say anything because she knew, in Lena’s place, she would have done the same thing.

“Where is she now?” Cat asked.

“She’s at home,” Kara said. “Astra is with her.”

“Well, that’s good,” Cat said. “Are you two just stopping in before you head off to rescue kittens trapped in trees?”

“Already did that,” Leslie said, puffing up a bit. “I zapped a group of bank robbers, and Sunshine put out two fires and helped clear an accident downtown.”

“I also have the social media situation covered, too, so I’m free until about five if you can get away,” Kara said.

“Give me five minutes,” Cat said. “Why don’t you call Carter and tell him we’re on our way.”

“I’ll leave you two love birds alone,” Leslie said. “Try not to scar the kid.” She got up and dropped a hand on Kara’s shoulder, giving it a quick squeeze as she passed by.

“Call me if you need me, Sunshine,” she said on her way out.

Lena poured herself a generous glass of the Ardbeg 10 Year before walking over and sitting down next to Astra. She sipped the scotch in silence as she tried to get a grip on her emotions. She jumped slightly when Astra slipped an arm around her.

“Is this okay?” Astra asked.

“Very,” Lena said, leaning into Astra. “I’m just not used to anyone wanting to touch me.”

“I’m not sure I’ll be able to stop myself, once I’m free to do so,” Astra said. Lena was a little surprised when Astra pressed a kiss to her temple a moment later. “I am sorry, Lena.”

“You don’t have anything to be sorry for,” Lena said. “It does explain why you were so upset when you found out about my mother trying to kidnap me. You knew.”
“I would have been terrified had it been anyone,” Astra said. “Knowing what I do, the news that she got so close was enough to make my heart stop.”

Lena closed her eyes and shifted closer to Astra. “I knew Kara was holding things back, but I never imagined it was something like this.”

“I admit there is a part of me that wishes you never had to find out,” Astra said. “I know you are strong, and I know your mind will be a great asset to the war effort, but I also know the toll such secrets take on those who keep them. I would not wish that on anyone, but you, least of all.”

Lena rested her head on Astra’s shoulder. “Eighteen days suddenly feels like forever,” she said.

“I am sorry, /eh shed krigdia/,” Astra said. “I wish I had dealt with the matter long ago, but I never imagined I would meet someone who would make me feel the way I do when I am with you.”

Lena let out a small laugh. “Flatterer,” she said. “I bet you say that to all your lovers.”

“I’ve never taken a lover before,” Astra said. “I saw it enough, in the Guild. I knew it was something I was supposed to want, but a few fumbling kisses in the barracks was enough to let me know I didn’t care for the touch of men.”

Lena lifted her head to look at Astra. “But you were married.”

“Marriage on Krypton for a member of a Great House was more of a business arrangement than a declaration of affection. When we reached an age where our biological drive was an issue, our attendants instructed us on how to relieve the urge ourselves, and once the marriage is complete, it’s acceptable to take lovers as long as one is discreet, and no shame is brought on the Houses. Love and romance were considered anything from fanciful notions to vices,” Astra said.

“But you have rules for courtship,” Lena said.

“When a society has fifteen thousand years of recorded history, much of it awash in the blood of our fathers, you have rules for everything,” Astra said. “But the rules concerning courtship are more practical than you might expect. Lovers are allowed, but the one immutable rule of courtship on Krypton is that you if you take someone as a lover while you are still bound to someone else, you may never bond with them.”

“Because marriages are business arrangements,” Lena said. “If there was a temptation to divorce in order to marry your lover, then taking a lover would become a danger to those arrangements. And when it happened, people would lose money.”

“Wars were fought over such things. Lovers were murdered to remove the threat. Spouses were murdered to clear the path. The rule was a dam against chaos,” Astra said.

“That’s why you want to wait?” Lena said.

“Yes,” Astra said. “I don’t know if I will make the sort of lover who will make you happy. If I’m honest, I didn’t even recognize that my feelings for you were romantic in nature until Kara confronted me about it. But once I did understand, I wanted all of it. Or at least, the chance to have all of it.”

Lena leaned forward and set the glass of scotch on the coffee table, then straightened back up and looked at Astra again. “Eighteen days is going to be a very long time,” Lena said.

“I’ve waited eighty-one years for you,” Astra said. “I think the next eighteen days will feel longer
than all of it, but you are worth it.”

The flash of the transmat faded away, leaving Kara, Cat and Carter behind. Kara glanced over at Cat and Carter and smiled as she saw the looks on their faces as they took in the entry hall of the Genesis Chamber.

“Cool, huh?” Kara asked.

“Yeah!” Carter said.

“It’s a replica of the Genesis Chamber in Argo City,” Kara said.

“IT’s beautiful,” Cat said.

Kara smiled a little wider as she reached out, taking Cat’s hand. “Come on,” she said. Cat took Carter’s hand and Kara lead them over to the sentry station.

“Greetings, Lady Kara,” the drone at the station said.

“Hey,” Kara said. “I need two pass disks.”

“One moment,” the drone said as it turned towards a cabinet with a transparent door and took out two disks about an inch and a half in diameter and handed them to Kara.

Kara turned to Cat. “Hold out your left arm,” she said. Cat held out her arm, and Kara pressed one of the disks against the skin just behind the wrist. A band spread out and closed around Cat’s arm. Kara turned to Carter, who was already holding out his arm, and pressed the disk in place.

“Once we’re through the door, don’t take those off for any reason,” Kara said.

“What would happen?” Carter asked.

“The building’s automated defense system would decide you are a threat to the children in the Genesis Chamber, and defend them,” Kara said. “Kryptonians take the defense of our children very seriously.”

Carter’s eyes got big and he gave a very serious nod. “Got it,” he said.

“You’re sure this is safe?” Cat asked.

“Absolutely,” Kara said. “Come on inside.”

Sam sat on the couch watching Ruby play Splatoon and it was all she could do to stop herself from hugging the life out of her daughter. She wanted to scream at Lena. She wanted to yell at Kara. She wanted to curse the unfairness of the universe. She wanted to run away and ride somewhere where she and Ruby would be safe.

She couldn’t do any of those things, because somehow, she’d become responsible for overseeing the financing of the defense of the entire universe, not to mention fifty-two others, so instead, she did her best to quell the shrieking terror in her soul.

She had an MBA and an accounting degree. She didn’t want to get involved with vigilantes, superheroes and gods. She just wanted to take care of her daughter and her useless disaster of a best friend.
“Are you okay, Mom?” Ruby asked.

Sam nodded. “Yeah, Kiddo, I’m fine. Just Lena’s mom making trouble again.”

“Aunt Lena’s mom is a butt,” Ruby said.

“You know, since it’s Lena’s mom, I’ll allow it,” Sam said, “but don’t push your luck.”

“What did she do?” Ruby asked.

“She sent Lena some of Supergirl’s private files to try and make Lena mad at Supergirl,” Sam said.

“How’d she get Supergirl’s stuff?” Ruby asked.

“I don’t know,” Sam said.

“It didn’t work, did it?” Ruby asked. “Aunt Lena isn’t mad at Kara?”

“Why am I not surprised you know that?” Sam asked.

“Because we have two alien robot butlers and live in a building surrounded by a force field,” Ruby said. “Also, I went down to the pool one day and Kara had fallen asleep in one of the lounge chairs.”

“How did that help you figure out she’s Supergirl?” Sam asked.

“She flies in her sleep,” Ruby said.

“Of course she does,” Sam said, doing her best not to facepalm and scream into her hands.

“Come on, it’s kind of funny,” Ruby said.

“A little funny,” Sam said. “You want to head down to the arena, so your mom can kick your behind in a little nerf war?”

“YES!” Ruby said.

“Go grab the guns,” Sam said.

“Awesome!”

Sam watched as Ruby ran off towards her bedroom where the nerf guns lived and decided she’d finish her panic attack later. Right now, she was going to go play with her daughter. Then she was going to sit down and figure out how to get Kara everything she needed, because Sam was going to make God damned sure nothing happened to her daughter, even if she had to fight a war with a god to do it.

Cat had thought the rest of the building was beautiful, but it was nothing compared to the Genesis Chamber itself. The whole room was shaped like a massive egg, but the interior looked like Fabergé’s finest work. A long bridge stretched out from one wall connecting to a round platform in the middle of the chamber. The walls were covered in alcoves arranged in a spiral pattern, and every one of them glowed a deep, warm red. Each alcove was surrounded by the same text, written in gold, and running between the alcoves, in the same spiral pattern, were glowing blue lines of text, filling the chamber with light.

“What does it say?” Carter asked.
“The gold around the matrix alcoves is the Prayer for New Souls,” Kara said. “The same one written on the outside of the building. The blue text is from the Book of Rao. It’s the story of the creation of Ro and Lara, the first Kryptonians.”

“It’s beautiful,” Cat said.

Kara smiled. “Wait until you see the Birthing Matrix.” She stepped up to the console in the middle of the central platform and pressed her hand to a scanner similar to the palm scanners on the doors of the Solarium.

“Greetings, Lady Kara,” a female voice said. “How may I assist you today?”

“I would like to see my daughter,” Kara said.

“Of course,” the voice said.

Cat watched as a drone appeared from below them and flew over to the side of the chamber and reached into one of the alcoves. It removed something Cat assumed was the birthing matrix, then turned and flew back towards the center of the chamber as a pillar rose up out of the center the platform. The drone carefully deposited the birthing matrix on the pillar and drifted off to one side.

The first thing Cat noticed was that Kara was absolutely right. The birthing matrix was a work of art. A shimmering mother of pearl oval two feet long, wrapped in delicate raised silver scroll work, every inch of which was engraved with Kryptonian script.

Kara waved a hand over the top of the birthing matrix and a hologram of a fetus appeared, all oversized head and pot belly, with stubby little arms and legs and the very beginnings of fingers and toes. The chamber filled with the soft, echoing thump of a beating heart. It was an amazing sight, but one that made Cat feel a tightness in her chest was the expression on Kara’s face. There was a small, tiny little part of Cat that had been worried that Kara was keeping the child out of some sense of obligation, but she’d end up resenting her because Kara hadn’t had a choice in the decision. She needn’t have worried. The expression on Kara’s face was one of absolute wonder. Cat had seen it enough on her own face in the pictures she had of her holding Carter as a baby.

“This is my daughter,” Kara said.

“Does she have a name?” Carter asked.

“Not yet,” Kara said. “She was going to be called Karsta, but that doesn’t feel right. Not for her. I was thinking of something else, but I thought I should ask your mother first.”

“What did you have in mind?” Cat asked.

“I’d like to name her Kiera,” Kara said.

Cat stared at Kara for a moment, not sure how to take what she’d just said, but there was a pleading look in Kara’s eyes, and Cat felt a lump settle into her throat. She didn’t understand what she had done to deserve someone like Kara in her life, much less deserve the love Kara seemed to give so easily. She also didn’t understand how Kara had taken a name that Cat had meant to hold her at arm’s length, to remind her of her place, and turn it into something to be cherished and held close, turned into a symbol of love; but somehow, she had.

“I think that’s a wonderful idea,” Cat said.

Kara waved her hand and a screen appeared above the birthing matrix.
“Computer, unlock record and set edit mode. Update name. Kiera El, Daughter of Kara of the House of El, and Cat Grant of Earth,” Kara said. She looked over at Cat, and Cat saw the question on Kara’s face, and the offer there, and she gave a small nod.

“Commit changes and lock record,” Kara said.

The screen disappeared, and Cat felt Kara’s hand slip into her own.

“Would you like to see what she’ll look like?” Kara asked.

“You can do that?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded.

“Okay,” Cat said.

“Computer, run standard growth projections, birth, five /ahmzehto/, ten /ahmzehto/, twenty /ahmzehto/, fifty /ahmzehto/.”

The hologram of the fetus disappeared, replaced by the image of a chubby little baby with a shock of strawberry blonde hair and ice-blue eyes.

“She has your eyes,” Cat said.

“Advance,” Kara said, and the infant was replaced by a toddler, a beautiful little girl with long hair, still with a hint of red, and still with those gorgeous blue eyes. “This is about two and a half years.”

Cat couldn’t bring herself to say anything, because she suddenly understood how Kara had become so attached to their daughter so quickly. For humans, at four weeks, a pregnancy was little more than an idea, but with the technology in front of her, it became something else. The ability to see the future of the tiny life growing in the birthing matrix made it instantly and undeniably real. Cat was staring at the face of their daughter, and she couldn’t help but love her.

Eliza looked up from her microscope at the sound of a knock on the wall. She looked over to see J’onn standing in the door to the lab. He held up a bag of take out.

“Hey,” she said. “Just a moment.”

“I’ll set up in the office,” J’onn said.

“Thanks,” Eliza said.

She picked up her pen and jotted down a couple of quick notes, then pulled the slide out of the microscope and put it in a slide case. That done, she stripped off her gloves and headed over to the sink to wash and sanitize her hands.

“Sorry,” she said. “I just didn’t want to forget what I was working on.”

“No problem,” J’onn said as he plated the food.

“What have we got this evening?” Eliza asked.

“I went by Nikki’s,” J’onn said. “I got you meatloaf, mac and cheese, collard greens, mashed potatoes and gravy and cornbread.”
“Oh, please tell me you got dessert,” Eliza said.

“Peach Cobbler,” J’onn said.

“Bless you,” Eliza said.

J’onn smiled at her as he passed her a plate. He reached back into the bag and pulled out a bottle of A1 and handed it over.

“How did you…?” Eliza asked.

“A few weeks after I met Kara for the first time, I stopped by to pick up some intel she had on a Fort Rozz fugitive,” J’onn said. “We had dinner, and I watched her drown her meatloaf in that. She mentioned picking up the habit from you.”

“Guilty,” Eliza said as she opened the bottle and poured the sauce on. “In my defense, my mother’s meatloaf was terrible, and this hid the taste. *My* meatloaf is actually very good, but this is kind of comfort food.”

“You like to cook?” J’onn asked.

“I do,” Eliza said. “Cooking, baking, sewing, gardening. I’ve got all the clichés.”

“You also have an MD and how many PhD’s?” J’onn asked.

“Six, now,” Eliza said. “But honestly, the last four were awarded on the merit of my published work. All I had to do was write a dissertation, and I just submitted an article I was going to publish anyway, so it was really double-dipping.”

“You say that like it makes it any less impressive,” J’onn said.

“I suppose it is impressive,” Eliza said. “It doesn’t feel that way. Most days, I was just trying to put food on the table, do right by my girls, and keep the lights on, but every once in a while, I look back at my life, and I just go, ‘wow, I did all that’.”

“I know what you mean,” J’onn said. “I look back on my life, and I hardly believe some of it happened.”

“Well, you have a better excuse for the disbelief than I do,” Eliza said. “You’ve lived an incredible life.”

“From what I’ve seen, yours has been pretty amazing too,” J’onn said. “Speaking of… How are you holding up?”


“You shouldn’t let what he did ruin your memories,” J’onn said.

“It’s hard not to,” she said. “I’m just so angry right now.”

“And you have every right to be,” J’onn said. “But whatever Jeremiah may have become, I have to believe that he was a good man once. He saved my life, and he nearly died doing it.”

“The part I’m having trouble with is, for us, that was ten years ago. For him, that was a month ago. Can someone really change that much in so little time?” Eliza asked.
“People can change completely in a single moment, if something bad enough happens,” J’onn said. “I’m angry about what he did, but I pity him. He held on to the past so hard that it cost him his future, and that’s a hard thing, I know. I nearly let it happen to me. The irony is, Jeremiah is the one who helped me move forward again. Who gave me hope for a better future.”

“This must be hard for you too,” Eliza said.

“A little,” J’onn said. “But I only knew Jeremiah for a few hours. It’s you, Alex and Kara I’m worried about.”

“We’ll survive,” Eliza said. “Alex is strong, and I’m used to being angry at him. It’s Kara I’m worried about. I hadn’t realized her mental health had deteriorated so far, and another blow so quickly after what happened Christmas night… It’s not fair.”

“No, it isn’t,” J’onn said. “But it’s not fair to you or Alex, either. I just want you to know that if any of you need anything, I’m here for you.”

Eliza reached across the table and squeezed J’onn’s hand. “Thank you,” she said.

Kara frowned a little at the sight of Alex on the screen. It wasn’t that she wasn’t always happy to see her sister, but she was completely exhausted after the debrief at Sanctuary, the trip to the Genesis Chamber, and the funeral for Non, and she wasn’t sure she was up to a conversation about Jeremiah. It was Alex though, and she would never turn away her sister, so she opened the door.

“Hey, Alex,” she said, forcing herself to sound a lot more chipper than she actually felt. Fortunately, that was something she had decades of practice at.

“Hey,” Alex said, and Kara knew immediately that something was off, just from the tone of her voice. “Would Cat mind if I came in for a minute?”

“Of course not,” Kara said, moving out of the way to let Alex into the apartment. Alex stepped into the apartment and waited as Kara closed the door.

“Can we talk for a minute? In private?” Alex asked.

“Sure,” Kara said, the frown creeping back onto her face. “Cat’s in her office, and Carter’s in the den, but we can use the balcony if that’s okay.”

“That’s fine,” Alex said.

Kara led them out onto the balcony and sat down on one of the couches. Alex took a seat next to her, and Kara looked at her, wondering why she was so tense.

“What’s wrong?” Kara asked.

“We just had dinner with Maggie’s family,” Alex said.

“Did it not go well?” Kara asked. She knew that Maggie hadn’t gotten to spend anywhere near as much time as Kara had hoped she would with her family and felt guilty because it was almost all her fault.

“It went great,” Alex said. “Juanita is really funny, and Mike and Maggie are so much alike it’s scary, and Ying Yue is brilliant. You should have been seen Maggie. Kara, she was just so happy I wanted it to go on forever.”
“I don’t understand. If it went that well, why are you so upset?” Kara asked.

“We were talking about what they were going to do when they go home on Sunday,” Alex said, “and it… Kara, they can’t go back to school,” Alex said.


“Maggie’s parents cut Mike off,” Alex said. “Just like they did to Maggie. And Ying Yue’s family disowned her when she refused to break up with Mike. Neither of them can afford to pay for school without help from their parents, and they don’t even really want to go back, because a lot of the people on campus were really horrible to them. And Mike can’t afford his hormones, and he’s been binding his chest using an ace bandage because he can’t afford a binder. Yue said it was dangerous, and I looked it up and she’s right. It can cause all sorts of problems. Maggie’s downstairs shopping for binders right now, but Juanita is supporting all three of them, so money’s really, really tight for them at the moment, and—”,

“Alex!” Kara said, shocking Alex out of her rambling. “How can we help?”

“You know Maggie would never ask for anything,” Alex said.

“She’s family,” Kara said. “So are Juanita, Mike and Yue. They get help whether they ask or not.” Alex smiled. “I was thinking, have you rented out your old apartment?”

“No,” Kara said. “The Super said he’s had a couple of inquiries, but I couldn’t bring myself to let it go.”

“You think Mike and Yue could take it?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I think that’s a great idea. It’s too late to get them in for spring semester at National City University, but we can get them in for the Summer Semester. Getting Mike medical care will be easy too. I mean, I kind of own two fully stocked hospitals. Three, if you want to get picky. We won’t even need to bother with hormones. The Chrysalis Chamber can…”

She trailed off, as a thought settled into her head, and she wanted to smack herself for her own stupidity.

“Kara?” Alex asked.

“I am such an idiot,” Kara said.

“Yeah, tell me something I don’t know,” Alex said.

Kara glared at her for a minute. “Keep it up and I’ll melt your face.”

“Try it,” Alex said. “I’ve got heat vision too.”

“I knew I’d regret giving you that war suit,” Kara said.

“What about the Chrysalis Chamber?” Alex prompted.

“I’ve been thinking of it in terms of making humans into Kryptonians, but it can rewrite people’s entire physiology. Gender confirmation, treatment for genetic disorders, anything that involves physical or genetic modification of the body,” Kara said.

“You mean Miguel can just get into and…” Alex waved her hands.
“Well, he’ll be asleep during the procedure, so no jazz hands, but yes,” Kara said. She chewed on her lower lip for a moment. “We’ll need space. FDA approval of the tech. Establish a standard of care. Security will be an issue.”

“Security?” Alex asked. “Can’t you just transmat him out to Sanctuary?”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “For Mike, that’s fine, but I’m thinking about for the clinics.”

“What clinics?” Alex asked, confusion written on her face.

“Alex, if I can do this for Mike, why wouldn’t I do it for everyone else who needs it?” Kara asked. Alex shook her head. “You really are amazing, you know that?” she asked as she pulled Kara into a hug.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

`eh shed krighia`
`bright one`

`ahmzehto`
`(Plural of ahmzeht): 1 Kryptonian Year. 180 Earth days`
Chapter Summary

Cat is Jealous; Kara runs into Harley and Ivy; Lucy makes a mistake; Leslie comes to a realization; Chase asks someone out; Susan eats a radioactive blueberry scone; Cat and Leslie talk; Harper visits Noonans; Alex, Maggie, and Eliza meet Kiera; Eliza gives Cat a warning; Winn and Kaldur'ahm become uncles; Nia asks Olivia for a favor; Winn gets some bad news; Adam makes a decision; Siobhan gets a couple of stories published, and Nia has a dream.

Saturday, January 2, 2016

“I don’t like this,” Cat said.

“I know, but it will be fine,” Kara said as she adjusted the fit of the plain black suit Bruce had insisted on.

“They’re criminals,” Cat said.

“So? Your girlfriend is an illegal alien,” Kara said.

“You’ve been legal for weeks,” Cat said.

“I also blackmailed the Mayor,” Kara said.

“Who was plotting to kill every alien in the city,” Cat said.

“I forged the building inspections for this building,” Kara said.

“This building would survive a direct hit from an ICBM,” Cat said.

“Leslie will be with me,” Kara said.

“Leslie is even more of a reckless child than you are,” Cat said.

“You sure you’re not just jealous?” Kara asked.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Cat said.

Kara smiled and pulled Cat into her arms. “You don’t have anything to worry about,” she said.

“Of course I don’t,” Cat said. “Because I don’t do jealousy.”

Kara laughed, which earned her a glare from Cat, so she leaned forward and kissed the adorably grumpy little pout off Cat’s lips.

“Feel better?” Kara asked.

“No,” Cat said.
Kara pretended she didn’t notice the grin tugging at the corners of Cat’s mouth and leaned in, kissing her again, letting her hands slip down to cup Cat’s ass. Cat moaned and lifted her left leg, hooking it around Kara, who suddenly wasn’t so eager to rush off to Gotham, which was probably exactly what Cat had intended.

Kara broke the kiss and gave Cat a playful glare. “That’s cheating,” she said.

“Is it working?” Cat asked.

“Yes,” Kara said, “Which is why I’m leaving now, so our first time isn’t a quickie where we’re both worried about Leslie or Carter walking in on us.”

“We could go to the bedroom” Cat said. “Lock the door…”

Kara groaned. “You’re killing me,” she said. “You know I have to go. If I don’t, they might move, and it could take months to find them again.”

Cat gave a dramatic sigh. “Okay,” she said, putting her foot back on the ground, and stepping away from Kara. “Go. Have fun in Gotham. I guess I’ll just have to take care of myself.”

Kara stared at Cat for a moment as her brain processed what Cat had just implied. It took longer than it should have, because she was pretty sure her brain had to reboot at least three times before coherent thought was possible again.

“You know, Gotham can wait one more night,” Kara said.

“No, no,” Cat said. “Off you go.”

“Why do we have to wear masks again?” Leslie asked as she crouched next to Kara and Barbara on the rooftop across from their target.

“Masks are a thing here,” Barbara said.

“Whatever,” Leslie said. “You know we could have gotten here a lot faster if we’d flown.”

“There’s no flying in Gotham,” Kara said.

“Says who?” Leslie asked.

“No one,” Kara said, “but I’m pretty sure Batman would take it as a personal insult.”

“You’re not wrong,” Barbara said.

“McBroody can kiss my ass,” Leslie said.

“I’m say Selina might object to that, but honestly, she’d probably offer to help,” Barbara said.

“Oh, ewww…” Leslie said.

“Batgirl, stop tormenting Livewire,” Kara said.

“Sorry,” Barbara said. “I didn’t know you had anyone straight in your crew.”

Kara didn’t answer her. She figured if Leslie wanted to correct the assumption, she could handle it herself. It wasn’t Kara’s business to tell people what Leslie was or wasn’t. She felt a little guilty over
having warned Susan off, and she’d only made that exception because she remembered how close Winn’s crush had come to destroying their friendship. If Susan had made a similar mistake, she wasn’t sure if Leslie would put in the effort to patch things up, and she wanted to keep both of them from getting hurt.

“Are you sure they are down there?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Barbara said. “They’ve been holed up there for at least five days, and Bluebird spotted them going in about two hours ago.”


“Ivy’s about as close to functional as any of us,” Kara said.

“She wants to feed every man in the world into a woodchipper, and use their remains as fertilizer,” Barbara said.

“You do have a point,” Kara said. “The fertilizer thing is a bit weird.”

Kara raised her hand just in time for the high five from Leslie.

“You sure you want to do this alone?” Barbara asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I’d rather go in my regular suit though.”

“I know, but I’m pretty sure Batman would have a stroke if you wore the colors in Gotham,” Barbara said.

“He lets Clark and Diana do it,” Kara said.

“He lets Diana do it,” Barbara said. “He pouts for weeks every time Clark comes to town.”

Kara shook her head. “They’re both a couple of babies,” she said as she stepped off the roof.

Kara moved slowly through the greenhouse, taking in the sight of the dozens of exotic plants and inhaling their perfume, enjoying her own memories for a change.

When Harley and Pam had joined the Waverider, Pam had turned one of the cargo holds into a hydroponic garden. It had been one of Kara’s favorite places in the whole multiverse. The quiet of the Temporal Zone outside, the low hum of the Waverider’s engines, the soft trickle of water through the hydroponics system, the sweet perfume of the plants, and the warmth of Sara in her arms. A small, peaceful place in the middle of the hellscape of the war.

Kara had been a little bit afraid that Pam would resent their intrusion into her domain, but she seemed to understand Kara and Sara’s need for a quiet place. As long as they didn’t pick the flowers, Pam had left them in peace. Sometimes, when Sara was sleeping, and Kara’s mind was running too fast for her to doze off, she would slip down and help Pam tend the plants. It had reminded Kara of working in the garden with Eliza on Saturday mornings, and much like she had during her time with Eliza, she’d started talking. Pam hadn’t replied at first, but Kara kept at it, talking about plants and horticulture and biology in general until Pam had eventually started answering her. Over the years, the two of them had formed a quiet, low-key friendship that had reminded Kara of her friendships with Susan. It had been something she’d treasured when she had it and missed terribly when it was gone.
Kara and Harley had tended the garden for years after Pam had died, right up until a hull breach during a fight had destroyed it.

Kara was so absorbed in her memories she didn’t notice the enormous wooden mallet until it slammed down onto her head.

“Damn it, Harley,” Kara shouted. “That hurt!” She turned around to find a very confused Harley staring at a mallet with a broken handle.

“That shoulda killed ya!” Harley said. She squinted at Kara. “Hey, Red! I think Batsy is sending robots after us!”

“I told him the suit was a dumb idea,” Kara grumbled. She touched one of the preset studs on her bracer and the plain black suit and domino mask melted into her default leotard, skirt, cape and boots outfit.

“I am not a robot,” Kara said in an annoyed tone.

“You look just like Supergirl in that outfit,” Harley said.

Kara sighed. “I am Supergirl, Harley.”

“Oh!” Harley said. “That makes sense then.” Harley stared at her for a moment. “Hey! How do you know my name?”

“The same way I know you’re stalling me while Ivy sneaks up behind me,” Kara said. She spun around to find Pam about two steps away from her.

“Hey, Ivy,” Kara said.

“Supergirl,” Pam said. “If I’d known we had company coming I’d have dressed for the occasion.”

Kara gave Pam a quick once over, taking in the dirt-stained jeans, the worn hiking boots, and the red flannel button-down. It reminded Kara a lot of what Pam had worn during her off hours on the Waverider.

“Honestly, the whole lesbian farmer look is working for you,” Kara said. “You should stick with it.”

“Well,” Pam said, stepping closer, “whatever floats your boat.” She leaned in, hooking a hand behind Kara’s neck as she laid a kiss on her, and Kara was too shocked to pull away. It probably shouldn’t have surprised her. She’s heard enough stories about Pam before the Waverider. She’d just never expected to be on the receiving end of it.

Pam stepped back, giving her an expectant look, and Kara just rolled her eyes.

“Poison lipstick? Really?” Kara asked.

Harley came around in front of Kara.

“It didn’t work,” Harley said. “That always works.” She tilted her head. “Let me try!” She jumped on Kara, and Kara reacted out of years of habit. She caught Harley around the waist with one arm as Harley’s legs wrapped around her waist, and Kara’s other hand cupped Harley’s ass, and when Harley kissed her, hard and deep, it wasn’t even a little bit surprising, because this was Harley. Kara did feel a little guilty, because she enjoyed the moment a lot more than she should, but there was something comforting about the fact that Harley still tasted like cinnamon apples.
After a moment, and more tongue than was strictly necessary, Harley pulled back.

“You’re not dead,” Harley said.

“You aren’t wearing poison lipstick,” Kara said, not quite able to keep the amused tone out of her voice.

“Red left some on your lips,” Harley said. “I thought maybe if I rubbed it in…”

Kara shook her head. “You’re lucky you’re cute,” Kara said. “You can get down now.”

“Don’t wanna,” Harley said. “You’re warm.”

Kara looked over Harley’s shoulder at Pam. “A little help here?”

Pam sighed. “Hop down, Harley.”

Harley put her feet on the ground and let go of Kara. Kara found it harder than she expected to let go of Harley in return, but she forced herself to do it.

“You aren’t one of Batman’s usual subcontractors,” Pam said.

“No,” Kara said. “I don’t work for him.”

“Well, maybe you don’t know how this works,” Pam said. “We lay low and don’t hurt anyone, and the bats leave us the fuck alone.”

“Again,” Kara said, “not a bat.”

“We haven’t done anything,” Pam said.

“You mean aside from the two counts of attempted murder?” Kara asked.

“One count,” Pam said. “That was mind control lipstick. Not poison.”

“Mind control?” Kara asked. “I think I’m insulted.”

“It works on your cousin,” Pam said.

“Spitballs work on my cousin,” Kara said. “He’s a lightweight.”

Harley laughed. “She’s funny.”

“You know if you lock us up, we’ll be out in a week,” Pam said.

“You’d be surprised,” Kara said. “LCorp just got a contract to upgrade Arkham’s security with Kryptonian tech. But I’m not here to lock you up.”

“Then why are you here?” Pam asked.

Kara reached down and unclipped a box from her belt. She held it out to Pam.

Pam frowned as she took it. She opened it and saw the two injectors inside. One labeled Pamela Isley, and the other labeled Harleen Quinzel. She looked up at Kara.

“What is this?” Pam asked.
“Medication,” Kara said. “Custom-formulated mood stabilizers that your biochemistry won’t reject and that won’t interfere with or dampen your powers.”

“That’s not possible,” Pam said.

“Krypton’s tech base is about fifteen thousand years ahead of Earth’s, so we have a different idea of what is possible,” Kara said. “The injection will also take care of the bomb in Harley’s head.”

“Really?” Harley asked, the childish, high-pitched voice gone, replaced by a deeper, more adult-sounding tone.

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“What’s the catch?” Pam asked.

“No catch,” Kara said. “You can tell me to fuck off right now, and I will walk out of here and do my best to never cross your paths again. That’s not what I want, but both of you have had to many people force things on you that you didn’t want, and you may not understand why, but I care too much about you to force something on you, even for your own good.

“Those injectors are my way of honoring people I lost. Good people, who were my friends, and who died way too young, after living lives that were far harder than they should have been.

“But if you would like, I can offer you something else, too.”

“What would that be?” Pam asked.

“I kind of need a gardener, and I thought you might like the job,” Kara said. “Good pay, full medical, diplomatic immunity.”

“Did I get all the lipstick off?” Kara asked as she stood in front of Barbara and Leslie.

“Yes,” Barbara said without looking up from her phone.

“The hickey’s going to take some explaining though,” Leslie said.

“What?” Kara asked. Before Barbara could say anything, Kara took off for the bathroom at super speed.

Barbara glared at Leslie. “You know you just cost us thirty minutes, right?”

“Worth it,” Leslie said.

Monday, January 4th, 2016

National City Tribune

Supergirl and LCorp Announce A New Transit System

By Siobhan Smythe

In a stunning announcement today, Supergirl and Lena Luthor announced a partnership between the newly-formed Krypton Incorporated and LCorp to build a nation-wide transportation network consisting of Matter Transportation Centers. These centers will allow near-instantaneous transport for
both goods and people between locations anywhere in the country.

Built by the Kryptonians using technology from their home world, the Transmat Network will initially focus on human transportation, but LCorp is promising that high-volume freight centers will follow within a few months.

When asked about international service, LCorp CEO Lena Luthor said that international expansion of the network is already in the works, but that timetables will depend on how quickly policies and procedures for customs and immigration enforcement can be worked out.

The network is expected to go online on Monday, January 18th, with locations in National City, Gotham, Metropolis, Gateway City, New York, Washington, Atlanta and Los Angeles, with additional cities rolling out in the weeks and months to follow.

LCorp is a subsidiary of Danvers International which also owns CatCo Worldwide Media, the Tribune’s parent company.

Tuesday, January 5th, 2016

“Where is she?” Kara asked as she touched down on the landing deck of the DEO.

“They’ve got her in the women’s locker room. They’re using one of the whirlpools as an ice bath,” Leslie said.

“Go get a red sun grenade from the armory and meet me there,” Kara said. She took off at super-speed, zipping through the halls of the DEO to get to the women’s locker room. When she got there, she saw Alex and Maggie dumping buckets of ice into a steel bathtub full of Lucy Lane and rapidly boiling water while a gorgeous redhead in a lab coat pointed an infrared temperature gauge at Lucy’s head.

“It’s no good,” the redhead said. “Her temperature just topped five hundred Kelvins.”

“Take her out of the bath,” Kara said.

The redhead looked over at her. “That ice bath is the only thing keeping her alive right now.”

“Alex, put her on the floor,” Kara said.

Alex scooped Lucy up and set her down on the tile floor, then stepped back. Lucy immediately started convulsing, and Kara hit her with a hard stream of freeze breath. The redhead pointed the thermometer at Lucy again.

“It’s working,” she said.

Leslie came running in carrying two red sun grenades. Kara snapped her fingers to get Alex’s attention, then signed a series of instructions to her in sidespeak.

“Doc, she says to tell her the moment Lucy’s core temp drops below three thirty Kelvin. Leslie, as soon is it does, set off the grenade,” Alex said.

“Got it,” Leslie said.

It took almost a minute of freeze breath before the redhead shouted, “Now!” As soon as she did, Leslie triggered the red sun grenade and a bright flash of red flooded the room. Kara’s stream of freeze breath died instantly, and Lucy stopped convulsing and settled into what looked like a relaxed
sleep on the floor.

“Temperature steady,” the redhead said.

Kara walked over and picked up one of the buckets still filled with ice and dipped it in the hot tub, getting it full of water as well, then turned and dumped the ice water on Lucy, who immediately woke up sputtering and cursing.

“What the fuck!”

Kara tossed the bucket aside and knelt down next to Lucy.

“What did I tell you about the Torquasm Vo mantra?” Kara asked.

Lucy shrank down and gave Kara a sheepish look.

“Only use the meditation to reduce the draw of solar energy from my cells.”

“And?”

“Turning up the draw is an advanced technique, and it will be a while before I’m ready to try it,” Lucy said.

Kara let out a frustrated sigh. “You could have leveled the entire city.”

“Really?” Lucy asked, a horrified look on her face.

“Yes, really. You do realize that sun is a giant nuclear reactor, right?”

“Yes.”

“And you realize that your Kryptonian body collects, *concentrates* and stores massive amounts of solar energy, which is *nuclear* energy.”

“Yes,” Lucy squeaked.

“Lucy, what do you call a sudden, rapid, uncontrolled release of energy?” Kara asked.

“Bad?”

“I was going for ‘explosion’, but yes, bad. Now, what do you call a sudden, rapid, uncontrolled release of *nuclear* energy?”

“Really bad?”

Kara let out an exasperated sigh. “Was she at least hot?”

“Who?” Lucy asked.

“Whoever you were showing off for,” Kara said.

Lucy turned bright red. Kara smiled and looked up at Alex, Maggie and the redhead.

“She’ll be fine,” Kara said. “She just needs a few minutes in the sun.”

“And to get laid, apparently,” Leslie said, making Lucy groan, and Alex, Maggie and the redhead glare at her.
“What?” Leslie said. “I don’t want to get vaporized because she’s so horny it makes her stupid.”

Kara shook her head and stood up.

“I don’t think we’ve met,” she said, holding her hand out to the redhead. “I’m Supergirl.”

“Dr. Shay Veritas,” the redhead said. “Nice to meet you.”

“It actually worked?” Lillian asked as she walked into the lab.

“I admit, I’m as surprised as you are,” Max said. “But go on and have a look.”

Lillian walked over to the cell in the far end of the lab where Indigo was testing the cage she was in, looking for a way out.

“It makes sense, if you think about it. Her body is essentially a supercomputer made up of a techno-organic nanite swarm. I honestly suspect the EMP from the massive electrical discharge did more damage than the actual lightning bolt Willis hit her with.”

“And you’re sure she’s fully functional?” Lillian asked.

“Yes,” Max said. “The containment cell is Nth Metal, which is resistant to super-strength, and I’ve also got an Nth Metal Faraday cage so she can’t escape into the digital world either.”

“Can the Project Brain nanites control her?” Lillian asked.

“We don’t even need the nanites. When I hooked up one of our computers to the corpse, the nanites were kind enough to create an interface with the computer, complete with a programming primer. I was able to use that and the Coluan language primer available on Supergirl’s website to translate the control code Simon wrote into a language the nanite swarm would understand, and insert it directly into her operating system,” Max said.

“Very impressive, Max,” Lillian said.

“Our little friend here has been an absolute treasure trove of information, too,” Max said. “For example, did you know what every building in Little Krypton is an off-the-shelf design?”

“No, but I’m not surprised, given how quickly Supergirl went from ‘community center’ to ‘building a city’,” Lillian said. “How does that help us?”

“Well, for one thing, it confirms our suspicions about the building everyone has been calling ‘the temple’,” Max said. “It’s definitely a Genesis Chamber. An exact duplicate of the one from Argo City.”

“So, they’re breeding?” Lillian said.

“There’s no way to tell for sure if they’ve started yet, but the intent is definitely there,” Max said.

“Does she have the schematics for the chamber?” Lillian asked.

“Yes, she does,” Max said.

“Show me,” Lillian said.
Leslie sat in the ready room off the landing deck at the DEO, sipping coffee as she read through another policy manual. It was her fifth time through, and this pass was more to make sure she had it memorized than to absorb anything new. She was paying more attention to what was going on down on the floor of the command center than to what she was reading.

Susan was down there and watching her was always fun. She sat in the ops chair, legs crossed at the knees, left elbow on the arm rest, chin resting in the palm of her left hand, with her fingers curled and the tips resting against her cheek bone as she stared at the screen in front of her and worked the mouse with her right hand.

As Leslie watched, Susan sat up and stretched, tilting her head to each side before lacing her fingers together behind her lower back and lifting her arms until they were parallel to the floor, leaning her head back and arching her whole upper body as the muscles visibly tensed.

Leslie shifted in her seat, her mouth suddenly dry as the desert she’d grown up in. She drank in the sight in front of her, every curve, every ripple of muscle, the soft, warm color of Susan’s skin. She couldn’t stop herself from reaching out and feeling the faint tug of the electrical currents trickling through every nerve, every muscle and every cell of Susan’s body.

When the stretch was over, Leslie pulled back, letting the awareness of the electricity within Susan’s body fade. She stared as Susan settled back into her seat, wanting to be down there with her. Susan seemed to sense something and turned towards her. Their eyes met, and Susan smiled up at her. Leslie smiled back, even though it suddenly felt like there wasn’t enough air in the room.

Susan gave her a small wave and turned back to her work, breaking the spell. Suddenly, Leslie could breathe again. She fell back in her seat as the heart that was pounding like mad in her chest started to return to a more normal rhythm.

“Shit,” Leslie whispered, muttering under her breath, wondering why the fuck this had to happen to her.

She’d gone her whole fucking life looking at women and men and not feeling a thing. Not a hint, not a tingle, not a single fucking impulse to let someone stick their tongue down her throat.

Then Cat had come along, and Leslie hadn’t understood it at all, but she’d wanted to be around her all the time. She’d lived for the moments when Cat had come into her studio. It had never mattered whether it was for praise or criticism, as long as Cat had delivered it in person. Just being around her had made Leslie feel wonderful and alive. Right up until the day she’d been at some idiotic event, mostly because she knew Cat would be there. Except Cat had walked in wearing the most incredible dress. Leslie had taken one look at Cat and it had felt like getting slapped by the hand of god. Which was exactly how she felt right now, and it fucking sucked.

That night had been the beginning of everything starting to go to shit with Cat. She wasn’t sure how she’d given herself away, but she had, somehow, because Cat had started pulling away after that. It had taken years and a near-death experience before things had started to turn around, and it still stung in odd moments, knowing Cat had chosen Sunshine over her.

She couldn’t lose Susan. She couldn’t. As pathetic as it was, Susan, Cat and Sunshine were all she had, and the thought of losing any of them felt like ripping her own heart out.

She just had to make sure she didn’t give herself away. Had to make sure that Susan never found out
she’d developed a crush.

Fuck her life. Fuck the fact that she could never seem to feel this way for someone who actually wanted her.

Because Susan clearly didn’t. She’d never once made so much as a suggestive remark in Leslie’s direction.

She closed her eyes, trying to force herself to calm down, but it didn’t work. She was having difficulty breathing for an entirely different reason, and she could feel the walls start closing in around her. She needed to put some space between her and Susan before she gave herself away.

She got up and went over to her ready room locker and stashed her tablet before heading out onto the landing deck.

She tapped her eat piece. “Livewire to control,” she said.

“Control acknowledges,” Susan said. “Go ahead, Livewire.”

“I’m stretching my wings,” Leslie said. “On comms if you need me.”

“Understood,” Susan said. “Watch out for pigeons.”

“That was one time,” Leslie said, “and the pigeon was fine.”

“Medium well, but fine,” Susan said.

Leslie laughed as she lifted off, heading for CatCo.

Susan watched Leslie lift off from the landing deck and head off towards CatCo with a smile on her face. She knew she was going to end up making herself miserable, but it didn’t seem to matter. She was so far gone, it was actually a little embarrassing, and she had no idea how Leslie hadn’t figured it out yet.

“Hey, Wentworth, I’m in need of caffeination. Take ops for a bit?” Susan asked.

“Sure, boss,” Wentworth said.

Susan got up and headed to the cafeteria with a stupid grin on her face. She walked in and waved at the drone behind the counter.

“Large café mocha and a blueberry scone,” Susan said.

“Of course, Agent Vasquez,” the drone said.

Susan waited patiently as the drone fixed her order, humming softly to herself.

“What’s got you in such a good mood?” Chase asked.

Susan turned to see Chase standing next to her, giving her a curious look.

“Private joke,” she said.

“Ah,” Chase said.

“I thought you were out on a call,” Susan said.
“False alarm,” Chase said. “Another case of ‘existing while alien’.”

“Fuck,” Susan said. “Again?”

“Yeah,” Chase said. “Poor girl was just trying to buy her textbooks for the semester, and some jackass called the DEO on her.”

“What happened?”

“I wrote the asshole a two-hundred-dollar ticket for a false emergency call and told him next time, I’d arrest his ass,” Chase said. She held up a business card with a hand-written phone number on the back. “I think the girl was impressed.”

Susan smile as the drone set a tray on the counter with her coffee and her scone. “Was she cute?”

“Yeah, oddly enough. She had these weird ridges on her face, but it kinda worked for her. *WAY* too young for me though,” Chase said.

“Yellow eyes, hoop earrings, cute but looks like someone’s younger sister?” Susan asked as she picked up the tray and started heading towards an empty table.

“That is both oddly specific and frighteningly accurate,” Chase said.

“Yeah,” Susan said. “She hangs out at Darla’s. She’s got a thing for cops.” Susan sat down, and Chase sat down across from her.

“Darla’s is the alien bar in Little Krypton, right?” Chase asked.

“Yeah,” Susan said.

“I didn’t realize you hung out there,” Chase said.

“M’gann’s one of the bartenders there,” Susan said.

“Oh,” Chase said. “I don’t think she likes me very much.”

“She’s a little gun-shy around cops, DEO agents, FBI, anyone connected to government, really,” Susan said. “Given what we’ve done, you can hardly blame her.”

“I suppose not,” Chase said. “Maybe you could introduce me, sometime? Put in a good word for me? It’s always easier to work a case if you know people on the ground.”

“I could do that,” Susan said.

“How about tonight?” Chase asked. “I could pick you up around eight.”

Susan stared at Chase for a moment, completely caught off guard.

“I’m sorry, are you asking me out on a date?” Susan asked.

Chase did this weird thing where she shrugged her shoulders, rolled her eyes, and kind of bobbed her head back and forth, all at the same time.

“Would it be terrible if I said yes?” Chase asked.

“No… Just very, very confusing,” Susan said.
“Look, I know we kind of got off on the wrong foot because of the whole Willis thing,” Chase said.

“That’s putting it mildly,” Susan said.

Chase nodded. “Yeah. It was my fault. You’re right. This isn’t the FBI, and I might have let my personal baggage lead to a snap judgement about Willis.”

“Personal baggage?” Susan asked.

“I don’t like metas,” Chase said.

“And you came to work *here*?” Susan asked.

“I figured I could do more good here than in the FBI,” Chase said. “Besides…” Chase waved her fingers, and Susan’s eyes got big as she watched her scone float up about six inches off the plate before settling back down. “I thought I might fit in a bit better here.”

Susan closed her eyes. “I don’t get paid enough for this shit,” she said, before opening her eyes and looking at Chase. “You’re a meta who has a problem with other metas? What, was hating yourself for being gay too trendy?”

“I don’t have a problem with metas because they’re metas. It’s the costumes and the other bullshit. Captain Evil, and Doctor Justice, and Lady City Ordinance and all of it. My dad was a meta, and he got caught up in all of that costumed crime-fighting bullshit. Got him and a lot of other people killed. That’s why I went into the FBI. So I could take down assholes like that.”

“And you came here, because we’re in charge of dealing with aliens and metas,” Susan said. She shook her head. “There’s going to be so much paperwork.”

“What?” Chase asked.


“Um…”

“Look, for the record, you developed psychokinetic powers after being exposed to a radioactive blueberry scone, which I then ate,” Susan said, picking up the scone in question, and biting into it grumpily.

“That’s what you’re going with?” Chase asked.

“Do you know how much paperwork there is if you’ve had powers all along?” Susan said. “Radioactive scone, or I will kill you and hide the body in the towel hamper in the men’s locker room. It’s not like anyone would notice the smell.”

Chase laughed.

Susan stared at Chase for a minute as she took another bite out of her scone and thought about what Kara had told her. That she and Chase had been together in the other timeline. That they’d apparently been happy together.

Maybe it would be good for her. Get out, have fun. Maybe give her vibrator the night off if things went well. Chase wasn’t bad to look at, and when she wasn’t bitching about Leslie, she was actually smart, insightful, even funny.

Except Susan kept coming back to a rule she’d had ever since she first started noticing girls.
“I’m going to pass,” Susan said.

“Oh,” Chase said.

“Yeah,” Susan said. “I don’t date people who shit all over my friends.”

“You’re turning me down because of Willis?” Chase asked.

Susan leaned forward, staring right into Chase’s eyes. “I told you before, you’re replaceable. She’s not. Be somewhere else.”

“Hey, Leslie,” Kara said as she stepped out onto the balcony outside her and Cat’s shared office.

“Hey Sunshine,” Leslie said as she stared out over the city.

Kara closed the door behind her and walked over to the railing, taking a spot next to Leslie.

“You okay?” Kara asked.

“Just needed a quiet place to think,” Leslie said.

“Want to talk about it?” Kara asked.

“Not really,” Leslie said.

“Okay,” Kara said.

“That’s it? Just okay?” Leslie asked.

“I’m one of two surviving veterans from the worst war in fifty-three universes,” Kara said as she rested her arms on the railing. “You really think I don’t know how it feels to just want to be left alone with my thoughts?”

“I’m not very alone, am I?” Leslie asked.

“Do you want to be?” Kara asked. “Because this is not where I come when I want to be alone.”

“No, it’s where you come when you want to make out with your girlfriend,” Leslie said.

“Well, it does have that advantage these days,” Kara said, “but in the old timeline, it’s mostly where I came when I needed advice, or just wanted a quiet place and good company.”

“Good company,” Leslie said. “Been a long time since I thought of Cat that way.”

“That’s because I was a complete bitch to you,” Cat said, surprising them both. Kara looked back and watched as Cat stepped up on Leslie’s other side and leaned against the rail.

“You weren’t,” Leslie said. “At least, you weren’t any more of a bitch to me than you were to anyone else.”

“You say that like it makes it better,” Cat said.

“Honestly, it made it worse,” Leslie said, turning away from Cat to look back out on the city. “It wouldn’t have hurt so much if you hated me. It was the indifference I couldn’t stand.”

“Oh, Leslie,” Cat said, “I was never indifferent. I was terrified. From the moment I realized how you
felt, I was scared out of my mind.”

“Why?” Leslie asked.

“Because I felt… Not the same way,” Cat said. “I don’t know if I was even capable of feeling that way at that point in my life. But God, I wanted too.”

“You did?” Leslie said.

“Do you really think it’s normal for the CEO to drop into the studio and discuss the morning broadcast with a radio host?” Cat asked.

“I did at the time,” Leslie said.

“I was an idiot,” Cat said. “I met you when I was alone, and hurting, and you were magnificent in every way. Young and beautiful and talented and smart and sharp-witted with a gift for destroying over-inflated egos and pompous windbags. I was smitten with you from the first day, and it was a safe little fantasy, because you never seemed interested in anything more than friendship, up until that launch party for the nationwide syndication. That was the night I knew I was in trouble.”

“It was that dress,” Leslie said.

“Mmm… The black one that was open down to my navel, with the laces across my chest?” Cat asked.

“That’s the one,” Leslie said.

“That was a good dress,” Cat said.

“What gave it away?” Leslie asked.

“The way you looked at me,” Cat said. “I’m seen that look before. I saw in the mirror every time I thought of Lois for almost a year.”

“You and Lois?” Leslie asked.

“No,” Cat said. “It was a close thing. I loved her. Oh, god, did I love her. But she cared more about getting the story than she did me. When I found out what she did, it hurt worse than any of my four divorces.”

“Why wasn’t I good enough?” Leslie asked.

“You’ve got it backwards,” Cat said. “Leslie, it was never about you not being good enough. It was about me being a coward. Lois hurt me so badly that the thought of ever exposing myself like that again scared the life out of me. I pushed you away, because I was afraid you would destroy me, and I was so determined to protect myself, to never be that vulnerable, that I didn’t care how badly I hurt you.

“If anyone wasn’t good enough, it was me. And I’m sorry. I just expected you to move on, at some point. Find a girl, fall in love.”

“I never wanted a girl,” Leslie said. “My whole life, you were the only one I ever wanted.”

“Leslie…” Cat said.

Kara watched as Leslie shook her head. “It’s okay,” she said. “Susan said something. Called it
demisexual.” She shrugged. “Someone who only experiences sexual attraction towards someone after a deep emotional connection is formed. I thought maybe that was me, but I think I need to get tumblr to invent a word for someone who only experiences sexual attraction towards people who will never, ever want them back.”

Cat reached up and put a hand on Leslie’s shoulder. “You’ll find someone,” Cat said. “If that’s what you want.”

“That’s the god-damned reason I’m out here on your balcony reliving the latest issue of Emo Bitch Weekly,” Leslie said. “I found someone, and she just isn’t fucking interested.”

Kara stared at Leslie for all of two seconds before she made the connection, and so many little moments over the last few weeks suddenly made sense. Leslie’s sudden change of attitude about moving into the Solarium the moment Kara mentioned Susan was moving in. Her restlessness at the Christmas party until Kara had assured her Susan was coming.

“Did she say she wasn’t interested?” Kara asked.

“No,” Leslie said, “but she didn’t really have to. The profound lack of interest was a pretty big clue.”

“Maybe-”

“Just drop it, okay,” Leslie said.

Kara shut up, but she was absolutely screaming inside and when she met Cat’s eyes, she could tell that Cat realized something was up. And then, because Cat was Cat, she did the most Cat thing ever.

Kara watched in amazement as Cat’s hands moved in the quick, graceful motions of sidespeak.

“What is it?” Cat signed.

Kara’s eyes flicked down to Leslie to make sure she was still staring out at the city before she signed back, ‘I know who it is, and she is in love with her too.’

Cat rolled her eyes. ‘Of course she is.’

Kara nearly laughed, because she didn’t even know it was possible to express that much annoyance with sidespeak.

“The bitch of it is, I knew it was happening,” Leslie said. “Just like it did with you. I just got up in the morning, and it felt like nothing was right until I was in the room with her, and once I was, it didn’t matter if we were talking about frequency-hopping or lighting up bad guys. I just kept hoping it wouldn’t happen. That moment that I had with you when suddenly, all I could think of was how much I wanted to touch you. And then, today, all the sudden I’m sitting there, leering at her like a teenage boy, and I had to get out of there before she figured out that I’m a complete loser who can’t keep it in her pants.”

“Oh, for the love of God,” Cat said, in a tone that she usually reserved for emails from board members. Kara and Leslie both turned to look at her. “You’re right. You do sound some emo teenager with her first crush, and it’s annoying.”

“Cat-” Kara said.

“What?” Cat snapped at Kara before turning back to Leslie. “Are you Leslie Willis, or aren’t you?”

“What are you talking about?” Leslie said.
“I’m talking about the woman who had a wall full of framed reviews calling her everything from a hack to a blight on morning radio,” Cat said. “I’m talking about the woman who cooked Hank Henshaw with a lightning bolt and was ready to throw down with Superman thirty seconds later. I’m talking about the woman who figured out how to disarm a nuclear bomb on the fly. I’m talking about Leslie Fucking Willis. You are amazing. You are astonishing. And you are going to march into the DEO and tell that attractive little lesbian who orders everyone around like she’s Napoleon that you love her and dare her not to feel the same way.”

“I.”

Cat thrust out her arm, pointing in the general direction of the DEO tower. “NOW!” she roared, making Leslie jump slightly. She held up the blue ring. “You have ten seconds before I take up sky writing.”

Kara couldn’t see Leslie’s face, but she knew Leslie was trying to decide if Cat would make good on her threat. She apparently decided Cat would definitely make good on her threat, because Leslie floated up off the balcony, and shot off towards the DEO without another word.

“Do you think that will work?” Kara asked.

“Of course,” Cat said as she took out her phone and started typing.

“What are you doing?” Kara asked.

“Texting Susan,” Cat said.

“Why?” Kara said.

“Because Leslie is an even bigger idiot than you are,” Cat said.

Susan frowned as the text alert she had set for Cat chimed. She reached down and pulled her phone out of her pocket.

Cat: Meet Leslie on the landing deck.

Cat: NOW!

Susan shot to her feet. “Wentworth, you got ops,” she called as she raced towards the landing deck at a dead run. The doors slid apart just as she hit the top step and she was barely through them when Leslie dropped out of the sky and landed in front of her.

“Hey,” Susan said. “Are you-”

She didn’t get to finish her question, because Leslie reached out and grabbed her and kissed her.

It was terrible. Really terrible. It was wet and their noses mashed together and it was too rough and it was just really, really obvious that Leslie had never, ever kissed anyone before and when she pulled back, she had a look of pure terror and complete embarrassment on her face. She started to back away and Susan knew exactly what was about to happen, and she would be god-damned if she was going to let it. She grabbed Leslie’s jacket and pulled her back in. One hand went around Leslie’s waist, and the other cradled Leslie’s face as Susan pulled her back down into another kiss.

This one was better. So, so much better. It wasn’t rushed and desperate and hopeless. This time, Susan was in control. She tilted her head just so, and it was light, and it was gentle and when she
moved her lips against Leslie’s it was practiced and the small whimper that came from Leslie was perfect and Susan felt the world fall away and for a moment there was nothing but her and the beautiful, amazing woman in her arms.

She pulled back from the kiss, smiling at Leslie, who was looking back at her with an expression of pure wonder on her face.

“Why didn’t we do that sooner?” Leslie asked.

“I was just waiting on you,” Susan said before she leaned in for another kiss.

“So you think they know the entire command center is watching them?” Lucy asked.

J’onn, who stood next to her, with his eyes closed, pinching the bridge of his nose, just said, “I swear this place is worse than a high school.”

“Stuff like this never happened before the Danvers sisters showed up,” Wentworth said.

Lucy looked around, a frown on her face. “Where are Danvers and Sawyer?”

“Making out in Sawyer’s office last I saw,” Wentworth said.

“I’m too old for this shit,” J’onn said.

Thursday, January 7th, 2016

The breakfast rush was finally over, and it was getting on towards the end of her shift when Sally stepped out of the back door of Noonan’s carrying four large bags of trash. It had been a pretty good morning for her. Good tips, Kara, who’d been MIA for a while, had stopped in and they’d gotten a few minutes to chat. She hadn’t had a single customer who was rude enough for her to notice, which was something close to miraculous for a weekday.

That’s probably why the whole thing came as such a surprise. The man grabbed her from behind, and before she could scream, he pressed a mask over her face. She heard a hissing sound, and tasted something metallic, and the fight went out of her.

Harper released his grip as the woman stopped struggling. He waited a few moments, just to make sure she’d breathed in all the nanites before he lifted the mask away from her face.

“Look at me,” he said. The woman turned towards him. He held out a small box. “Take this. Put one spray in the coffee of anyone who is wearing a DEO badge or a CatCo ID.”

“Okay,” the woman said.

“Good. Forget any of this happened, but remember your instructions,” he said. Then he turned and walked away.

Sally shook her head, feeling a little dizzy. Maybe she’d gone a little too long without eating. She might grab a bagel when she went back inside.

“Out with it, Sunshine,” Leslie growled as she and Kara drifted high above the city.
“Out with what?” Kara asked.

“You’re been grinning like someone gave you a barrel full of ice cream all morning,” Leslie said. “So, spit it out already.”

Kara grinned even wider and Leslie rolled her eyes.

“So, you and Susan?” Kara asked.

Leslie looked over at Kara and tried to be annoyed, tried to come up with some biting remark, but she couldn’t. Even the thought of Susan put a smile on her face.

“Yeah,” she said in a voice so soft it was embarrassing. “Me and Susan.”

Kara let out a squeal so loud a passing flock of birds turned suddenly out of fright and plowed into each other, falling a few dozen feet before they recovered.

“Oops,” Kara said.

Leslie shook her head. “Cat’s right. You’re twelve.”

Kara stuck out her tongue.

“I keep telling you I’m not interested.”

“Jerk.”

“Bitch.”

“Bitch who wants details!” Kara said.

Leslie laughed. “Will you stop grinning like an idiot?”

“I make no promises,” Kara said.

Leslie shook her head. “It was nice.”

“Nice?” Kara raised a hand and pointed at the DEO building. “I saw the look on Susan’s face this morning, and it was a lot better than nice.”

“Okay,” Leslie said. “It was amazing, alright. We didn’t even do anything more than kiss, but I finally get it. All the fuss, the giggling, the swooning, the drama. Like, right now, all I can think about is getting home at the end of the day so I can curl up with her arms around me.”

“Oh my god,” Kara said. “You’ve got it so bad.”

“Yeah,” Leslie said. “I swear if you tell anyone I will cook your tits.”

Kara laughed. “Your secret is safe with me.”

“It better be. Otherwise I’ll tell Cat about your little make-out session in Gotham.”

“Woah!” Kara held up her hands. “No need to go full on supervillain.”

“Oh, please,” Leslie said.

“Can I ask you something?”
“If I say no, you’ll pout until I give in and let you ask anyway,” Leslie said.

“See, this is why we’re such good friends. You get me.”

“And now we’re back to cooking your tits.”

“Okay, okay,” Kara said.

“Ask your question, Sunshine.”

“What made you realize how you felt?” Kara asked.

“I don’t know,” Leslie said. “I was just sitting in the ready room, reading through a procedure manual and watching Susan down on the ops floor and she glanced up and waved at me and I just couldn’t breathe until she looked away, and it just sort of clicked. I could feel her, the currents running through her, and I just wanted so much to reach out and touch her.”

“You can feel the electricity in Susan’s body?”

“Yeah. I can actually feel it in everybody, but it’s different with Susan.”

“What do you mean?”

“Everyone else just sort of fades into the background unless I’m actively paying attention, but Susan is always there now.”

“I get it,” Kara said. “Cat’s heartbeat is like that for me.”

“Really?

“Really,” Kara said. “I’m happy for you, Leslie.”

“Thanks. I don’t actually hate that you and Cat are together.”

Kara smiled so brightly that Leslie knew Kara understood what she was really saying, and it made an already good day that much better.

Friday, January 8th, 2016

National City Tribune

A Fuel Free Future?

By Siobhan Smythe

Following the surprise announcement earlier in the week of the Transmat Network, LCorp announced today that they are entering full production on three new environmentally-friendly power sources derived from Kryptonian technology licensed from Krypton Inc.

The first power source announced in today’s press conference is called the Omegahedron. It is being touted as a drop-in replacement for existing power plants. According to LCorp CEO Lena Luthor, a single Omegahedron, a device roughly the size of a baseball, could power National City for two thousand years at current usage levels, and would require no fuel of any sort during that time period, and contains less hazardous material that the average smart phone.
The second power source announced is called the Betahedron and is described as a smaller version of the Omegahedron, intended as a backup power source for use in facilities which require uninterrupted power in the event of a disruption to the power grid, such as hospitals and emergency services facilities which currently rely heavily on generators for backup power.

The final power source announced, and the one that will likely be within the reach of most consumer’s budgets, is the Jara crystal. These will be available in a variety of sizes from a small crystal about the size of a watch battery, said to be powerful enough to run a typical American household for a decade, up to crystals the size of a D cell battery that could power a small town for about the same amount of time.

Luthor declined to discuss price points for the Omegahedron and Betahedrons at this time but did say that prices for the Jara crystals would be comparable to rechargeable lithium ion batteries.

In addition to announcing the new power sources, Luthor brought Wayne Enterprises CEO Bruce Wayne on stage for a final announcement: a partnership between LCorp and Wayne Automotive to introduce Jara crystal-powered electric cars to replace Wayne Automotive’s entire fleet by the beginning of the 2017 Model Year.

LCorp is a subsidiary of Danvers International, which also owns CatCo World Wide Media, the Tribune’s parent company.

Saturday, January 9th, 2016

Eliza couldn’t help but smile at the huge grin on Kara’s face as Kara pressed the security disks to her, Alex and Maggie’s wrists. Both Alex and Maggie kept looking around a little wide-eyed at the interior of the building, taking in all the technology on display and the details of the alien architecture, but Eliza was focused entirely on Kara.

They had sat down and had a long talk a couple of days after Jeremiah’s little stunt. She had been horrified by what she’d heard. Alex’s reaction, her willingness to not only cut her father off, but to erase his memory entirely had been incredibly disturbing, but she’d found Kara’s willingness to let what he’d done pass every bit as disquieting as Alex’s rage. Both though, had paled in comparison to the fury she felt towards Fendra and how heartbroken she’d been when she’d heard Kara talking about her spiral on Krypton, and her decision to stay and die with her world.

What had disturbed her the most was Kara’s decision to keep the child. Not because she believed any nonsense about the child being tainted by the circumstances of her conception, but because of Kara’s reaction to what Fendra had done.

Eliza knew that she wasn’t the best mother in the world, but she had loved Alex and Kara so, so much. Whatever mistakes she had made, she had made entirely out of love and a desire to do what was best for her girls, and she couldn’t imagine ever living a single moment of her life when she didn’t want and love both of them. She had been terrified that Kara’s decision to keep the child had been motivated by some sense of obligation or duty, and that she would end up resenting the girl.

She should have known better. She had never met anyone else with the capacity for love and forgiveness that Kara had. The sheer joy and enthusiasm on display as she led them into the Genesis Chamber put to rest any doubts she had about whether or not Kara wanted the child.

Eliza did get a surprise when they entered the actual Genesis Chamber. Cat Grant sat in a chair the center of the platform next to what Eliza assumed was a birthing matrix sitting on some kind of pillar, with a tablet in her lap, reading to the birthing matrix.
Cat touched the tablet, then looked up at Kara with a huge smile on her face. “Hello, love,” Cat said.

“Hey there,” Kara said before leaning down and giving Cat a kiss that definitely wasn’t a chaste peck on the lips and went on until an uncomfortable cough from Alex made Kara pull back with a look on her face that was just a tiny bit smug.

“I didn’t expect to find you here,” Kara said.

“Carter asked if he could go ice skating with Sam and Ruby, so I had some free time,” Cat said. She finally looked away from Kara long enough to greet the rest of them. “Eliza, Alex, Maggie.”

“Afternoon, Cat,” Eliza said as Kara stepped around Cat to get to the birthing matrix.

“Ready?” Kara asked, bouncing cheerfully on the balls of her feet.

“Yes,” Eliza said.

Kara waved her hand and a hologram of a fetus appeared above the birthing matrix.

“This is Kiera El,” Kara said, and the beaming smile on her face spoke volumes.

Cat walked through the market square in Little Krypton beside Eliza, watching Kara, Alex and Maggie walk ahead of them, bickering and laughing and giving each other playful little shoves like a bunch of teenagers. It probably should have made her feel old, but it didn’t. It just made her happy to see Kara so carefree, even if it was only for a little while.

“It’s amazing what Kara has done here,” Eliza said.

“It really is,” Cat said, still a little amazed by it herself. “Aliens living openly side by side with humans. Free housing for the poor and underprivileged. Every home comes equipped with an attendant which is a live-in doctor, teacher, cook, babysitter, maid, handyman and bodyguard. Free power, water, sanitation and even free food for anyone who needs it. It’s a miracle.”

“Is it sustainable?” Eliza asked. “She’s got to be hemorrhaging money.”

“Not as badly as you might think,” Cat said, “but yes, she is. In the short term, the city has about two years’ worth of operating capital, so yes. In the long term, maybe. It’s not sustainable as a single enclave in a capitalist economy. But if she can grow the model and move the whole world into a post-scarcity economy, then yes. It won’t be quick, and people will fight her every step of the way.”

“It’s going to be hard for her,” Eliza said.

“Hard is an understatement,” Cat said. “But she’s strong, and she’s going to have a lot of help.”

“You love her,” Eliza said, and Cat glanced over at her, wondering where this was going. Unfortunately, she had a bit of an idea.

“Desperately,” Cat admitted. She took a deep breath, steadying herself for what seemed like an inevitable confrontation. “Is this where you tell me you don’t approve?”

“No,” Eliza said. “She loves you, and after what she’s been through, I think she’s more than earned
the right to have people respect her choices.”

Cat found herself smiling as she realized she and Eliza were going to get along better than she’d expected. “You’re doing better than her cousin,” Cat said.

One of the weariest sighs Cat had ever heard came from Eliza. “Clark means well,” she said. “He’s just a complete idiot.”

“I wish it was that simple,” Cat said, “but I’ve known Clark long enough to know that he’s actually brilliant. Not as smart as Kara, or at least, not as in command of his raw intelligence as she is. He’s something far, far worse than an idiot. He’s a self-righteous man who has had the profound misfortune of almost always being right.”

Eliza looked over at her and laughed. “That is probably the best description of Clark’s problem I have ever heard.”

“Well,” Cat said, preening just a bit, “I am the Queen of All Media for a reason.”

“I can see why she likes you,” Eliza said.

“My excessive self-confidence?” Cat asked.

“The way you refuse to admit fear,” Eliza said. “She has always admired bravery.”

“That explains her friends,” Cat said. “I’m not so sure about me.”

“Most people would have run away screaming long before now,” Eliza said.

“I won’t,” Cat said.

“I hope not,” Eliza said, “but I can’t help but wonder if you’ve figured out yet just what you’ve gotten yourself into.”

“What do you mean?” Cat asked, just a touch of trepidation creeping in.

“I admit, it took me a while to put it together,” Eliza said, ignoring Cat’s question. “I mean, we all sat there and watched her do it, and it still took me weeks to realize what she’d done. As well as I know Kara and the way she thinks, I really should have figured it out when she made Alex the Head of a Great House of Krypton, but everyone was distracted that night.”

“A little,” Cat admitted.

“Well, you have all the same clues I do, and you used to solve mysteries for a living. Think about it. Kryptonians don’t age under a yellow sun. Kara said it that night. They could all live long enough to see the Sun swell up into a Red Giant. That’s a long, long time to watch everyone you love grow old, wither and die. Especially when you have the power to stop it.”

“Oh.” Cat said as the pieces began to fall together. The way Kara had blithely ignored any mention of Cat’s own mortality. The Chrysalis Chamber. What had happened to Lucy.

“Lucy was the big clue,” Eliza said.

Cat looked across the market square to where Kara, Alex and Maggie were arguing over which color of cotton candy they wanted to buy.

“Forever suddenly seems a lot longer, doesn’t it?” Eliza asked.
“With her, it doesn’t sound so bad,” Cat said, because it didn’t. For the first time in her life, she had someone she could really imagine forever with.

“I know it must sound like I’m trying to scare you off, but I’m not,” Eliza said. “I just wanted you to be prepared.”

“Prepared for what?” Cat asked.

“Kara has this bad habit,” Eliza said. “I’m not sure if it’s something she picked up on Krypton, or if it’s a response to Krypton, but she puts off conversations if she thinks they’ll upset people. Waits until it just can’t wait anymore. Kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy, because most people’s immediate reaction is, ‘why didn’t you say something sooner?’ She’s going to wait until she’s scared, or hurt, or until you have another close call, and then she’ll spring it on you while emotions are high. I just thought you’d both be less likely to hurt each other if you had a chance to think about it before she popped the ‘hey, you want to be a Kryptonian?’ question on you.”

Cat laughed. “God, that sounds like a bad pickup line,” she said.

“Which is probably how it’s going to sound when Kara says it,” Eliza said.

Cat looked over at Kara who was juggling six pomegranates one-handed while she ate a huge cotton candy flower.

“Why would she think that’s a conversation that would upset me?” Cat asked.

“Think about how Kara would feel if someone asked her to give up being Kryptonian and become human,” Eliza said.

Cat didn’t have to think about it. She knew Kara would be devastated by the very idea.

“She doesn’t realize that we wouldn’t look at it the same way,” Eliza said. “Kryptonian culture is fifteen thousand years old and was a global culture before the first stones were laid at Damascus and Jericho. The entire planet was a culturally homogeneous ethnostate. Multiculturalism isn’t a concept that comes naturally to her, and as much as she’s tried, I don’t think she’s ever quite divorced culture and biology completely in her mind. For her, on an emotional level, stepping into the Chrysalis Chamber would be as much a renunciation of her culture and her heritage as a daughter of the House of El as her biology, and on that same level, she believes that asking you to become Kryptonian would be asking you to give up your culture and your heritage.”

“I could see why that would make her hesitate,” Cat said. “How long did it take you to decide?”

“About five minutes,” Eliza said. “There’s no way in hell I’m going to leave my girls if I can help it.”

“I guess I have some thinking to do,” Cat said, but as she watched Kara, she knew there was only one choice.
“You’re fine with Carter and Ruby,” Kara said.

“Carter and Ruby are old enough to play video games and pack-hunt people in the nerf arena,” Winn said. “Babies are different.”

“Well, you’re lucky she’s not a baby yet,” Kara said as they reached the central platform. She smiled as she saw that one of the attendants was already bringing the birthing matrix down to them.

“That’s not making this any less scary,” Winn said.

“Quit being a big wuss,” Kara said. “You stood up to Batman *and* Superman. You can meet my daughter.”

“Yeah, I can’t accidently break Batman or Superman,” Winn muttered.

“It will be fine, Winn,” Kaldur’ahm said in such a serious voice that Kara almost burst out laughing.

She waved her hand over the birthing matrix, and the hologram of Kiera appeared, and whatever Winn was about to say died on his lips as he took in the sight in front of him.

“Oh,” Winn said.

Kara waved him forward. “Come closer.”

Winn took a step closer, and Kara smiled at the look of wonder on his face. She reached up and waved a hand, switching from the live hologram to the projected appearance at birth.

“Wow,” Winn said. He looked over at Kara. “She’s beautiful.”

“Isn’t she?” Kara asked. “I-” She cut off as her text alert sounded. “Just a second.”

She stepped back from the birthing matrix, turning away as she took out her phone. There was a message from Cat.

Cat: I’m working on tomorrow’s press release and can’t find the list of conditions for the pilot program.

Kara: It’s not on the Sharepoint?

Cat: Obviously not.

Kara: I must have forgotten to upload it. Give me a moment.

Kara switched applications and remoted into her work computer long enough to grab the file Cat needed and upload it.

Kara: Check the Sharepoint again.

Cat: Got it. How are Jacob and the Hobbit doing with Kiera?

Kara started to type a reply when the sound of a soft voice singing caught her attention.

“The other night dear, as I lay sleeping

I dreamed I held you in my arms

But when I awoke, dear, I was mistaken
So I hung my head and I cried"

Kara turned around to see Winn resting her hand on the birthing matrix as he sang softly.

“You are my sunshine, my only sunshine
You make me happy when skies are gray
You'll never know dear, how much I love you
Please don't take my sunshine away”

He glanced over, and saw her looking at him, and he blushed.

“Ah…”

“It’s beautiful,” she said.

“My mom used to sing it to me when I couldn’t sleep,” Winn said.

Kara smiled again as she looked back down at her phone.

“I'll always love you and make you happy
And nothing else could come between
But if you leave me to love another
You'll have shattered all my dreams”

Kara sang the verse as she typed out a message to Cat.

Kara: Our girl is going to have the best uncles.

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Monday, January 11th, 2016

National City Tribune

Supergirl Announces ‘Molecular Surgery’ Center

By Siobhan Smythe

In the latest in a series of Kryptonian technology-related announcements, Supergirl announced that the Kryptonian Medical Foundation would be opening The Center for Molecular Surgery in the Kryptonian Medical Halls in the City of Hope effective Monday, January 18th. The Center is intended to host a clinical trial for FDA approval of a technology called a Chrysalis Chamber.

Originally developed on Krypton several thousand years ago to help colonists adapt to life on Krypton’s sister planet Daxam, the Chrysalis Chamber is capable of modifying or rewriting a person’s physiology all the way down to the genetic level. This capability will allow the new Molecular Surgery Center to offer treatments for a number of debilitating diseases, including Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease, Fibromyalgia, Sickle Cell Anemia, Cystic Fibrosis, Muscular Dystrophy and other genetic disorders.

In addition, the Kryptonian Medical Foundation also announced that the Center will be offering gender transition services, including procedures for both transmasculine and transfeminine patients.
which will result in an anatomy identical in form and function to cisgendered men and woman down to the genetic level, including full reproductive function. Procedures will be available to patients whether or not they have already had gender confirmation surgery.

Once the Chrysalis Chamber technology is approved for widespread use, it will become the centerpiece of a chain of clinics that will open nationwide, owned and operated by the Kryptonian Medical Foundation, which readers may recall was founded as a partnership between the Thomas Wayne Foundation, The Wayne Medical Division of Wayne Enterprises, Themyscira Enterprises, and the Artemis Society. Krypton Inc. and LCorp will both be joining the Kryptonian Medical Foundation as full partners. Krypton Inc. will supply the Chrysalis Chambers for the clinics, while the Thomas Wayne Foundation and the Artemis Society will staff the facilities, and LCorp will provide physical security. In addition, the Wayne Center for Legal Aid will have offices and legal staff on site at all facilities to assist patients with any legal issues that may result from their treatment.

During the pilot program, all treatment will be provided free of charge. The Kryptonian Medical Foundation plans to have pricing, payment and coverage details worked out with all major insurance providers as soon as possible but have promised that absolutely no one will be turned away due to inability to pay.

Olivia was in the middle of reviewing the latest position paper from one of the Republican think tanks, trying to find words to respond to the idiocy when her intercom buzzed. She reached over and answered, glad for the break from the stream of stupidity, classism and casual bigotry she’d been slogging through.

“Yes, Elizabeth?” Olivia asked.

“Ms. Nal is requesting a moment of your time, ma’am,” Elizabeth said.

“Do I have anything in the next twenty minutes?” Olivia asked.

“No, ma’am,” Elizabeth said.

“Then send her in,” Olivia said.

“Of course, ma’am,” Elizabeth said.

The line went dead and a moment later, the door opened, and Nia walked in looking even more nervous than usual. Olivia smiled as she stood up and walked over to greet the girl.

“Good morning, Nia,” Olivia said.

“Ma’am,” Nia said.

“Please, have a seat,” Olivia said as she sat down on one of the couches.

Nia sat down next to her. “Thank you for taking the time to see me,” she said.

“It’s always a pleasure,” Olivia said. “Do I have a speech I’ve forgotten about?”

“No,” Nia said. “This is actually personal.”

“Oh?” Olivia asked, more than a little confused. She liked Nia a lot. The girl had a way with words that was simply amazing, and she’d quickly become Olivia’s go-to speech writer in the months since she arrived at the White House, but they weren’t at all close, and she couldn’t imagine why the girl
would come to her for a personal issue unless it was with one of her staffers.

“Is everything okay?” Olivia asked.

Nia gave her an uncomfortable smile. “Yes. Of course. It’s just… Have you seen the press release Supergirl put out this morning?”

Olivia felt a small lump of dread. Surely someone would have told her if Kara had done something that was potentially damaging.

“No,” she said. “Should I have?”

“Oh! No, it’s nothing bad. Well, I mean, the Republicans will probably think it’s bad, because they think anything that involves people getting free healthcare is evil and should be illegal, but it’s not really bad. In fact, it’s going to help a lot of people, and I think it’s great, and I’m rambling,” Nia said. She stopped and took a breath. “This is why I prefer to write. It lets me organize my thoughts.”

“Why don’t you tell me what the press release was about,” Olivia said.

“Supergirl announced something called ‘The Center for Molecular Surgery,’” Nia said. “It’s a pilot facility designed to let them get FDA approval for a medical device called a Chrysalis Chamber that she says will be able to cure all sorts of conditions.”

“Aside from what I am sure will be an epic amount of screaming from the biotech and big pharma lobbies, that does sound like good news,” Olivia said.

“It is,” Nia said enthusiastically. “The thing is, I know you’re going to speak with Supergirl when you go to National City at the end of the month, and I wanted to ask a favor.”

Olivia nodded, surprised at how bold the usually shy girl was, though she supposed if there was a medical issue at stake, it would make sense. “Go on,” she said.

“I’m not sure if you’re aware of this, but I’m a transgender woman,” Nia said. “I started my transition before puberty, which makes things a lot easier, medically speaking, and I really lucked out that my parents were supportive. But even with all those advantages, there’s a limit to what our current medical technology can achieve.”

“And Kryptonian medicine can do more?” Olivia guessed.

Nia nodded. “The press release said that the Center will also be offering full transition services, all the way down to the genetic level. And that the procedures would also be effective on people who’ve already had confirmation surgery.”

Olivia stared at Nia for a moment, processing the implications. It wasn’t a subject she was especially well-versed on. Transgender rights, yes, but the actual day-to-day realities of the medical side of it weren’t something she’d delved into. She had advisors to know those kinds of things for her when it came time to deal with legislation that might impact transgender people. She did know that Nia would be on hormones the rest of her life, and that she couldn’t carry a child. If Kara had the technology to fix that, Nia’s presence in her office suddenly made a lot more sense.

“What, exactly, are you asking?” Olivia asked, more to confirm what she suspected than anything else.

“I’d like to be in the trial group,” Nia said. “I thought maybe if you spoke to Supergirl when you were in National City, I might have a shot at getting in.”
Olivia smiled. “I think we can do better than that,” she said. “Come with me.” She got up, walked over to her desk and sat down, gesturing to the chair next to her desk for Nia as she opened her desk drawer and took out her cell phone. She dialed Kara and put the call on speaker.

“Hey, Olivia,” Kara said.

“Hello, Supergirl,” Olivia said. “I hope I’m not interrupting anything.”

“You are, and Cat is very put out,” Kara said.

Nia’s eyes got big as saucers and Olivia closed her eyes, wishing not for the first time that Kara had a little more respect for the office, if not the person.

“You’re on speaker,” Olivia said.

“Oh,” Kara said. “Damn. A little warning next time.”

“I’ll try to keep that in mind,” Olivia said.

“What can I do for you?” Kara said.

Olivia opened her eyes and looked at Nia with a smile. “I just heard about the press release regarding the surgical center,” she said.

“Really?” Kara asked. “I figured you had an alert set for every time I made the news by now.”

“There’s a recap in my morning briefings,” Olivia said. “If I checked the news every time your name popped up, I wouldn’t have time to run the country.”

“I’m not that bad,” Kara said. “Am I?”

“Yes, you are,” Olivia said. “I have one of my staffers here with me. Her name is Nia Nal. She’s one of my speech writers.”

“Oh! Did you write the one she gave at the amnesty signing?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Nia said. “I also wrote the one she gave later that night.”

“Want a job?” Kara said. “I promise I can pay better than Olivia.”

Nia laughed, and Olivia sighed and stepped on the urge to murder Kara in her sleep.

“I didn’t call for you to steal away one of my best people,” Olivia said.

“Yeah, sorry, I’ve been spending too much time with Ms. Grant,” Kara said. “What. Damn it. Nia, forget I said that.”

Nia laughed again, and Olivia just rolled her eyes.

“She’s got a cute laugh,” Kara said. “Ouch! Hey! What was that for?”

“Supergirl!” Olivia said.

“Yes?” Kara asked.

“Can I ask you a small favor?” Olivia asked.
“If you’re going to ask me to punt Miranda Crane into orbit, the answer is yes,” Kara said.

This time Olivia couldn’t help but laugh along with Nia.

“Sadly, no,” Olivia said. “Much as I think all of us with enjoy that, I’m afraid punting Senators into orbit is bad for the public image.”

“Okay, but if you ever change your mind, you have my phone number,” Kara said.

“I do,” Olivia said. “Nia was wondering if she could be included in the trial group for your new surgery center.”

“Oh,” Kara said, her tone suddenly much more serious.

“Is it okay if I ask which course of treatment?” Kara asked. “If you’d rather not discuss it in front of Olivia, I could give you my phone number, and we can talk later.”

“No, it’s okay,” Nia said. “I’m a transgender woman. Five years post-op.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “Give me your cell number and your email address.” Nia quickly rattled off the information. “Got it. You’ll get a call from someone named Nimda in about an hour. She will tell you what medical records we need. I’m not sure if we can fit you into the actual clinical trial group, but if Olivia brings you with her and can spare you for the day, I’ll make sure you get treatment.”

“Thank you!” Nia said.

“You’re welcome,” Kara said. “I look forward to meeting you.”

“Likewise,” Nia said.

“Olivia, is there anything else you need right now?” Kara asked.

“No, thank you,” Olivia said. “That was everything.”

“Okay. See you soon,” Kara said, and the line went dead.

Almost immediately, Olivia found herself being hugged tightly by Nia. “Thank you, so much!” Nia said.

Tuesday, January 12th, 2016

“Okay, that settles it,” Winn said. “We are definitely getting you a Warcraft account. With reflexes like that, you’d make an amazing healer.”

“I have an account,” Kaldur’ahm said. “My main was an elemental shaman, but I stopped playing after we downed Arthas.”

“You raided Icecrown?” Winn asked as he opened the door to Noonan’s.

“Yes,” Kaldur’ahm said. “Donna was our main tank, Dick was our off tank, Gar and Barbara were our healers, Raven, Kori, both Cass’s, Virgil and I DPS’d.”

“Okay, we have been dating for a month and a half, and I’m just finding this out?” Winn asked.
“It never came up,” Kaldur’ahm said.

Winn glared for a moment before turning to the woman behind the counter. “Morning, Sally,” he said.

“Hey, Winn,” she said. “The usual?”

“Yeah,” Winn said.

“Jackson,” Sally said, “I’ll get Ms. Grant’s order, too.”

“Thank you,” Kaldur’ahm said.

Winn turned back to Kaldur’ahm to ask another question, so he never saw the odd, glassy-eyed look Sally gave the CatCo badge hanging from his laptop case. He also didn’t see her remove a spray bottle from her pocket and spray a dose of Tycho’s Brain nanites into his coffee.

Thursday, January 14th, 2016

National City Tribune

Toyman Tries to Leave the Box

By Siobhan Smythe

Winslow Schott, the bomber known as The Toyman, is back in the news today. Guards, acting on an anonymous tip, conducted a search of Schott’s cell yesterday and discovered a key to the cell, a weapon built into a yo-yo, and most of a guard’s uniform. Further investigation revealed an accomplice, prison guard Jacqueline Nimball.

This is Schott’s third escape attempt since his incarceration, and in light of the danger he poses to the public, officials have announced that Schott will be transferred to the Federal Supermax Prison Facility known as ADX Florence.

There is no word yet on what charges Jacqueline Nimball will face for her role in Schott’s escape plan.

Kara looked up from the contract she was working on at the sound of a polite cough from the doorway of her and Cat’s shared office.

“Hey, Winn,” Kara said. She didn’t really have to ask why he was there. She just turned to Cat. “I’ll be upstairs.”

Cat just waved her off without looking up, which was her way of respecting their privacy.

Kara stood up and led Winn out of the office and over to the private elevator. As obviously upset as he was, Winn hesitated a moment before stepping into the elevator with her, which brought a small smile to Kara’s face.

The ride up to the forty-second floor was as quiet as it was tense, but Kara had been expecting this. She led Winn into her office and closed the doors behind them.

“You knew?” Winn asked.
“Yes,” Kara said.

“You made the call?” he asked.

“I had Nimda make it,” Kara said.

Winn stepped forward and pulled her into a hug so tight she worried for a moment that he would hurt himself.

“Thank you!” he said.

Kara wrapped her arms around him and hugged him back, more than a little confused by his reaction. She’d been expecting him to be upset that she hadn’t given him a heads up on what was going on, but honestly, she’d been a little afraid to. Any time Winn’s dad came up in the old timeline, he’d been a wreck, and the whole thing had led to one of the worst periods in their friendship the first time around. She hoped that their relationship was on a lot more solid footing this time around, but Winn’s dad poked Winn’s crazy in unpredictable ways.

“You’re welcome,” she said.

“Never, ever tell me what he did in the other timeline,” Winn said.

“I think I can manage that,” Kara said.

“Can you hide me from Siobhan?” Winn asked.

“Tell me you didn’t find out about this because she came after you for an interview,” Kara said.

“I could, but we both know I’d be lying,” he said.

Kara sighed and squeezed Winn a little tighter. “I’ll talk to Vicki,” she said. “I’m sure we can find a puppy wedding or a kitten bar mitzvah or something to keep Siobhan busy.”

“You’re the best,” Winn said.

Friday, January 15th, 2016

National City Tribune

Roombas for the Environment

By Siobhan Smythe

Over the past few weeks, Kryptonian robots, referred to their creators simply as drones and attendants, have become a common sight in National City. They serve as the police force in the Kryptonian-built-and-owned City of Hope, and as paramedics, doctors and EMTs trained in both human and alien medicine all over the city.

Now the rest of the world may have to get used to the sight of these mechanical helpers.

In the latest in a series of literally world-changing announcements, LCorp revealed today that they are licensing thousands of the robots from Krypton Inc. These robots will be used for environmental clean-up.

The first items on LCorp’s cleaning agenda are fifteen EPA Superfund sites currently classified as
extremely high priority. The cleanup of these fifteen sights will serve as a test case for the LCorp project, and if it proves successful, contracts may be awarded for all sites on the Superfund list, as well as numerous other regions which suffer from man-made environmental damage.

In addition, LCorp has also announced a partnership with Krypton Inc. called the Recycle Everything Initiative. LCorp has purchased over a hundred commercial landfills across the United States, and starting in February, LCorp robots will harvest the trash, which will be moved using Transmat technology to a new recycling facility built by Krypton Inc. According to LCorp, one hundred percent of the trash in those landfills will be recycled.

LCorp is a subsidiary of Danvers International, which also owns CatCo World Wide Media, the Tribune’s parent company.

“I don’t even know why you’re surprised,” Shay said. “I mean, yeah, she’s hot, but anyone with eyes could see that she was sniffing around Willis. What did you think would happen?”

“I don’t know,” Chase said. “The stupid part is, it made me like her even more. I mean, she’s hot, she’s smart, she’s actually kind of scary when you get down to it, *and* she’s super loyal to her friends.”

“You forgot the part where she’s banging your arch nemesis,” Shay said as she pulled open the door to Noonan’s.

“Please,” Chase said. “Willis hardly rates.”

“If Willis hardly rated, you wouldn’t have shot yourself in the foot with the hottest little butch I’ve ever laid eyes on,” Shay said.

“Okay, I fucking hate Willis, alright,” Chase said.

“I don’t think there’s a gay woman at the DEO who doesn’t hate Willis about now,” Shay said.

“Can I help you ladies?” the woman behind the counter asked.

Chase glanced at her, noting the name badge that read Sally. “I’d like a large Americano and an everything bagel with extra cream cheese.”

“Sesame seed bagel with peanut butter and bananas, and a large mocha, triple chocolate,” Shay said.

“Got it,” Sally said.

“I hate you, too,” Chase said.

“Please, you know you’d hit this,” Shay said.

Chase laughed. “You’re wrong though,” she said.

“What about?” Shay asked.

“Everyone hating Willis,” Chase said. “I don’t think Danvers, Lane or Sawyer give a damn.”

“That’s because Danvers and Sawyer are too busy banging each other behind every door with a lock, and Lane is pining over Supergirl,” Shay said.

“Can you blame her?” Chase said. “I mean, who wouldn’t want to bag Supergirl?”
“Me,” Shay said. “Way too much drama there.”

Chase glanced over to see how their order was coming along and noted that the espresso was just starting to pour. She turned back to Shay and missed Sally spraying nanites in her cup.

Adam walked into his apartment and tossed his keys and his wallet into the bowl on the table by the door, then started peeling off layers of clothing. It was one of the things he absolutely hated about Opal City in January. Wading through knee-deep snow had stopped being fun around the time he outgrew snowball fights and sled rides.

Once he was down to jeans and a t-shirt, he headed over to the fridge and grabbed a beer before dropping down on the couch and kicking his shoes off. He picked up the remote and turned on the TV, more for the noise than because he cared what was on. He took a sip of his beer and leaned back, watching the news.

The program he had pitched that afternoon had gone over like a lead balloon, and not for the first time, but this time meant he was officially unemployed, unless he could find someone else to pitch to. Not that he hadn’t already pitched to every charity in town, but that was the problem with living in a city so steeped in old money. No one gave a shit about a program designed to help convicts reintegrate back into society.

Maybe it was time for a change in scenery. Find someplace where people’s idea of charity wasn’t donating money to an Opera House that charged two hundred dollars for the worst seats in the house. Somewhere he could put his degrees to good use. Metropolis, maybe. It was possible he could retool the program for Suicide Slums.

“CatCo CEO Cat Grant took a moment to address allegations of bias in CatCo’s reporting on news related to Supergirl and the other aliens in National City today as she left CatCo headquarters.”

Adam looked up at the TV to see his mother walking out of the front of her building with a tall redhead woman wearing glasses beside her. The two of them were both smiling as the taller woman talked, but she stopped and stepped in between Cat and the camera as it approached.

“Ms. Grant, what do you say to recent allegations of bias in your reporting where Supergirl and the aliens of National City are concerned?” someone off-camera asked.

“That they’re ridiculous and a waste of time,” Cat said, stepping around the redhead.

“What about accusations that you traded favorable coverage for access to Kryptonian technology?” the reporter asked.

“Lies,” Cat said. “Supergirl offered to upgrade CatCo’s security with Kryptonian defensive technology after a terrorist attack - motivated by fear and bigotry- took the lives of nine CatCo employees. I stand by that decision, given that fact that there was recently a second terrorist attack just outside of the CatCo security perimeter that was clearly motivated by our continued association with Supergirl. But let me be clear. This is not the first time CatCo WorldWide Media has been accused of bias, and it’s always by people spouting outright lies and claiming they are the gospel truth, but CatCo’s reporters all get reminded of something most other news outlets have forgotten. If someone says it’s raining, and another person says it’s dry, it’s not a reporter’s job to quote them both. It’s a reporter’s job to look out the window and find out which is true. That’s what CatCo does. We report facts. Yes, like any news organization, we offer commentary and editorial on those facts. Yes, that commentary has always been in favor of people who are kind, people who help others, and people who champion the rights and freedoms of others. Because it damn well should be. Because
people who are trying to make the world a better place deserve to have their voices amplified.

“But if the critics and the cynics out there absolutely must have a negative critique of a woman who has dedicated her life to protecting other people and making their lives better, here it is.

“She eats like a child. Her choice in pizza toppings is absolutely revolting and surpassed only by her choice in ice cream brands, and if I catch her eating potato chips on my balcony one more time, I will have her banned from the building.

“Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ve wasted enough time on this nonsense.”

The video cut back to the anchorwoman in the studio, and Adam stopping paying attention and looked down at the binder lying on the coffee table in front of him.

He had read through it several times, and still wasn’t sure how he felt about it. Some of the letters were just crumpled up sheets of paper with some variation of ‘Dear Adam’ on them. Others were a quarter or a half a page, or sometimes even a full page. A few were even multiple pages. One ran on for almost six pages. Some were crumpled, some were ripped into pieces and carefully taped back together. A few had coffee stains on them. Some talked about how proud she was of him. Others about how much she regretted leaving him. The only thing they all had in common where that they were unfinished.

However much this Kara Danvers tried to spin it, he couldn’t get past the fact that Cat had never once cared enough to actually finish one of the letters. In fact, the letters made him angry more than anything else. If she cared as much as she claimed in them, why didn’t she finish them? Why didn’t she send them?

The most frustrating part about it was that he still wanted to get to know her. He still, after all this time, wanted his mother.

When he had heard the report about the shooting at CatCo, he had very nearly jumped on a plane, but then the news came that she was okay, and he had waited. He had wanted to see if it would finally be enough to make her reach out.

She hadn’t.

He leaned forward and sat his beer down on the coffee table and flipped the binder open. He reread Kara’s letter, wondering again why the woman she described, the woman in the unfinished letters, was so different from the woman who had absented herself from her son’s life.

He flipped to the back of the binder, looking at the flight vouchers.

Maybe it was time he found out.

Nia looked around as she stepped into the foyer of the apartment. She wasn’t sure where she was, or why she was there, but she felt a sense of weight to the place. Like it was important. Like the fate of the whole world hinged on this place.

She heard a sound. It was muffled and indistinct, but she felt drawn towards it. She walked further into the apartment. It was beautifully decorated, with burnt orange walls, tan carpet, and sleek, modern furniture with sand-colored upholstery and bronze trim. The sound came again, clearer this time. The sound of a baby crying. She followed the cries down a hall, past an open door that led to an art studio that smelled of oils and paint thinner, before coming to another open door that led to a nursery.
She stepped inside and couldn’t stop herself from smiling at the cheerfulness of the room. The walls and ceiling were painted a bright sky blue, with lovingly rendered clouds covering the ceiling and upper edges of the wall. One corner was dominated by a yellow sun with a smiling face looking down at the center of the room. The lower half of the walls were covered in brilliant sunflowers, each one unique, and all of which seemed to spring up from the green carpet. The furniture in the room was all stained white, and all of it looked hand-made. Two heavy-duty rocking chairs with strange symbols carved into the wood. A changing table. A bookshelf filled with baby toys and a Supergirl teddy bear occupying a place of pride. In the center of the room, a mobile hung from the ceiling with a colorful rainbow of dragons hanging from the arms above a beautifully-carved crib covered with more of the strange symbols.

The sound of the crying came from the crib, and Nia went over to it and looked inside. The crib was empty except for a dull gray blanket. Nia frowned at the blanket. It seemed out of place in the cheerful, colorful room. She reached out and picked it up and dull gray dust slid from it, revealing a silky-soft red blanket.

Nia looked up at the sound of laughter. It came again, calling out to her, and she followed it, carrying the blanket with her. The sound led her back to the living room and out onto a rooftop. The roof was covered with grass, and a line of coconut trees ran along the edge.

A boy with curly hair and a girl with a long ponytail ran across the grass, chasing a white dog with a red collar and a golden tag.

The scene might have been idyllic, if it weren’t for the red sky and the woman floating above them. She had long, dark hair and pale skin. Her face was covered by a black mask, a menacing mix of curves and angles. She wore a black cape and a black suit like the kind favored by most of the Kryptonians. There was even a symbol on the chest.

The symbol looked like Supergirl’s from a distance, but as Nia approached, she realized it was different. The same diamond shaped border, but the S was missing, replaced by a skull with its mouth open, as if it were screaming.

Nia’s eyes started to water, and she nearly choked on the smell of smoke. She looked over the side and saw the whole city burning.

Nia opened one eye and glared balefully at the clock. Three AM. Wonderful. At least tomorrow was Saturday, which meant she could sleep, but she really, really wished she could figure out what the hell that dream meant.

She rolled over, fully intending to go back to sleep, when it suddenly occurred to her that she was going to meet Supergirl. The thought brought a smile to her face, because it meant there was a very real chance she might get some answers about the stupid dream.
Date Night

Chapter Summary

Cat and Kara go on their first official date.

Chapter Notes

This chapter definitely earns the explicit rating.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, January 16th, 2016

“Oh, thank God!” Winn said, and Alex just shook her head.

“How bad is it?” she asked.

“It’s bad,” Winn said. “Really, really bad. I’ve never seen her like this.”

“Come on,” Maggie said. “She spent a decade on the front line of a war. How bad could it really be?”

Alex looked over at Maggie, and a small smile tugged at the corner of her lips.

“Remember you said that,” Alex said as she walked into the apartment. She wasn’t three steps inside when Kara appeared out of the bedroom, moving at super-speed.

“What about this? How does it look? Do you think Cat will like it? No? Of course she won’t. It’s terrible! What was I thinking?” Kara said, disappearing again before anyone could get in a word.

“I take it back,” Maggie said.

Alex looked at the collection of people sitting around the living room. Leslie and Sam were setting in the corner, and both of them were laughing. Susan looked completely done with the whole situation. Lucy, Lena and Zatanna all looked a little shell-shocked. Astra looked like Astra. Stoic and unreadable as ever. Kaldur’ahm looked vaguely green around the gills, and Eliza was sitting in the corner, reading the latest issue of CatCo magazine like she didn’t have a care in the world.

“How many outfits?” Alex asked.

“Thirty,” Eliza said without looking up.

“Oh, God,” Alex said. “You know better-”

Kara zipped back into the room, looked around at everyone, then zipped back out again.

“Thirty-one,” Eliza said.
“You know better than to let her get past five,” Alex said.

Kara reappeared, squeaked like a mouse, and was gone again.

“I’m staying out of this,” Eliza said. “I learned my lesson after the homecoming incident her junior year.”

Kara reappeared. “Too red, isn’t it?” she said before vanishing again. Alex barely had time to notice that the entire outfit was bright yellow.

She shook her head and walked over to the spot Kara kept coming back to. A moment later, Kara reappeared and Alex grabbed her by the shoulders.

“Alex!” Kara screamed. “When did you get here?”

“Four outfits ago,” Alex said.

“You’ve got to help,” Kara said. “I don’t have anything to wear!”

“Yes, I’m sure all thirty-five outfits were completely terrible,” Alex said.

“They were!” Kara said with a small stomp that shook the entire floor.

“Red hair or blonde?” Alex asked.

“You’ve seen Cat before,” Kara said, confusion written on her face.

“You!” Alex said.

“OH!” Kara said. “Um… blonde.”

“Okay,” Alex said. “Go put all the blue dresses on one of the rolling racks and bring them out.”

“Right,” Kara said, then disappeared.

Alex turned around. “Lena, you’re on make-up. Lucy, you’re on jewelry. Maggie, can you get me a scotch? Astra, catch Kara when she tries to jump out the window.”

“She’s not going to jump out the window,” Eliza said.

Alex rolled her eyes. “Senior Prom,” she said.

Eliza finally looked up from her magazine.

“Point taken,” Eliza said. “Astra, be a dear and catch Kara when she tries to jump out of the window.”

Kara came back into the room pushing a rolling dress rack filled with blue dresses.

Alex took the scotch Maggie pressed into her hand and knocked it back, then walked over and started looking through the rack.

“Something sleeveless,” Maggie said.

Alex looked over at Maggie. “It’s the middle of winter,” she said.

“Maggie’s right,” Susan said. “Every time Cat sees Kara’s biceps, her face goes straight into NC-17
“Sleeveless it is,” Alex said.

Cat sat at her vanity, staring at her reflection in the mirror with a sense of déjà vu. Tonight felt so much like the night of the CatCo Gala. It was hard to believe that the Gala was only two months ago. So much had happened since that night. She had found out that Kara was neither as young nor as innocent as she had thought but was in every way even more magnificent and astonishing than Cat had ever imagined. The most amazing part of it though was that Kara loved her.

Things weren’t perfect. They still argued, usually about each other’s safety, though more than once over Kara’s disturbingly cavalier disregard for human laws when they stood in the way of her plans. But even then, their fights were rooted in their love for each other.

It wasn’t perfect, no relationship was, but it was as close to perfect as either of them were ever likely to find. Cat had been jaded and cynical about love and relationships for so long that she could hardly believe that she could look at Kara and see forever looking back at her. That she could believe in it enough, want it enough, that she was willing to commit to marriage and motherhood before they had ever been on a single date.

Though she was definitely looking forward to the date, and to breaking her vow to keep her hands to herself.

She put down the brush she was holding, finally satisfied with her makeup, then stood up and walked over to the closet. She took down the pants hanging on the door and stepped into them, fastening them before she stepped into her shoes, and finally pulled on her jacket.

She took a moment for one last look in the mirror, and what she saw there brought a smile to her face. She might be closer to fifty than forty-five, but she still looked good, and the outfit was going to knock Kara’s socks off.

Kara felt more than a little ridiculous. She had stood face to face with the literal god of evil and fought him without fear, but here she was, shaking like a leaf as she stood in front of Cat’s door. The door to the apartment where she had been living for the past three weeks.

This felt bigger, somehow. Like more was at stake. It was insane. Cat loved her. Cat had actually proposed to her. They had been living together for weeks. They were having a baby together.

Okay. She could do this. She could totally do this. She would ring the doorbell and Cat would open the door and everything would be okay. She could do this. She just-

The door opened and Kara forgot how to breathe. Cat stood there in the door in a black silk tuxedo with royal blue velvet trim and strappy black sandals with a four-inch heel. Her hair was pulled in in a fancy twist and held in place with black lacquered-hair sticks with blue dragons painted on them. She also wore sapphire and diamond pear drop earrings, and a sapphire-studded graduated fringe necklace where the gem-studded strands of fringe trailed down over the bare skin between the lapels of her jacket.

Kara stood there, trying to process what she was seeing, but her brain couldn’t get much further than ‘Cat… tuxedo… so hot…” before it overheated and had to start all over again.

Cat gave her a grin that was downright predatory as she stepped out of the door. She extended a finger, pressing it to the underside of Kara’s chin, closing Kara’s mouth with an audible click.
“See something you like?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded.

Cat’s grin got a little wider. “You know, it’s not very nice to keep a lady waiting.”

Cat’s words seemed to break the spell and Kara felt herself blushing. “I’m sorry,” she said. “It’s just, you always look amazing, but tonight…” She let herself look Cat up and down. “You’re breathtaking.”

“And you are stunning,” Cat said. “So, do I get to know where you are taking me?”

Kara smiled. “You’ll see when we get there,” she said.

“You know I hate waiting,” Cat said.

“Who says you have to wait?” Kara asked. “Nimda, two for transmat.”

The flash of the transmat engulfed them for a moment, and when it died away, it left them surrounded by the walls of the Sanctuary Entrance Hall.

“Well,” Cat said, “points for boldness, but none for taste.”

Kara frowned. “You don’t like it?”

“Considering the only other time I’ve been here, I watched the woman I love stab herself and nearly bleed out, I’m going to go with ‘no’,” Cat said.

Kara reached out, resting her hands on the upper curves of Cat’s hips. “I’m sorry,” she said. “I spend so much time here, and so much time with you, I didn’t even realize you haven’t been back since that night. But I promise you, there are more wonders here than horrors.”

Cat closed her eyes and nodded. “I’m still not sure I want to spend tonight of all nights here,” she said.

“We’re not,” Kara said. She took Cat’s hand in hers. “Come with me.”

Cat opened her eyes and nodded. Kara turned and started walking, leading them towards the entrance. The massive armored doors swung open, and they walked through them, out onto a stone path which they followed down to the lagoon.

“Better?” Kara asked as they exited the forest and came out onto the beach.

“Oh, darling, this is beautiful,” Cat said.

Kara smiled as she looked out at the lagoon. She’d had Nimda add a boardwalk from the beach out to a platform in the middle of the lagoon, and another boardwalk from the platform to an enormous Polynesian-style bungalow sitting even deeper into the lagoon. The boardwalks were lined with tea lights inside of colored glass globes, and the platform was circled in tiki torches.

“I thought you’d like it,” Kara said.

“I love it,” Cat said. “It reminds me of that resort you booked me at when I went to Fiji.”

“Likuliku,” Kara said. “You loved that place.”
“I did,” Cat said.

“Come on,” Kara said, leading Cat out until the boardwalk.

“Has this been here the whole time?” Cat asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I thought of it the first time I saw the lagoon, and I knew you would love it, but that was just after I started working for you this time around. I wasn’t sure then if I’d ever be able to tell you the truth, or how you would react if I did, and I couldn’t imagine how much it would hurt to have this and not be able to share it with you.”

Cat gave Kara’s hand a small tug and Kara turned around, only to find herself being enfolded into Cat’s embrace and very thoroughly kissed. She smiled at Cat when the kiss ended, not in any hurry to leave the warm circle of Cat’s arms.

“What was that for?” Kara asked.

“For all the times you must have wanted to kiss me, and couldn’t,” Cat said. “I forget, sometimes, how long you’ve loved me.”

Kara hugged Cat a little tighter. “Since ten fifteen in another life,” she said.

“That amazes me,” Cat said. “There’s a whole history of us that I don’t remember, and then a moment comes along like this, and I wish I could, because every moment spent with you is precious and wonderful and special.”

“You were amazing,” Kara said. “I have never met a single version of you on any world that wasn’t amazing.”

“I imagine the same could be said for you,” Cat said.

Kara looked down and shook her head as memories of more than one of her other selves ran through her head.

“Not really,” Kara said. “The universes where I don’t have either you or Alex… Those don’t end so well.”

Cat reached out and tilted Kara’s head up until their eyes met.

“You have us,” Cat said. “I will stay with you for as long as you want me too. Forever, if that’s what you want. And you know someone would need heavy machinery to pry Alex away from you.”

Kara smiled. “Forever sounds just about right.”

Cat leaned in and kissed her again, and Kara just melted into it, getting lost in how soft and gentle it was, and for a moment, she thought staying right there forever sounded perfect.

Unfortunately, her stomach had other ideas, which it announced, loudly. Cat broke the kiss when she started laughing, and Kara couldn’t help but join in.

“Nice to know where your priorities are,” Cat said.

“You,” Kara said. “You are always my priority. I just need fuel to keep up with all your demands.”

“Well, we should feed you then,” Cat said, “because I plan on being very demanding tonight.”
Kara moaned. “We could skip dinner,” she said. Her stomach, as if sensing what she’d just offered, immediately growled in protest.

“Apparently not,” Cat said. “Come on. Let’s feed you.”

“I know what I’d like to eat,” Kara said.

“Mm… Brazen is a good color on you,” Cat said.

Kara smiled and bent down, scooping Cat up in her arms and carrying her the rest of the way out to the platform.

The platform itself was divided into a small dining area with a table and two chairs, and a dance floor. Kara sat Cat down next to the table and pulled out her chair for her. Cat sat down, and Kara leaned down and pressed a kiss to Cat’s cheek.

“I love you,” Kara whispered as she pushed Cat’s seat in. Then she moved around to the opposite side of the table to take her own seat.

As she sat down, Kolex appeared out of the bungalow carrying a tray with two plates and a bottle of wine.

“I went with a Hawaiian theme for dinner,” Kara said.

“That tray better not be loaded with a Hawaiian pizza,” Cat said.

“Um… Dinner might be delayed a few minutes,” Kara said.

Cat narrowed her eyes, but before she could say anything, Kolex sat a plate in front of her. She glanced down, and Kara smiled at the surprise on Cat’s face.

“What is this?” Cat asked.

“Pan-seared Ahi tuna,” Kara said proudly.

Cat gave her a glare, but Kara could see the smile tugging at the corner of her lips. “Not a bad start,” Cat said, “but you’re on thin ice.”

Dinner turned out to be fantastic, and completely devoid of pizza. When Kara had said a Hawaiian theme, she’d half expected some horrible attempt at a Luau, complete with a whole roast pig. Instead, she’d gotten a series of amazing fusion dishes. The pan-seared Ahi was cooked rare and served cold with a ginger dressing and a spicy Asian slaw. It was followed by a Lomi Salmon Bruschetta, then an Ahi Poké spinach salad with a balsamic vinaigrette dressing. The main dish was Lau Lau, pork slow-roasted in taro leaves, which had been served with a sweet and sour pineapple chutney. Dessert had been a mango sorbet and Kona coffee.

Even if the food hadn’t been divine, Cat would have enjoyed herself. Sitting out over the water, having dinner with Kara by torchlight as the waves rolled in around them. It was like something out of a dream. Wonderful and peaceful and romantic.

The strapless blue dress Kara was wearing didn’t hurt either.

Kara reached across the table and took Cat’s hand as the robot cleared away the dishes.

“What are you thinking?” Kara asked.

“Just that this is a wonderful place,” Cat said. “I’m glad we came.”
“Even if the start was a little rocky?” Kara asked.

“Oh, well?” Cat said. “I know this place must mean a lot to you.”

“Not as much as you might think,” Kara said. “Don’t get me wrong. I love it, and for now, I need it because so much of what I’m doing is centered here, but it’s just a place. Places come and go. Home is where my family is. Alex, Maggie, J’onn, Winn, Lucy, James, Susan, Eliza, Leslie, Astra, Lena, you and Carter. Our daughter.”

“Places do come and go,” Cat said, “but this is a piece of your heritage. You shouldn’t have to give it up or feel bad about wanting to spend time here, just because I have a few bad memories.”

“We’ll make new memories,” Kara said. “Good ones. I promise.”

“I’d like that,” Cat said.

Kara smiled at her, and Cat’s heart skipped a beat. She almost wanted to laugh at herself. She was as besotted as a teenager with her first crush. It felt incredible though. Wonderful and precious, and she cherished it.

Kara stood up. “Come dance with me,” she said.

Cat stood up and followed Kara out onto the dance floor. Kara turned around and rested her arms on Cat’s shoulders, crossing her wrists behind Cat’s neck. Cat rested her hands on Kara’s hips as music started to fill the air.

“Nora Jones,” Cat said as they began to sway to the music. “I’m impressed.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “Everyone is so surprised my taste in music extends beyond NSync, Brittany Spears and the Backstreet Boys,” she said.

“Only because we’ve all been subjected to your playlists,” Cat said.

Kara laughed and shook her head. “Like you don’t have the soundtracks to both Grease movies, Little Shop of Horrors and Wicked on your phone.”

“Have you had that nosey computer going through my phone?” Cat asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I just… I used to listen along. I know I shouldn’t have, but it was a way for me to feel close to you. Before…” She squeezed her eyes shut and tears spilled down her cheeks. She took a deep breath. “Before, we used to sit in your office some nights, editing some story or writing something, and you’d put on a soundtrack. Grease, Little Shop, Les Mis, Phantom of the Opera, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. You even took me to a show once.”

“I took you to a show?” Cat asked, not quite believing it.


Cat closed her eyes and shook her head, not quite believing it. “My God,” she whispered.

“What’s wrong?” Kara asked.

Cat opened her eyes and stared at Kara for a moment. “I was in love with you,” Cat said.

“What?” Kara asked.
“Kara, I never take anyone to the theater with me,” Cat said. “Never.”

“You always had me buy you two tickets,” Kara said, confusion evident on her face.

“Yes,” Cat said. “One for me, and one for my dad.”

“But your dad is… Oh.”

“He used to take me,” Cat said. “When I was a little girl. He loved it. My mother would only ever go to Broadway shows. Said anything else was wasting time on actors and writers who couldn’t cut it. But Dad loved everything. Big Broadway productions to little black box community theater. He took me along to almost every show. After he was gone, I just kept going. Kept buying two tickets.”

“You never took Carter?” Kara asked.

“Once,” Cat said. “I thought he might like to see The Lion King. He loved the movie so much, but he’s not good with crowds. After that, I just went back to going alone.”

“Now I feel like an idiot,” Kara said.

“No, love,” Cat said. “I never said anything, did I?”

“No,” Kara said.

“And what would you have done if I had?” Cat asked.

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “If it were anyone else, I probably would have panicked, told them I was straight, and run away screaming and clinging to my avowed heterosexuality for dear life, but I was never very good at saying no to you. I only ever managed it once.”

“Oh, you’ve told me no a few times,” Cat said.

“In this timeline,” Kara said, “with more than a decade of battle-hardened courage behind me. Even then, I was usually shaking in my stylish red boots.”

“Well,” Cat said, “the boots *are* red.”

“You know you love the suits,” Kara said.

“I may have developed a certain fondness,” Cat said. “But that’s all about the person in them.”

“Well, the person in them may have developed a certain fondness for bossy CEOs who know how to rock the power suits,” Kara said.

Cat smiled, but before she could say anything, Kara looked off into the distance, a small frown on her face.

“What is it?” Cat asked.

“Storm,” Kara said.

Cat glanced over her shoulder but couldn’t see anything in the darkness. “Soon?”

“An hour,” Kara said. “Maybe two. The weather report said it would pass north of us, but the wind’s changed.”
Cat turned back to Kara. “Will we be safe in the bungalow?” she asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Then take me to bed,” Cat said.

She didn’t have to ask twice.

Kara smiled as she led Cat into the bedroom, happy and excited, but a little nervous. She was pretty far from the inexperienced girl who’d been so smitten with Cat and so unaware of her own desires in the previous timeline, but she’d still only made love to two women in her life. She’d had years to learn what Sara liked, and Sara had been a patient and gentle teacher, and the times Harley’d been involved, it had been more about kissing and cuddling and comfort than about raw passion.

She wasn’t sure what to expect from Cat. More like Sara, surely. Passion and lust and need and love, but Kara also knew Cat was a lot more experienced than her and couldn’t help but wonder if she’d be able to live up to expectations.

She led them around to the side of the bed, then turned around, taking in the sight of Cat in her tux one more time before she reached up and took off her glasses. She took Cat’s hands in her own as she sat down on the edge of the bed. She closed her eyes and began the breathing exercises, in and out, whispering the quiet mantra of the Tarquasm Vo meditation she used to partition off her consciousness, letting the small portion of herself she was tucking away relegate the draw on her stored solar energy to the point where her powers faded away.

“What are you doing?” Cat asked.

“Turning off my powers,” Kara said as she opened her eyes.

“You can do that?” Cat asked, surprise in her voice.

“Not for long, but it’s safe for a few hours,” Kara said. “Enough to let me have a night where I don’t have to worry about anything but being with the woman I love.”

Even without her powers, Kara could see the effect her words had written on Cat’s face, how the confusion melted away, replaced by surprise and love before Cat leaned down and caught her lips in a kiss that made her toes curl and made her whimper when it ended. She opened her eyes to see Cat straighten up.

“Stand up,” Cat said, giving Kara’s hands and small tug. Kara used Cat’s grip to pull herself to her feet, only to have Cat twist her arms around behind her back. Kara smiled as she found herself pinned against Cat’s chest by arms that were stronger than she expected. Cat leaned in for another kiss, this one rough and demanding, and when Kara’s lips parted, she felt Cat’s tongue in her mouth and she sucked it gently as she felt herself getting wet.

Cat let go of one of her hands and reached around, finding the zipper on the side of Kara’s dress and pulling it all the way down in a single motion. She let go of Kara’s other wrist and broke the kiss, stepping back just enough that their bodies weren’t touching anymore, and without that pressure pinning it in place, that soft blue velvet dress Kara had been wearing slid off her, pooling at her feet and leaving her standing in front of Cat in nothing both a garter belt, thigh-highs and heels.

The look of pure lust on Cat’s face went right through Kara, making her ache to be touched and filled. She stepped out of the dress and kicked it aside, then reached out and grabbed the front of Cat’s jacket, tugging Cat towards her, pressing her naked body against the silk of Cat’s tux.
“Like what you see?” Kara asked.

Cat’s hands were on her a moment later, running over her skin as Cat leaned in for another kiss. Cat stepped forward, forcing Kara back until her knees hit the bed. Cat pushed, and Kara let out a yell of surprise as she fell back onto the bed, but before she could get up, Cat crawled up onto the bed, straddling her. Kara reached up, but Cat caught her by the wrists and pinned her arms to the bed and smiled down at her.

“Very much,” Cat said as she leaned down. She kissed Kara again, grinding herself against Kara’s stomach and making Kara moan. She moved down, leaving a trail of kisses down Kara’s neck. Kara arched her back, whimpering and seeking firmer contact as she felt the tip of Cat’s tongue brush her nipple. A moment later, Cat’s mouth closed over it, and Kara moaned and rocked up against Cat.

Cat let go of her wrists as she moved lower, her mouth leaving fire in its wake as she worked her way down. Kara fisted her hands in the blanket below her as she felt Cat’s breath hot on her swollen sex, felt fingers spreading her open, then Cat was inside her, filling her with two fingers. Kara looked down, meeting Cat’s gaze as Cat’s mouth covered her clit.

She bit her lower lip and rocked her hips up to meet Cat’s fingers and tongue, as Cat plunged into her, over and over again.

“/sokao:zhaolodh :zhao w rrip ,rao, i :divi vot :zhao w rrip, eh ,kat,grant,/” The words rolled off her tongue in her own language as the emotions washed over her. Need. Desperate, desperate need. ‘Please, fuck me.’ Love. ‘I love you.’ So much love. Love that lasted through life and death and new life. ‘By Rao’s light, I love you, Cat Grant.’

“/../roshi ewuhshes bem/” Kara said, warning Cat that she was close. Cat responded by pushing a third finger inside her, and Kara broke, screaming Cat’s name as she fell over the edge.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

.sokao:zhaolodh
*Please, fuck me*

.zhao w rrip
*I love you*

.rao, i :divi vot :zhao w rrip, eh ,kat,grant
*By Rao’s light, I love you Cat Grant*

..roshi ewuhshes bem
*I’m going to come*
Just Another Manic Monday

Chapter Summary

Adam arrives in National City, and has dinner with Cat and Kara. Lena and Astra go on their first date.

Chapter Notes

I just want to give everyone a head's up well ahead of time. Chapter 64 of Devils in the Dark will be the last chapter of this story. It will post on September 14th, baring any unforeseen circumstances. At that time, Future Shock will go on a brief hiatus. My current plan is to start posting Future Shock Part 3: A Plague of Righteousness, on November 30. That means, basically, that there will be ten weeks without Future Shock.

I am really, really sorry this has to happen, but I'll be honestly. I have put out weekly, and sometimes more than weekly updates for Future Shock every week since February 11, of 2018. During that time, I also wrote and posted 13 Chapters of Something Just Like This as well as writing eleven other Supergirl stories, one of which is 190,000 words long (more on that in a minute).

Simply put folks, I am tired, and as hard as I have been busting my ass, I am only 45,000 words into A Plague of Righteousness. The ten weeks left between now and when the last chapter of this story posts is just not enough to make me feel comfortable with being able to get enough done to keep a consistent posting schedule. So, Future Shock is taking a break to give me time to get more of A Plague of Righteousness written before I start posting it.

That said, I do have some good news for you. Especially if you are a Sanvers fan, or a fan of the Midvale era Alex and Kara. Two weeks from today, I am going to start posting Taking In Strays, which is the first story in a new series called Little Girls Lost. Taking in Strays is 190,000 words, and divided into 19 chapters. It's a Sanvers High School AU. There will eventually be a sequel, which will be written and posted once Future Shock is finished. But the idea for the timing is simple. The last 9 Chapters of Devils in the Dark will go up side by side with the first 9 chapters of Taking In Strays. The last 10 chapters of Taking In Strays will cover the gap between Devils in the Dark and A Plague of Righteousness. Then, on November 30th, A Plague of Righteousness will start posting, and hopefully, it will roll right into In The Shadow of Rao, but I will be honest. That depends entirely on how quickly I can turn out A Plague of Righteousness.

So, if you don't want to miss anything, please, subscribe to author alerts.
“Yeeessss you want her! Look at her, you know you do. It’s possible she wants you too. There’s one way to ask her. It don’t take a word, not a single word. Go on and kiss the girl, kiss the girl,” Kara sang as she swung her Midnight Blue Aston Martin Rapide around a tight corner and headed towards Paramount on the Bay. “Sha la la la la la, My oh my! Looks like the girl’s too shy-

The song cut out, and Nimda said, “Lady Kara, Ms. Grant is asking to speak to you.”

“Put her through,” Kara said. “Hey, love.”

“Hello, Darling,” Cat said. “Where are you?”

“I’m about five minutes from the Paramount,” Kara said. “Why, is something wrong?”

“Nothing J’onn couldn’t handle,” Cat said. “I just wanted to make sure you were going to arrive on time.”

“Is that why you shoved me out the door this morning without so much as a goodbye kiss?” Kara asked.

“I just wanted to give you some incentive. The sooner you get to work, the sooner you can collect on that kiss I owe you,” Cat said.

“Why, Ms. Grant, are you suggesting we engage in a public display of affection in the office?” Kara asked.

“There won’t be anything public about it,” Cat said.

“Oh, that’s definitely motivation,” Kara said. “But barring a Cadmus attack, or supervillain shenanigans, I’ll have Carter to school early enough for his club meeting and be back at the office in time for the meeting with Astra, Lena, Sam and Zora.”

“Excellent,” Cat said. “Then you’ll have time to bring me a latte on your way back.”

“You called me to ask me to bring you a coffee?” Kara said, not able to keep the grin off her face or out of her voice. “Don’t we have three very well-paid assistants for that?”

“Jacob is still working on the treaty for the aquatic reclamation project. Jason never gets my order right, and Artemis spends so much time flirting with that purple-haired girl with the nose ring that my latte is always cold,” Cat said.

Kara knew perfectly well that the request had nothing at all to do with the temperature of Cat’s coffee, because Konex, Gonk or Kleenex could have all prepared her an absolutely perfect latte and transmatted it to her while it was still piping-hot. Requests like this were always about something else. Something had happened that hurt Cat, and she needed a little bit of attention and special treatment to feel like herself again.

“No problem,” Kara said. “One piping-hot latte for my lady love.”

“Of course,” Cat said. “Just make sure you’re on time picking up Carter.”

Ah. It had something to do with Carter then, which let Kara guess the rest.

“I’m pulling up to the Paramount now. Anthony knows I’m coming?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Cat said, and her tone was enough to confirm Kara’s suspicions that he’d said something to her.
“He wanted to keep Carter until this Cadmus business was over,” Cat said.

“What?” Kara said.

“I told him it was out of the question,” Cat said, “but he said that if there’s another attack on CatCo, he’s calling his lawyer and suing for full custody.”

Kara pulled into one of the visitor’s parking spaces and killed the engine. “He would lose,” Kara said.

“I wish I could be sure of that,” Cat said. “But Carter was nearly shot while in my care. That’s not likely to play well in court.”

“Cat,” Kara said, “He would lose.”

There was a moment of silence as her words hung in the air.

“Kara, what did you do?” Cat said.

“I made contingencies to protect the people I love,” Kara said. “If Anthony tries to sue you for custody, he’s going to be too busy serving time for tax evasion to show up to the hearing.”

“Kara,” Cat said in an exasperated tone, “you can’t just send someone to jail for something they didn’t do because they’re inconvenient.”

“I’m not,” Kara said. “He’s guilty as sin. He has a dozen accounts down in the Caymans he’s not reporting on his taxes. All I’d need to do is drop a dime on him.”

“Kara-”

“He’s not taking our son,” Kara said. “I don’t give a fuck who he is. If he tries to take Carter away from us, I will bury him with whatever shovel is close to hand.”

“I love you,” Cat said.

“I love you too,” Kara said.

“Go get our son,” Cat said.

“Good Morning, Bliix,” Astra said as she walked into City of Flowers. She flared her arms out for a moment. “Wind fill your wings.”

“General!” Bliix said, giving a bounce and very nearly a full flap of her wings in greeting. “Today is the day, yes?”

“It is,” Astra said with a smile on her face.

“I have the perfect arrangement!” Bliix said. “Eleven red roses in full bloom! Red for passionate and romantic love. Eleven to tell her your love is true and deep. Six white edged pink tiger lilies. A challenge. A dare to love you. She will like it?”

“Yes,” Astra said. “I think she would love it.”

“I will make it so, then,” Bliix said, bouncing and rushing off to do just that. Astra smiled as she watched the Havanian woman rush around, talking cheerfully as she put together the arrangement,
half-skipping, half-flying, and she felt a simple, cheerful joy at the excitement and energy Bliix exuded. Today would be a good day. A happy day.

She could feel it.

Kara fumed the whole way up to the thirtieth floor of the Paramount, forcing herself not to imagine punching Anthony in the face. She’d never cared for him in either timeline. He’d been part of the reason Cat left National City in the wake of Myriad. There’d been a nasty custody fight, and even though Cat had won in the end, it had shaken her.

Kara hadn’t actually met him in the old timeline until after Cat’s death. She’d taken to checking on Carter, making sure he was okay. Sitting with him on bad nights. Anthony had walked in on them one night, about six months after Cat had died. They’d been drinking root beer and Carter had been trouncing her at chess. He’d thrown her out and told her if he ever caught her near Carter again, he’d have her locked up like the rest of the aliens.

It hadn’t stopped her, but it had made her a lot more circumspect, and when the Third Army had appeared Kara had gone and gotten Carter. She’d told Anthony she could protect him and his girlfriend too but had said in no uncertain terms that she was taking Carter, and she had. After the Third Army was gone, Anthony was gone too. Kara had wanted to adopt Carter, but Darkseid arrived, so Lois took Carter, and Kara had gone to war.

She had yet to actually meet Anthony in this timeline, but she’d had to rearrange Cat’s schedule for missed visitation weekends often enough that even if she hadn’t already had a profound distaste for the man when she went to work for Cat, she wouldn’t consider him a fit parent, and there was no way in hell she was going to let him take Carter away from them.

She stepped out onto the thirtieth floor, taking a small, smug little bit of satisfaction that he couldn’t do better for himself, and walked down the hall to apartment 3011, and knocked. She smiled when she heard Krypto barking, but frowned a moment later.

“I hate that fucking dog,” Anthony said.

Kara only heard it because she was listening to what was happening in the apartment, but she pushed her glasses up to check and make sure Carter wasn’t within hearing distance of Anthony. Luckily for Anthony, he wasn’t. Kara kept an eye out until Anthony and Carter came to the door. Lowering her glasses back into place just before Anthony looked through the peephole.

The door opened a moment later, and Krypto bounded out into the hall, dancing around cheerfully.

“Krypto, heel,” Kara said. Krypto immediately sat down next to her, and looked up at her silently, waiting for another command.

Kara smiled at Carter who stepped past Anthony and hugged her tightly. She hugged him back carefully.

“How are you doing, buddy?” Kara asked.

“I’m good,” Carter said.

“Ready to go to school?” Kara asked.

“Yeah!” Carter said. “You and mom have a good weekend?”
“Yeah,” Kara said. “We missed you like crazy, though.”

“I missed you guys too,” Carter said as he let go of her. “Did you bring the Ferrari?”

Kara rolled her eyes. “The Ferrari doesn’t have room for Krypto,” she said. “I brought the Aston Martin. I assume that’s an acceptable substitute?”

“I suppose I’ll make do,” Carter said, with a weary sigh.

“Well, *maybe*, if it’s okay with your mom and Ms. Arias, Aunt Alex and I can take you and Ruby out on the Ducatis this weekend,” Kara said.

“Really?” Carter asked.

“If it’s okay with your mom and Ms. Arias,” Kara said. She looked up at Anthony, who was standing there, glaring at her. “Anything I need to know?” she asked.

“It’s Karen, isn’t it?” Anthony asked.

“It’s Kara. Kara Danvers. As in, Danvers International. Parent Company of CatCo Worldwide Media and LCorp,” she said, not for a moment under any illusion that he didn’t already know that.

“Right,” Anthony said. “Weren’t you her assistant a few weeks ago?”

“Yes, I was,” Kara said. “Come on, Carter. Let’s get you to your club meeting.”

They were about halfway down the hall when the door slammed behind them.

Astra fired off a text to Eve as she entered the LCorp building. She headed for the elevator, a smile on her face when the response from Eve came, letting her know that everything was set. She took the elevator to the twenty-third floor, quietly humming one of the songs she and Lena had danced to at the Christmas party, a small smile on her face as she remembered what it felt like to hold Lena so close.

Something she hoped she would be able to do far more freely now that the mourning period was at an end.

The elevator chimed and Astra stepped out onto the twenty-third floor and headed down the hallway to the lab, swiping her badge and pulling the door open.

Lena looked up from her computer, and a smile spread across her face, and Astra felt her heart flutter.

“Good morning, Bright One,” she said.

“Good morning,” Lena said as she stood up.

Astra let the door swing closed as she opened the flower box and took out the bouquet. “I thought these might be an appropriate way to start the day,” she said.

Lena accepted the flowers and lifted them up, inhaling deeply. “Red roses and tiger lilies,” Lena said. “Together, they say ‘I love you, and I dare you to love me in return’. I’d ask if you knew the message when you selected them, but I know you well enough to be sure you did.”

“I will admit to seeking the counsel of one learned in such matters to make sure my intentions are
conveyed correctly,” Astra said.

“Well,” Lena said, reaching up and wrapping her arms around Astra. “I’ve never been one to walk away from a challenge.”

“How are Mike and Yue settling in?” Kara asked.

“They’re doing great,” Maggie said. “Yue’s really excited about the LCorp internship, and Mike hasn’t stopped talking about the Gallery since he got the interview. Honestly, it’s starting to get on my nerves a little.”

“Younger siblings will do that,” Alex said as she pulled open the door to Noonan’s.

“Younger siblings also buy you half million-dollar cars,” Kara said.

“I don’t think Mike will be doing that anytime soon,” Maggie said.

“Probably not,” Kara said, “but I thought Alex could use the reminder.”

“Well,” Alex said, “I do appreciate the car, but it doesn’t make up for all the hours of NSync I’ve had to listen to.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “I’m going to show Maggie the pictures from the Marilyn Manson concert,” Kara said.

“Wait, there are pictures?” Maggie asked.

“KARA!” Alex said.

“Danvers, you’ve been holding out on me,” Maggie said.

“Well, I can’t give you *all* the blackmail material at once,” Kara said.

“Traitor,” Alex growled.

Kara just gave Alex a smug little smile as she turned towards the counter and grabbed a couple of bagels and a tub of cream cheese.

“Hey,” she said. “Is Ms. Grant’s Latté ready?”

“I’m sorry,” someone said, and Kara turned towards the voice, and only more than a year of practice at hiding her reaction when she ran into someone she’d watched die kept her from flinching in surprise at the sight of Adam standing front of her. Between the shooting and everything that had come after, she’d honestly forgotten all about him.

“Excuse me?” She said, careful not to show any reaction.

“I said, I’m sorry. That you have to work for Cat Grant. I hear she’s a piece of work,” Adam said.

“A reputation she’s worked hard to cultivate,” Kara said.

“Is she really as horrible as everyone says? You know, breathes fire. Eats babies,” Adam asked.

“Oh, totally,” Kara said. “If I don’t have a human sacrifice for her at twelve o’clock on the dot, she roasts a reporter alive in front of the whole office. It’s terrible for morale, and the turnover rate is hell
on HR, but it keeps everyone motivated.”

She heard Maggie laughing behind her, but ignored it, staring at Adam, who was grinning at her.

“What’s she really like?” he asked.

“Amazing,” Kara said. “She’s one of the more intelligent people I’ve ever met. She’s tough, demanding, driven, and doesn’t suffer fools at all, but she’s also kind, generous, insightful, wise, and loving. Not to mention she’s a wonderful mother, mentor and friend. I’ve learned more working with her than I did the entire time I was in high school and college combined.”

“Wow,” Adam said. “Did she pay you to say all that?”

“No,” Kara said. “But you should learn to meet people before you judge them. Especially women. The kind of people who spread rumors usually have an ax to grind.”

“Well, I will say this for her. She’s lucky to have you,” Adam said.

“I think you’ve got that backwards,” Kara said.

“Ms. Grant’s latté,” the barista said.

“Thank you, Sally,” Kara said, taking the cup and adding it to her tray.

“You better run,” Adam said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “If her latté is cold, Ms. Grant might burn a couple of peasants to heat it up again.”

Kara headed for the door and Alex and Maggie fell in beside her.

“Wow,” Maggie said. “I have never seen a flirtation strategy that poorly chosen before.”

“I know,” Kara said. “Straight people flirting is *so* weird.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “I’m beginning to understand why I could never get into it.”

“You mean aside from being a big old lesbian?” Kara asked.

“Aside from that, yeah,” Alex said.

“How are preparations for President Marsdin’s visit going?” Kara asked as they stepped out of Noonan’s.

“Pretty well,” Maggie said. “The Secret Service doesn’t like the idea of using drones, but they got really enthusiastic about the personal forcefield generator.”

“I figured they’d like that. Covering the President’s visit and Senator Crane’s rally isn’t going to leave you stretched too thin, is it?” Kara asked.

“No,” Alex said. “We’ve got it covered, as long as you’re sure we won’t have any Martian problems.”

“Nothing so far,” Kara said. “I’m surprised they haven’t shown up, to be honest.”

“You think J’onn being mixed up with so many Kryptonians scared them off?” Alex asked.
“I doubt it,” Kara said. “White Martians are so arrogant they make Kryptonians look humble.”

“That’s pretty bad,” Alex said. “Maggie and I have to go. See you later?”

Kara nodded. “Love you both,” she said.

“You too,” Maggie and Alex said together.

“One latté, slightly scalding,” Kara said as she sat the cup on Cat’s desk with a flourish.

Cat smiled up at her. “Did Anthony give you any trouble?”

“No,” Kara said. “I mean, he tried. I think the part where Carter asked if I drove the Ferrari and I had to tell him I brought the Aston Martin ticked Anthony off. He tried the whole ‘I can’t be bothered to remember your name’ thing, then he tried to make me feel bad about having been your assistant. There was even door-slamming. Total amateur hour.”

“Mmm…” Cat said as she sipped her latté. “That sounds like Anthony. Is there anything I should know about Zora before we go into the meeting?”

“Not really,” Kara said. “Zora Vi-Lar. She’s from one of the minor Houses. Engineering specialist. Responsible for maintenance of the drop ships under Astra’s command. Probably knows more about sublight propulsion systems than anyone on the planet.”

“She’s the one with the burn on her face, right?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded. “Yeah. Picked it up fighting Czarnian mercenaries. She’s also on the Advisory Council.”

“Good to know,” Cat said as she stood up. “You ready?”

“I will be in a minute. You go ahead. I just need to have a word with Jason about this afternoon’s schedule,” Kara said.

“Okay,” Cat said. “Don’t be too long.”

“I won’t,” Kara said as she watched Cat head for the conference room. She dropped her bagel on her desk and picked up her tablet, then headed out to where Jason was sitting across from Kaldur’ahm’s desk.

“I need a favor,” Kara said.

“Hurting someone or breaking something?” Jason asked.

“If it was either of those, I’d ask Artemis. She’s much better at both,” Kara said.

“That hurts,” Jason said.

“Probably not as much as when you see your hairline in the mirror,” Kara said as she pulled up a picture of Adam and held her tablet out. “I want you to clear Cat’s schedule for the rest of the day, then go downstairs and wait by security for this man. His name is Adam Foster. When he comes into the building, have security clear him through and bring him up to Ms. Grant’s office. If we’re not back yet, make sure he gets anything he needs and that no one bothers him. Let him know Ms. Grant will be back around eleven. Do not mention my name.”
“Got it,” Jason said.

Kara closed the picture of Adam on her tablet and headed for the conference room. She smiled when she glanced back and saw Jason checking his hairline in the reflection on his monitor.

Adam walked around the office, taking it in, trying to get a feel for the sort of person his mother was. It was something he was normally very good at, but there were incongruities in the office he didn’t quite understand. The media wall made sense. The private balcony, the bar off to the side. The chairs in front of the desk, the sofas. They all spoke of a certain kind of person. Someone used to wielding power, and someone who took a certain joy in flaunting it. Someone whose life centered around work, and who enjoyed the perks and privileges associated with their title.

What didn’t make sense was the second desk, or the ice bucket full of M&M’s, or the upright freezer stocked with more Ben & Jerry’s than most grocery stores.

The digital picture frame on the second desk made things more and less clear. It cycled through photos, changing every minute or so. The two women who’d been with the girl he’d talked to in Noonan’s that morning sitting next to each other and smiling at whoever took the picture. A middle-aged black man with an exasperated smile on his face. A dour looking middle-aged woman with a white streak in her hair. An older blonde woman in a lab coat. Clark Kent and Lois Lane with the girl he’d talked to that morning, the same one he’d seen with Cat on the news, only she had long blonde hair, and instead of a fashionable suit, she was dressed in jeans and a CatCo t-shirt. Cat with a little boy he could only assume was his brother. There were others, too, but he had to look away after seeing his mother looking so happy with the son she’d loved enough to actually keep.

He’d just walked over to examine a painting on the wall, an expertly-rendered watercolor of a waterfall that looked like it was on fire, when he heard a pair of voices carrying over the sounds of people working outside.

“Astra and Lena certainly looked happy,” Cat said.

“Mourning period for Non ended last night,” Kara said. “I’m pretty sure they’re officially dating now.”

“I’m sure Lillian will be… Who’s in my office?” Cat asked.

Kara looked away from Cat and spotted Adam looking at the watercolor of the Firefalls she’d hung in their office.

“That’s your eleven o’clock,” Kara said.

“I don’t have an eleven o’clock,” Cat said.

Which was technically correct. Cat had a hard and fast rule about a thirty-minute gap between meetings and other appointments to give herself a chance to recover.

“I think you’ll want to take this one,” Kara said.

“Kara, I have…” Cat stopped as Adam turned towards them, and Kara could hear her heart racing.

“Go on,” Kara said.

Cat stood there until Kara reached up and placed a hand on her back. “I promise it will be okay,” she
said.

Cat looked at her for a moment, and Kara could see the unspoken request on her face.

“I’ll be right there,” she said.

Cat turned and squared her shoulders and walked into their office with Kara right behind her.

“Adam?” Cat said.

“Hi,” Adam said.

"Hi," Cat replied.

"I’m, uh, sorry to, uh, to show up while you're working," Adam said.


“Oh,” Adam said. “Yeah. About that.” He turned around and walked over to the coffee table and picked up the black binder that Kara had given him weeks ago.

“Someone named Kara Danvers sent this to me,” Adam said, holding out the binder.

“Really?” Cat asked as she took the binder, and Kara winced slightly and wondered if she could make a break for Earth 46 before Cat killed her.

“Look, if she was wrong, and you don’t want to see me, I get it, and I’ll get out of your way,” Adam said.

“No!” Cat said. “No. I… I’m just surprised, is all. I thought you were working on the Convict Reintegration Program in Opal City.”

“You know about that?” Adam asked.

Cat nodded. “I read the proposal,” she said. “It’s a good project.”

“You may be the only person who thinks so,” Adam said. “Every charitable foundation in Opal City turned me down.”

“The Harris Foundation passed?” Cat asked.

“How did you even know I’d pitched to them?” Adam asked.

“I... um...,” Cat said.

“You know,” Kara said, jumping into the conversation as she saw the panicked look on Cat’s face, “if you’re working on a social reintegration program, I know someone who might be interested in that.”

“Really?” Adam said. “I don’t think I caught your name.”

“Kara Danvers,” She said.

“You’re Kara Danvers?” he asked. “You said in your letter you didn’t work for Cat anymore.”

“Which is true,” Kara said. “I own forty percent of the company now.”
“Oh,” he said.

“I have a contact over at the Beacon of Hope,” Kara said. “They’ve been looking for a model for their cultural integration program for the prisoners the DEO has been releasing from custody, along with a program to support new alien arrivals. If your program is as good as Cat said, maybe they could adapt it.”

“That’s… not a bad idea,” Adam said.

“Everyone’s always so surprised,” Kara said. “Did you fly in on one of the vouchers I sent?”

“Yes,” Adam said.

“Do you have to be back in Opal City by a certain time?”

“No,” Adam said.

“Okay,” Kara said. “Where are you staying?”

“I’m at the Marriot Marquis,” Adam said.

“Nice hotel. There’s a Japanese steakhouse right across the street. Why don’t I make reservations for you and your Mom there tonight, and I’ll make a few calls and see if I can get anyone at Beacon of Hope interested in your program,” Kara said. “We can also see about getting you set up someplace more permanent. I think the North Penthouse of Waverly Tower is free. I’ll have it furnished and ready for you by tomorrow.”

“That’s really not necessary,” Adam said.

“Of course it is,” Kara said. “What do you think, Cat?”

“I think that’s a great idea,” Cat said. “We’ll have dinner tonight, and get an apartment set up here so you can stay as long as you like.”

“Okay,” Adam said. “I’ll get out of your way then.”

“You’re not in the way!” Cat said.

Adam’s eyes went a little wide, and Kara jumped back in.

“She’ll see you tonight,” Kara said. “And I’ll see you later, if I survive the next ten minutes.”

“Uh, good luck with that,” Adam said. “See you tonight,” he added to Cat as he headed for the door.

Kara nodded to Jason who got up to walk Adam out. She waited until they were out of sight before turning back to Cat.

“What did you do?” Cat demanded.

Kara walked over and hit the control that closed the office doors and blacked out the windows.

“Open the binder,” she said.

Cat walked over and took a seat at her desk, picking up a pair of reading glasses and putting them on. She glared at Kara for a moment before flipping open the binder and starting to read.
She reached the end of the first page, the letter Kara had written to Adam, and looked up at Kara.

“Fourteen months,” Cat said. “You spent fourteen months planning this?”

“Longer,” Kara said. “But I only started working for you fourteen months before I gave him the binder.”

“Kara, why would you do this?” Cat asked.

“It seemed more honest than what I did before,” Kara said. “In the old timeline, I came into the office to let you know about…. Something. I don’t remember what. You balled up the letter you were writing and threw it at my head. I picked up it, and when you weren’t looking, I read it, I saw that it was to Adam, and I finished it and mailed it. There may have been some forgery of your signature.”

“What happened?” Cat asked.

“You and Adam eventually worked it out, but the fight you and I had might have been one of the contributing factors to you getting flung off the balcony while I was dosed with Red K,” Kara said. “I figured telling Adam the truth from the start was less likely to result in attempted murder.”

Kara stared at Cat for a moment as she processed what Kara had told her.

Cat sighed. “What did I do?” she asked.

“You gave me some big speech about how we should keep our relationship strictly professional, then you hired Siobhan as your assistant,” Kara said.

“I fired you?” Cat asked.

“No,” Kara said with a small shake of her head. “You remember me talking about the Black Mercy and about Dirk Armstrong’s takeover attempt?”

“Yes,” Cat said.

“Well, during Dirk’s takeover attempt, you told me about Adam, and you also figured out I was Supergirl. I tried to deny it, but you told me that unless I could prove I wasn’t Supergirl, I was fired, because every moment I was here being your assistant, I wasn’t out there, saving someone. I should have told you the truth. That I was Supergirl, and that I needed this place to help keep me grounded. That I needed a public face, so I could have that connection, those moments when I could just feel normal. Instead, I forced you to back down by getting J’onn to pose as me, so I could be in the room with Supergirl. I don’t think it convinced you, but it did give you an out, so you at least pretended to be convinced. I think I hurt you by refusing to trust you.

“Then, I wrote to Adam for you, and he showed up, but when he left, you blamed me for him not sticking around. Or you said you did, anyway. You gave me the speech about keeping things strictly professional, and I went home that night, and I got attacked by the Black Mercy. My friends tried to help, by getting J’onn to come in and pretend to be me, instead of just telling you that I was in the hospital or something, because that would have made too much sense. I never got J’onn to tell me what happened, but when I came in again, Siobhan was here.

“You got her name right, immediately and every time. You called her assistant number one, and me assistant number two. I wasn’t allowed to do anything other than answer the phones. No meetings, no talking to department heads. You did everything you could to make my life miserable, and I wasn’t sure if you wanted me to quit, or apologize, or what.”
Cat closed her eyes. “That sounds exactly like the kind of thing I would do,” she said.

“It hurt,” Kara said. “Not having you there, not being able to come to you. I got so angry at you. I needed you. Astra was dead, and I thought J’onn did it, and then I found out that was a lie and it was Alex, and I was angry at both of them, and I was angry at you, and James and Winn and Siobhan and I just did what I always did. I bottled it up, and I bottled it up, and I bottled it up, and more and more kept happening and I kept bottling it all up, until the Red K shook up the bottle and pulled the cork out.”

“How many other times was I a complete bitch to you?” Cat asked.

“That was the last one,” Kara said.

“I’m sorry,” Cat said.

“You already apologized,” Kara said. “After you came back from your sabbatical and I told you the truth, you apologized.”

“You shouldn’t have had to tell me your secret for me to act like a decent person,” Cat said.

Kara sat down on the edge of Cat’s desk and took Cat’s hand in hers. “I love you,” Kara said. “Even then, I loved you, and there was only ever one thing I couldn’t forgive you for.”

Cat frowned. “What was that?” she asked.

“You died,” Kara said. “You left me when I needed you. And you are *not* allowed to do that again.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Cat said.

Kara smiled. “You know, I still haven’t had my good morning kiss,” Kara said.

“I know you’re trying to distract me from a long overdue conversation about boundaries,” Cat said, reaching up and tapping the binder with her free hand.

“Is it working?” Kara asked.

“Come here and find out,” Cat said.

“Thanks to Simon’s Project Brain, we now have agents at the DEO and at CatCo ready and waiting for commands. We have enough red kryptonite to seed the entire atmosphere, and Lex’s dispersal device is finished and ready to go. The girl is ready, all of Lane’s men have the gene mods and biosuits, and the Mark II Red Tornado units have been upgraded with the biogel, nanites and Lexosuit tech and are ready to go,” Max said.

“Then everything is ready,” Lillian pronounced.

“If we pull the trigger on this, it will be a slaughter,” Max said.

“If?” Lillian asked. “Max, tell me you aren’t having second thoughts.”

“About getting rid of the aliens, no,” Max said. “But to be honest, the timing concerns me. I can’t help wondering if we should wait and let Supergirl and her merry little band deal with Darkseid and his forces.”
“And give her even more time to win over the public and build a power base?” Lillian said derisively. “Max, I thought you were smarter than that.”

“I’m not saying Supergirl isn’t a threat, but she has fought this Darkseid before,” Max said.

“Fought and lost,” Lane said. “I’d rather take my chances. After all, with the technology you and Lillian have developed, we can create an entire army of Supermen. And ours will be faster, tougher and stronger than the original. They’ll also be human, so they’ll be completely loyal to this planet.”

“True,” Max said, trying not to roll his eyes at Lane’s rather simplistic view.

“Excellent,” Lillian said. “It’s settled then. We’ll dose the atmosphere with Red K and while the Kryptonians are rampaging through National City, *our* Supergirl will kill Miranda Crane on national television, and our agents will make sure the DEO and CatCo are unable to mitigate the damage. Then, Cadmus will ride to the rescue.”

“And if we’re wrong about the aerosolized Kryptonite bypassing the Kryptonian’s shields?” Max asked.

“Then we provoke them,” Lillian said.

“How do you suggest we do that?” Max asked.

“Simple,” Lillian said. “Any animal will fight back if you attack its children.”

“We’re not sure the Kryptonians have any children,” Max said.

“We weren’t sure,” Lillian said. “One of our sources sent us satellite images of Supergirl exiting the Genesis Chamber.”

“So?” Max asked.

“So, Cat Grant was with her,” Lillian said. “And both Supergirl and Cat Grant have been spotted making additional visits to the chamber.”

“You think they’ve seeded a birthing matrix?” Max said.

“They’re making a half-breed freak,” Lane said, contempt and disgust dripping from his voice.

“They are,” Lillian said. “And our blue friend downstairs can help us reach it.”

Astra checked her appearance in the mirror and frowned.

“Are you sure this is suitable?” she asked.

“Trust me,” Maggie said. “Lena will love it.”

“It doesn’t look that different from my day-to-day garments,” Astra said.

“That is because you lack cultural context,” Maggie said. “A woman like Lena is going to see a smoking-hot soft butch in a tux and melt into a quivering puddle of need.”

Astra took another dubious look in the mirror, and Maggie wanted to scream in frustration. This was definitely the last time she ever agreed to do a favor for Kara without getting all the details first. ‘Get my just-out-of-the-closet aunt ready for her first official date with a woman who walked right out
every butch’s wet dream’ was definitely above and beyond the call of duty.

She had better get at least a weekend in the Bungalow with Alex out of this.

“I could go get Susan if you want a second opinion,” Maggie said.

“I would have expected you to offer to summon Alex,” Astra said as she adjusted the bowtie again.

“Please,” Maggie said. “Alex has been gay less than two months. This is no time for amateur hour.”

“Kara said you were an expert in these matters,” Astra said, “so I will trust your judgement.”

“Good,” Maggie said. “Because there is an absolutely gorgeous woman waiting for you upstairs, and that situation isn’t going to last long with unattached queer ladies bouncing around the building.”

“How do I look?” Lena asked.

“The same way you looked the last five times you asked,” Sam grumbled. “Good enough that I want to date you, despite knowing what a complete and utter disaster it would be. Again.”

“You were hardly a prize girlfriend yourself,” Lena said.

“Never said I was,” Sam replied. “But if Astra were taking me out, I would be less worried about how my outfit looked, and more worried about how quick I could get out of it.”

“Don’t be crude,” Lena said.

“You could use a little crude in your life,” Sam said. “If you were getting a little crude, I could live vicariously through you.”

“You’re terrible,” Lena said.

Sam sighed. “Lena, that woman is absolutely crazy about you. The looks she was giving you during the meeting gave me cavities. You could wear mismatched clearance-bin sweats from Old Navy and that woman would look at you like she was about to start composing sonnets. And you’re just as bad. I’ve never seen you this absolutely besotted.”

Lena smiled. “I can’t help it,” she said. “She’s just…”

“Just?” Sam prompted.

“It’s silly,” Lena said.

“Lena, your insanely hot date is an alien who fights crime in her spare time and calls herself Flamebird,” Sam said. “We are so far past silly at this point that ridiculous and ludicrous are already in the rear-view mirror.”

“Did you ever watch Xena?” Lena asked.

“Yeah,” Sam said.

“I was twelve when I discovered it.” Lena said. “I got a little obsessed, to be honest. I was in that house with Lillian, and I used to have these elaborate fantasies where Xena would swoop in and rescue me.”
“Oh my god,” Sam said. “Really?”

Lena let out a wistful sigh. “Astra’s so gallant, and chivalrous, and I love the way it makes me feel,” she said. “Cherished.”

“Oh, okay, first, I am incredibly happy for you, Lena,” Sam said. “If anyone ever deserved to feel that way, it’s you.”

“Thank you,” Lena said.

“Second, when the date is over, I’m staging an intervention. I’ll be tossing your entire apartment, looking for the romance novels. Because you just called your girlfriend gallant and chivalrous, and you need help.”

“You are such a child,” Lena said.

“You love me anyway,” Sam said.

“I swear next time I’m asking Ruby to help me get ready,” Lena said.

“Nah,” Sam said. “Her eyeshadow game is weak. You need me.”

The doorbell rang before Lena could respond.

“And there is your warrior princess,” Sam said.

“Why did I agree to this again?” Cat asked.

“Because Adam is your son,” Kara said. “Because you love him, and you want a relationship with him.”

“You’re right,” Cat said. “You’re absolutely right.”

“Everyone’s always so surprised,” Kara said. “Can we get out of the car now?”

“In a moment,” Cat said. “I have something I need to do first.”

“What?” Kara asked.

Cat answered by leaning over and kissing her, and Kara decided Adam could wait a few more minutes.

Astra walked through the entryway of Shelly’s with Lena on her arm and approached the Maître d’.

“Reservation for In-Ze,” Astra said.

“Of course,” the Maître d’ said. He checked the reservation list. “I see we have you on a private balcony. This way please.”

Astra caught the surprised expression on Lena’s face out of the corner of her eye and smiled a little. They followed him into the restaurant and up a winding staircase, across the upper dining room, and out onto a small balcony with a single table.

“Your table,” he said.
“Thank you,” Astra said as she stepped forward and pulled out Lena’s seat. Lena sat down, and Astra pushed her seat in before moving around the table and taking her own.

“Tracy will be your waiter this evening. She will be along shortly,” he said before disappearing.

“I have to admit, I’m impressed. How did you manage to get reservations for a private balcony at one of the best restaurants in the city?” Lena asked.

“I admit, I might have used family connections,” Astra said. “I’m still feeling my way into human culture, so I asked Kara what you would expect. Her recommendations were… unhelpful, but Cat was a bit more instructive.”

“I’m almost afraid to ask what Kara suggested,” Lena said.

“Her exact words were, ‘keep her in overpriced rabbit food, chocolate, scotch and hugs and you’ll be married inside of a year.’” Astra said.

Lena laughed so loudly, she seemed to startle herself. Astra watched as she reached up to cover her mouth, almost as if she was ashamed of having laughed so loudly, and Astra found another reason, beyond the several she already had, to hate Lillian Luthor.

“You’re beautiful when you laugh,” she said. “You shouldn’t cover that up.”

Lena lowered her hand, and Astra smiled at her.

“Kara instructions are probably more helpful than you think,” Lena said.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Astra said. “Cat said that there’s something called a vegan tasting menu that would be to your tastes.”

“That sounds lovely,” Lena said.

Their waiter chose that moment to arrive. She introduced herself, filled their water glasses, took their orders, and disappeared again.

“Can I ask a question?” Lena asked.

“Anything,” Astra said.

“You and Kara seem very close, but I can’t help but wonder, don’t you find it a little… intimidating that she knows all these things about us we don’t even know about ourselves?” Lena asked.

“I’m not sure intimidating is the right word,” Astra said. “I feel more of a sense of regret that I failed her so completely during the other timeline.”

“I’m sorry,” Lena said, reaching across the table to take Astra’s hand. “I didn’t mean to bring up a sore subject.”

“It’s okay,” Astra said. “You’re one of the few people I do not mind talking to about it. Though, I would rather we find a more pleasant topic for this evening.”

“What did you have in mind?” Lena asked.

“It says in your biography on the LCorp website that you used to do ‘Eventing,’” Astra said. “I was curious as to what that means.”
Lena’s eyes lit up. “Do you know what a horse is?” she asked.

“Adam,” Cat said as they approached the table. “Sorry we’re late. It’s Kara’s fault.”

Adam stood up, giving them a slightly confused look.

“I didn’t realize she would be joining us,” Adam said.

“Oh, your mom decided to drag me along, so I could pay for my sins,” Kara said.

“Keep it up, and I’ll do a lot worse,” Cat said.

Kara sighed. “Promises, promises,” she said as she pulled out Cat’s chair. Cat sat down, and Kara pushed the chair in before taking the one on Cat’s left that offered a good view of the entrance and the door to the kitchen.

“Honestly, I’m here for moral support,” Kara said. “I figured it was the least I could do, since I threw her into the deep end without even letting her know you were in town.”

“You knew who I was at Noonan’s?” Adam asked.

“Of course,” Kara said. “I was your mom’s assistant for a long time. Wouldn’t be very good at my job if I didn’t recognize her family when one of them was standing right in front of me.”

Adam turned from her to Cat. “Well, you certainly do know how to inspire loyalty,” he said.

“Well, yes,” Cat said. “Loyalty, dedication, a healthy amount of fear.”

Kara let out a small laugh.

“But I don’t have any idea how I managed to end up with someone like Kara in my life,” Cat said.

“You were just yourself,” Kara said. “Scary, crazy, moody, occasionally ridiculous, wonderful, amazing self.”

“Quite the little cheerleader, isn’t she?” Adam asked.

Kara looked over at Cat and saw the speculative look in her eyes.

“Under no circumstances,” Kara said.

Cat shrugged.

Adam gave them both a confused look.

Kara shook her head and flagged down a waiter.

“So, there I am, sixteen years old and furious that the Headmaster has decided to eliminate the Equestrian Team and absolutely heartbroken that I’ve got to say goodbye to my only friend, and I see him pull up in his ridiculously expensive car. He gets out and walks into the building, and I just snap. I get on to Blessing, and I walk her right over to the car, and then I walk her up onto the hood, and then onto the roof. Of course, the alarm goes off the moment she puts her hoof on the hood, so by the time I get her up on the roof of the car, the Headmaster has come charging out of the building, and is just standing there with a look of complete disbelief on his face,” Lena said.
“I’m almost afraid to ask what happened next,” Astra said.

“Well, I didn’t save the Equestrian Team,” Lena said, “but the board of governors decided to replace the Headmaster because of his inability to manage unruly students. They also, after a rather substantial gift from my father, decided that banning me from sports for the remainder of my time there was sufficient punishment.”

“Are you sure you ordered enough?” Adam asked as their waiter left the table.

“Not really, but the fried ice cream here is amazing, and I’ll probably end up eating half the Bananas Foster your mother is telling herself she isn’t going to order for dessert,” Kara said. “She’s got the appetite of a bird unless cheeseburgers or strawberry cheesecake are involved,” Kara said.

“I have a perfectly healthy appetite,” Cat said. “I just don’t have ‘get banned from an all you can eat buffet’ as an item on my bucket list.”

“You do know you two sound like an old married couple?” Adam asked.

“Please,” Cat said. “I am barely into middle-age.”

Kara sighed. “Well, at least I didn’t get called a cradle robber,” she said.

Adam looked back and forth from Kara to Cat. “You are not what I expected,” he said to Cat.

“What did you expect?” Cat asked.

“Honestly?” Adam asked.

“Please,” Cat said.

“I expected you to be a self-absorbed narcissist,” Adam said. “I expected your employees to hate you, and for you not to care about anything but yourself. I couldn’t understand why someone would do what Kara did.”

“If you had shown up a year and a half ago, you probably would have found exactly what you were expecting,” Cat said.

Kara reached over and took Cat’s hand.

“What changed?” Adam asked.

“I hired a new assistant,” Cat said. “Kara walked into my office at 10:15 AM on September 14th, wearing the most hideous outfit I’d ever seen—”

“Oh, please, you love that dress,” Kara said.

“Wearing the most hideous outfit I’d ever seen,” Cat repeated, “refused to leave, no matter how many times I fired her, and insisted I become a better person.”

“You were always a good person,” Kara said. “I just reminded you that it was okay to let other people see that.”

“You always want to see the best in people, darling,” Cat said, squeezing Kara’s hand. “The truth is, I lived for CatCo, and the only exception to that was Carter.”
Adam frowned and reached for his drink, pulling it in front of him and gripping it with both hands.

“I’ve said something wrong, haven’t I?” Cat asked.

“No,” Adam said. “No. You were being honest, which I appreciate. I just… I guess I don’t understand why you wanted Carter, but not me.”

“Oh, no, Adam,” Cat said. “Don’t ever believe that. Don’t ever believe that I didn’t want you.”

He looked up at her. “It’s hard not to,” he said.

“I know,” Cat said. “I left you, and there is nothing in my life that I regret more.”

“Then why?” Adam asked. “Why did you abandon me?”

Cat flinched at the words, and pulled her hand out of Kara’s, folding her arms across her chest, her hands on the biceps of the opposite arms. Kara scooted her chair towards Cat and wrapped an arm around her shoulders.

“How much did your father tell you about our marriage?” Cat asked.

“Not much,” Adam said. “He never liked talking about you, and after you refused to sign the papers so Liz could adopt me, I wasn’t even allowed to ask about you anymore.”

Cat sighed. “That sounds about right,” she said. She leaned into Kara a little.

“When I met your father, I was… Seeing someone isn’t really the right way to say it. I was falling in love with someone. The kind of love you expect to last a lifetime. Only it didn’t, and I got my heart broken. Your father was there, and he’d made his interest known more than once. I was hurt, drunk half the time, reckless and stupid. And three months after the worst heartbreak I’ve ever been through, I was staring at a positive pregnancy test.

“You weren’t in any way something I planned, but the moment I saw that line on the test, I knew I wanted you. Your father proposed, and it didn’t seem like such a bad thing. He was kind, and attentive, and most of all, he was excited about you. So, I accepted. Because I was young, and stupid, and scared, and I wanted you so much, but I was terrified that I couldn’t raise you alone, and the person I really wanted to be with… wasn’t an option.

“For a while, it was fine. We fought a little over when I would stop working, but you made that decision for me. I was getting ready to go to work one morning and went into labor a month early, and then I had this little miracle, with ten fingers, and ten toes, and this smile that I couldn’t stop looking at, and I wanted to go out and make the world a better place for you.

“And then I went back to work, and things with your father went downhill from there. He didn’t want me to work at all. He told me I worked too much. He told me over and over again that I was letting you down. We fought. We did nothing but fight. When he finally served the divorce papers, on your first birthday, it was actually a relief. At least until I saw that he was suing for full custody, with no visitation.

“I was going to fight. I was. I dug in and I threw every high-priced lawyer whose name I could spell well enough to make out a check at him. I was ready to burn CatCo and my career to the ground to keep you.”

“What happened?” Adam asked.
“Your father and I had a meeting with the lawyers, and it turned into a screaming match. Not the first time. He called me a horrible mother. Also, not the first time. But my mother was visiting, and I came home, furious, practically in tears, ranting about him telling me I wasn’t fit to be a parent, and my mom said there was no point in being upset when he was just telling the truth.

“I know it isn’t an excuse, but when she said it, every fear I’d ever had about failing you as a mother, every word your father had ever said, every moment of guilt I’d felt when I went to work instead of spending time with you just hit me, and I believed her. After all, if my own mother didn’t think I was fit to be a parent, wouldn’t it be better for you if I got out of the way and let the father who so obviously loved you take care of you?

“I cried all night, and the next morning, I called the lawyer and told them to withdraw the custody petition. I had them set up the trust funds so you would never want for anything. I signed the paperwork, then I got very, very drunk. When I sobered up, I went to work, and I spent the next twelve years working eighteen-hour days and regretting letting you go.”

“And Carter?” Adam asked.

“I didn’t plan for Carter any more than I did you,” Cat said. “But when I had him, I had spent over a decade living with the regret over giving you up. I wasn’t going to make the same mistake again. I found a therapist, and I started going religiously. Three times a week at first. I caught Carter’s father cheating, and we divorced, and I made sure Anthony knew that I would spend every penny I had to keep Carter. Not because I loved him more, but because I loved you so much, and I knew how much it hurt every day for you not to be in my life, and I couldn’t bear the thought of going through all of that a second time.”

Kara watched Adam’s face and the emotions playing across it and understood it better than she wanted to. The silence stretched on and was just getting to the point of being uncomfortable when the waiter showed up with their appetizers.

Kara gave Cat’s shoulder a quick rub and a squeeze before letting go. She pulled Cat’s salad towards her, making sure they left off the carrots. Once she was sure they had, she poured the ginger dressing over it and slid it on front of Cat, then reached for her own bowl of seaweed salad.

“Wait, you put a tank in the Commandant’s office?” Lena asked.

“Yes,” Astra said.

“An entire tank,” Lena said.

“Yes,” Astra said.

“How?”

“The tanks were modular in construction. The functional tanks were closely guarded, but no one paid a great deal of attention to the parts depot. We went in and carried out an entire tank, module by module, while our squad’s engineer assembled them in the Commandant’s office. It took the entire weekend, but it was time well spent,” Astra said, not able to keep from grinning at the memory.

“How did she react?” Lena asked.

“She was impressed,” Astra said. “She said it showed initiative, creative problem-solving and a willingness to work hard to achieve a goal. She reassigned out whole squad to Shadow Knife training.”
“That’s not the reaction I expected,” Lena said.

“It’s not what we expected, either, but it was almost worth the month we spent in the stockade,” Astra said.

The smile on Lena’s face as she laughed was definitely worth a month in the stockade.

They’d eaten their salads, soup and appetizers in silence, but the weight of that silence kept growing. Kara could practically feel the anxiety radiating off Cat. So much so that it was starting to trigger her own. A panic attack in public wasn’t how she wanted to spend her evening, so as soon as the waiter finished setting down their meals, she started talking.

“This reminds me of the CatCo holiday party in 2014,” she said.

Cat looked up at her and glared, but Kara had seen worse. Mostly from Cat.

“You remember?” Kara asked. “We had just published that feature on Lord Technologies’ exploitive labor practices in China, and Max showed up with two Chinese models on his arm.”

Cat continued to glare at her, so Kara turned to Adam.

“Everyone was so tense, just waiting for this huge explosion. Your Mom was watching Max manhandle these poor women and clenching her teeth so hard I thought she was going to break her jaw. I just wanted to punch Max in the face. I’d worked really hard putting the whole event together, and he was ruining for everyone by being a complete pig.”

“Have you ever not wanted to punch Max in the face?” Cat asked.

“Only when I’m too busy wanting to set his greasy hair on fire,” Kara said. “The man is completely vile.”

She watched Adam as she talked and knew he had his interest, so she cast a quick glance over at Cat. “You remember what happened next?”

A grin tugged at the corners of Cat’s mouth. “It would be hard to forget,” she said.

Kara turned back to Adam.

“Max makes this huge circuit of the room, acting like he owns the place, and you can just tell no one wants anything to do with him, but they don’t want to make him mad, either, because he’s a billionaire. Finally, he comes up to Cat with this smarmy look on his face, eyeing her like she’s a piece of meat. Your Mom puts on her best ‘I’m only smiling because I am plotting your slow and painful death’ face-”

“And you somehow managed to accidentally knock over an entire tray of insanely expensive Champagne,” Cat said.

Kara laughed. “It’s so cute that you still think that was an accident,” she said.

The look of shock on Cat’s face was priceless.

“Did you think it was just a coincidence that Max got soaked while no one else got so much as a drop on them?” Kara asked.

A smile spread across Cat’s face. “Just when I think I can’t love you anymore than I already do, you
go and surprise me,” Cat said.

“You deliberately dumped a tray of Champagne on Maxwell Lord?” Adam asked.

“Yes, but in my defense, he totally deserved it, *and* I didn’t beat him to death with it afterwards,” Kara said.

“I still feel sorry for his ‘dates’,” Cat said.

“Don’t,” Kara said. “I may have slipped them Tanya’s contact info,” Kara said.

Cat smiled and shook her head.

“Tanya?” Adam asked.

“She’s the model wrangler for our fashion section,” Kara said. “I sent Max a copy of their first photo shoot along with a thank you note and a bottle of the same Champagne from the party.”

Cat laughed. “You’re cute when you’re petty.”

Kara blushed and looked down at her food.

“What was the hardest thing to get used to on this planet?” Lena asked.

“Honestly?” Astra asked. “All the green plants. They’re everywhere on this world. The trees. The grass. Very little was of the foliage was green back home.”

“What color were the plants on Krypton?” Lena asked.

“Red,” Astra said. “Most worlds in the galaxy are covered in red flora.”

“Really?” Lena asked.

“Yes,” Astra said. “The science behind it is fairly simple.”

Lena’s face lit up and she leaned forward eagerly. “Tell me.”

“You’re familiar with blackbody radiation curves?”

“Of course,” Lena said.

“Then we can skip straight to the statistical distribution of the various spectral types of stars.”

“Why didn’t you ever contact me?”

Kara had half been expecting Adam to ask it at some point, but the question still landed like a bomb while they were waiting for their desserts to arrive. Kara took one look over at Cat, who looked slightly terrified, and reached over, threading her fingers through Cat’s.

“/nahn ukep , eh ,kat, .nahn rrip w voi/” Kara whispered. Adam gave her an odd look, but she ignored it, focusing on Cat. Cat glanced over at her, and Kara saw the tension melt away. Cat took a deep breath and turned back to Adam.

“I wanted to,” Cat said. “You’ve seen the letters, and those are just the ones I wrote at the office after I hired Kara. Not the ones I wrote at home, or the ones I wrote for years and years before.”
“Why didn’t you ever send one?” he asked. “Or call.”

“I didn’t think I had the right,” Cat said. “I left you. I walked out on you. I didn’t think you would want anything to do with me, and I wouldn’t have blamed you if you felt that way. I thought it would be selfish to try and walk back into your life just because I wanted to.”

“Didn’t you miss me?” Adam asked.

“Of course I missed you,” Cat said. “I missed you every second. I missed putting up pictures that you’d drawn on the fridge. I missed telling you stories. I missed teaching you how not to be afraid of the world. I missed telling you how amazing I think you are. I missed being your mom. I missed your whole life. I still miss you. But I was so afraid that if I walked back into your life, I would hurt you.”

Kara saw the tears welling up in Adam’s eyes and wondered if she should give them a moment of privacy. As if sensing the direction of Kara’s thoughts, Cat tightened her grip on Kara’s hand, and Kara decided that she would stay put.

“I missed you too,” Adam said.

Cat reached out with her free hand, taking Adam’s hand in her own.

“I used to dream that you would just show up,” he said. “I love Dad, and Liz was great when she came along, but when I was younger, I used to ask him about you. He would tell me that you didn’t want me. That you didn’t want to be my mom. But then Christmas, or my birthday would come, and there would be a present from you, and a card. Always the same thing.”

“To Adam. All my love. Mom,” Cat said.

“I read those cards. Every single one. And I couldn’t figure it out. Why you would say that, and then stay away. Dad said you didn’t want me, but you said you loved me, and I just wanted my mom,” he said.

“I’m sorry,” Cat said. “I never would have stayed away if I knew it was hurting you.”

“I’m sorry. I don’t know how to better explain what the Phantom Zone is without going into the math,” Astra said.

“I don’t think the math has been invented yet,” Lena said.

“It has,” Astra said. “You just don’t have the notation on Earth.”

“So? Teach it into me in Kryptonian,” Lena said.

“Do you think they will bring us a pen and some paper?” Astra asked.

“They probably would,” Lena said, “but we’ve finished dessert, and I have a white board in my apartment.”

Astra stared at Lena for a moment, before a smile spread across her face. “I’ll get the check.”

“I swear sometimes I think you’re twelve,” Cat said as she watched Kara do a little dance in her seat after taking her first bite of the fried ice cream.

“You’re just jealous because you didn’t order some,” Kara said.
“Yes, because the Bananas Foster you ordered for me isn’t enough to send me into a diabetic coma,” Cat said.

“You don’t understand,” Kara said. “It’s deep fried ice cream. It is the fourth best dessert in the universe.”

“What’s the best?” Adam asked.

“Chocolate Pecan Pie,” Kara said without hesitation.

Cat rolled her eyes.

“Don’t you roll your eyes at me,” Kara said. “I fetched your lunch every weekday for fourteen months, and your dinner half those nights. I know all the sordid details of your relationship with strawberry cheesecake.”

“And how many orders of potstickers do you go through in a typical week?” Cat asked.

“Not as many as I’d like to,” Kara said. She took her spoon and cut a piece from her dessert, making sure to get some of the ice cream, some of the breading, and plenty of both the chocolate and strawberry sauce, then held the spoon up in front of Cat. “Go on. Taste it and tell me I’m wrong about how good it is.”

“That is diabetes on a spoon,” Cat said.

Kara raised an eyebrow, and they sat there, staring at each other for a moment, before Cat finally sighed and leaned forward slightly, taking the offered bite of dessert. Kara smiled smugly at the moan Cat let out.

“Told you so,” Kara said.

“Please, it was adequate at best,” Cat said.

“Share?” Kara asked.

“Yes!”

Astra moaned as Lena climbed on top of her, straddling her as they kissed. Her hands slipped down, cupping Lena’s ass as Lena’s hand slipped inside her jacket, cupping and kneading her breast. She lost whatever train of thought she’d had going right around the time Lena pinched her nipple through the fabric of her shirt and decided that the math lesson she’d been giving Lena while they rode home could definitely wait until some occasion when Lena’s tongue wasn’t in her mouth.

“I know tonight was…”

“Intense?” Adam asked.

“That’s a good word for it,” Cat said as they waited for Kara to pull the car around. “But I would like to do it again sometime.”

“I’d like that,” Adam said. “Maybe just you and me next time.”

“Oh,” Cat said. “Do you not like Kara?”
“No, she’s great,” Adam said. “Really great, in fact. I just think, if you and I are going to have a relationship, we might need to find out what that relationship is like when there isn’t a referee around.”

Cat smiled at him. “That’s probably a good idea,” she said. “Maybe we could have dinner Thursday?”

“Yeah,” Adam said. “I’d like that.”

Kara chose that moment to pull up in the Aston Martin.

“Well, that’s my ride,” Cat said. “You sure you don’t want us to take you back to the hotel?”

“It’s just across the street,” Adam said.

“Okay,” Cat said. “I’ll call you tomorrow once the apartment is ready.”

“That’s not really necessary,” Adam said.

“It is,” Cat said. “I want you to have a home in National City. Keep your place in Opal City if you want. The new Transmat network will have an Opal City station by the end of the month. You’ll be able to go back and forth any time you want.”

“I’ll think about it,” Adam said.

“That’s all I ask.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

.nahn ukep, eh, kat, .nahn rip w voi
I am here, Cat. You are safe
Astra frowned at the sound of her ringtone and pulled Lena closer, relishing the feel of Lena’s warm, soft form pressed against her, and wallowing in the memory of the last few hours. Lena’s fingers inside her. Lena’s mouth on her. The taste of Lena in her mouth and the sounds she’d made as she’d come apart under Astra’s touch. She wanted to stay in the moment and told herself that who ever was calling could wait until morning.

The ringing stopped, and Astra leaned forward, placing a light kiss on Lena’s forehead before settling back to get a few more hours of sleep before they had to return to work.

The ringtone sounded again, and Astra let out an annoyed sigh.

“Yes?” she said as she answered it.

“General, forgive me for disturbing you, but we’ve found the information you wanted,” Ursa said.

“You know where they are?” Astra asked.

“Yes,” Ursa said.

“Gather everyone who can fight,” Astra said. “Kara and I will meet you at Argo Tower shortly.”

“Understood,” Ursa said.

Astra hung up the phone.
“You’ve found my mother, haven’t you?” Lena asked.

“Yes,” Astra said. “I’m sorry, Bright One.”

Lena sat up, and for a moment, Astra forgot everything, her attention entirely focused on the sight of Lena’s naked form in front of her.

“I know,” Lena said. “Please, promise me you’ll be safe. My mother will be prepared for this.”

“I will not make a promise I cannot keep,” Astra said as she sat up. “Fights are never safe. But I promise that I will return to you.” She reached up, cupping Lena’s face in her hand. “I will not be parted from you, Lena Luthor. Not even for the comfort of Rao’s light.”

Kara was completely awake before the first note of her Astra’s ringtone had finished echoing off the wall. She reached over, grabbing her phone with the hand that wasn’t holding Cat against her, and hit the accept button.

“Go,” she said.

“Our contacts have located Cadmus,” Astra said. “We can move against them now or inform the DEO.”

“Where did you order our people to muster?” Kara asked.

“The top of Argo Tower,” Astra said.

“I’ll be there in fifteen minutes,” Kara said. She ended the call, and looked down, unsurprised to find Cat staring up at her.

“What is it?” Cat asked.

“Astra’s people have found Cadmus,” Kara said.

“Be careful,” Cat said. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Kara said as she pulled up Leslie’s contact and hit send.

“Eve, put it on speaker,” Leslie said, because she wasn’t leaving Susan’s arms for something as stupid as a fucking phone calls.

“Hey, Leslie,” Kara said.

“Do you have any fucking clue what time it is, Sunshine?” Leslie asked.

“We’ve found Cadmus,” Kara said. “I’m taking the Kryptonians and going after them. Want in?”

“Fuck yes,” Leslie said. “Susan and I will be right up.”

“Not Susan,” Kara said. “This is strictly off the books.”

“Agent Vasquez didn’t hear a thing,” Susan said. “Adult Supervision says, kick their fucking teeth in.”

“Thanks Susan. Leslie, warn me when I’m on speaker.”
“Bitch, you’re lucky I answered at all.”

“Fair,” Kara said.

“Kara?” Lucy asked. “What time is it?”

“Late or early. Take your pick,” Kara said. “Astra’s agents have found your dad. You want to go with us to say hello?”

“Damn right!”

“Roof. Five minutes.”

Kara stepped out into the balcony, and Krypto and Alice both followed her out the door. She tapped her cuff, activating her war suit in stealth configuration, and it spread out, covering her in a tight black body suit with a black cape, black boots, and the House of El Coat of Arms embossed on her chest in black. Krypto let out a specifically-toned whine, and his own suit was deployed from his collar. Alice looked back and forth between them, and her glow vanished, leaving a royal blue cheetah with black spots that almost disappeared into the darkness of the night.

A moment later, Lucy and Leslie rose up over the side of the building and touched down on the grass roof.

“You ready?” Kara asked. Both of them nodded.

“Let’s go,” she said.

When Kara touched down on Argo Tower, she wasn’t at all surprised to find all of the Kryptonians there, but they weren’t alone. Jason and Artemis were there, along with Starfire and about twenty aliens that had turned themselves in alongside Astra. Only one face among them really surprised her.

“M’gann,” Kara said.

“Kara,” M’gann said.

“You sure you’re up for this?” Kara asked. “It’s been a long time since you fought.”

“Not as long as you think,” M’gann said. “But yeah, I’m ready. They came for my people, and it’s time we end this. Besides… I hear that you were my sister, once upon a time.”

Kara smiled, and held out her hand. “Welcome to the family.”

M’gann took Kara’s hand, but instead of shaking it, Kara pulled her into a hug.

“It’s good to have you back,” Kara said, before letting her go.

She looked around and found the one face in the crowd she really didn’t want to see, but whose appearance was inevitable.

“Fendra,” she said.

“Yes, Lady El?” Fendra asked.
“Are we good?” Kara asked.

“I will fight for you. I will die for you. For Krypton’s sake, you have my vow.”

“For Krypton’s sake, I accept your service.”

She turned to address the assembled crowd. “We will attack in two waves. Byara, Cir, Dev, you will join me. Lucy, M’gann and Livewire in the vanguard. We will hit the Cadmus installation fast and hard, while General Astra leads the second wave. The Vanguard’s assault will give the fliers time to land the non-fliers, who will then advance under Astra’s command. If you can’t fly under your own power, find a Kryptonian to carry you,” Kara said. She turned to Astra and gave a nod. “You remember your assault on the Separatist League on Zennabar?”

Astra nodded. “A sound approach, Little One.”

“Five minutes,” she said, then tapped her earpiece.

———

“Lady Alex,” Nimda said.

“Yes,” Alex said, more than a little groggy.

“Lady Kara is calling you.”

“Put her through,” Alex said, sitting up, suddenly wide awake.

“Hey, Alex,” Kara said.

“Hey, Kara. What’s going on?” Alex asked as Maggie sat up next to her.

“We’re going after Cadmus,” Kara said. “I don’t want Cat to be alone. Could you and Maggie go up and sit with her?”

“What? No. If you’re going after Cadmus, Maggie and I are coming along,” Alex said.

“No, you’re not,” Kara said. “You’re going to get dressed, pick up Lena and Susan along the way, and maybe Eliza, and go sit with Cat. If this goes sideways I need you to be in the clear, because someone has to step up and deal with this shit, and Alex, you and Maggie are the people I trust to do that if I fuck it up.”

“Damn it, Kara, that’s a cheap shot,” Alex said.

“Was it effective?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Alex said. “We’ve got your back. Go kick their asses.”

———

Lillian picked up her phone. “Yes?”

“Something is happening,” Lane said.

“What do you mean?” Lillian asked.

“One of our agents reported the Kryptonians and other aliens congregating on top of their tower,” Lane said.
“Evacuate the base,” Lillian said. “They’ve found us.”

The expensive, lethal defenses Lillian had built into the installation didn’t react because they didn’t have time to. One second, the sky was clear, the next, the blast door sealing off the hangar blew inwards as if struck by the hand of an angry god, and five enraged Kryptonians, a White Martian, and a woman composed of living lightning were inside the base, and everything was in chaos.

Cadmus technicians screamed and ran, only to find themselves bound and gagged by Kryptonians moving at super-speed. Guards tried to raise weapons that might have been effective, if the people wielding them hadn’t been struck down by electricity thrown from the hands of an angry, vengeful woman, and then came the scream. No microphone detected it. No recording picked it up, but every human in the facility was hit with it. A massive, cripplingly-intense psychic scream from the mind of a daughter of Mars, a woman who, even among her own kind, was one of the most powerful telepaths alive.

The weak, frail humans who’d attracted their ire had no chance. They were powerless to defend themselves, and for nearly forty-five seconds, the attackers had absolute control of the field of battle.

The battle would have been a complete rout if it wasn’t for two things. Cadmus was already actively preparing for a strike against the Kryptonians, and they had almost ten minutes’ warning of the attack. Which meant that forty-five seconds into the fight, the back wall of the hangar exploded outwards. Dozens of Cadmus personnel the Vanguard had already taken prisoner died, and the Vanguard found themselves face-to-face with thirty figures in red and green.

Kara looked through the clearing smoke and debris and saw them. Red Tornadoes augmented with tech she recognized immediately. Lexosuit weapons and armor.

“Fall back!” Kara ordered as the Red Tornadoes moved forward, weapons already targeting her people. She used her freeze breath to throw up a wall of ice before they could start firing, and they all fell back. Kara stopped at the mouth of the hangar, deploying her shield and her sword.

“Do not let them out into the open,” Kara ordered. She saw the cracks forming in the ice wall, and made a decision.

“Miss Martian, get clear. Livewire, I need you to hit them from behind, hard. Everyone else, keep it moving. They’re tough, but they’re slow. Use super-speed and we can out match them. Freeze breath and heat vision are both effective but watch for the kryptonite blades.”

M’gann shot into the sky, moving back to join the second wave. Leslie vanished into a crackle of electricity, and the Kryptonians waited until the instant the ice wall shattered, then they were on the move, and Kara found herself smiling. She hadn’t had a fight like this in ages, and it felt good.

She plowed into the Red Tornadoes at somewhere around Mach 2, using her shield as a battering ram when she hit them, sending eight of them flying like bowling pins before she even brought up her sword. Electricity arced down from the metal rafters of the hangar, hitting half the units, making them jump and twitch before they collapsed. For a moment, Kara thought it was over, but the ones Leslie had hit with her lightning got back up, and so did the ones Kara had sent flying. Kara frowned as she realized these things were tougher than she thought. It didn’t matter though, she had to keep them corralled. If even one of them got off the ground, they would become exponentially more dangerous.

She picked the nearest one, and swung her blade, intending to decapitate it, only to have it deflected by a Kryptonite blade extending from the Red Tornado’s arm.
Another one tried to drive an identical blade through her back, but Kara sensed it coming and moved out of the way, letting the one attacking her from behind drive its blade into the one she’d been attacking while she swung her blade and decapitated them.

What happened next made Kara’s blood run cold. The Red Tornado who’d impaled the other withdrew its sword, and the hole it had cut closed up, while both of the severed heads liquified into large puddles which rolled across the floor and merged with the Red Tornado they’d been separated from, which promptly grew a new head.

“/:!zhaolium im zhaogha/” Kara growled. “Nimda, seal all war suits. Loose Kryptonite on the battlefield in nanotech form. Scan my location and begin targeting for combat transmat and spin up one of the Dragon’s teeth on the far side of the moon. I’m going to need relay transmat and annihilation cannons ready for the transmat exit point.”

“Understood.”

“How long?” Kara asked.

“Thirty seconds,” Nimda said.

“When you’re ready, begin-”

Something hit Kara and hit her hard. She found herself sailing through the air, unable to breath as whatever it was *kept on* hitting her. When she finally hit the ground, a good half a mile away from the Cadmus stronghold, she looked up to find a mirror image of herself staring down at her, and she knew immediately what she was looking at.

Bizarro was on the field.

J’onn jolted awake as his phone started ringing. He reached over and picked it up off the nightstand, accepting the call as he lifted it to his ear.

“J’onzz here,” he said.

“Sir, I think you better get down here,” Wentworth said.

“What’s going on?”

“I don’t know, sir, but it’s fucking big.”

“I’ll be right there,” J’onn said.

Alex and Maggie sat next to each other on the couch in Cat’s living room. Susan, Lena and Eliza were also scattered around the room, and all of them were watching Cat who was sitting in the lotus position, hovering six inches off the floor and glowing bright blue.

Alex, Maggie and Susan’s phones all went off at the exact same time. The emergency ‘get here right now’ call from the DEO.

“Go,” Cat said without opening her eyes. “We’ll be fine.”

All three of them looked at Lena and Eliza, who both just nodded.
“Would any of you care to tell me why the Kryptonians have turned an area to the east of the city into a war zone?” J’onn asked as Alex, Maggie and Susan walked into the control center.

“On the record, sir, we have no idea,” Susan said.

“Off the record?” J’onn asked.

“They’re hitting Cadmus,” Susan said.

“Why didn’t she bring us in?” J’onn asked.

“Because this place is leakier than a screen door on a submarine would be my guess, sir,” Susan said.

J’onn let out an exasperated sigh. “I wish I could say you were wrong.”

Kara curled herself into a ball, bringing her knees up against her chest, then kicked up with her back braced against the ground and slammed her heels into Bizarro’s chest, sending her up into the air, then brought her hands down, pushing herself up, flipping over and shooting after Bizarro.

“All hands, Astra has command on the ground. Astra, priority is containing Red Tornado units inside Cadmus facility. All units, avoid engaging airborne target at this time. Red Hood, Artemis, fall back to rear of battle line, disengage and wait for new tasking.” Kara said as she keyed a command into her bracer, bringing online one of the special functions she’d built into her war suit. Lines of blue snaked out from her wrist, covering her suit and glowing brightly in the night as wrist mounted cannons rose up out of the material of the suit and display lenses formed over her eyes. Targeting reticles appeared as Bizarro turned towards her, and Kara brought her arms up, lining up the shot.

She fired both cannons at the same time and beams of blue radiation ripped across the might sky, slamming into Bizarro. The girl screamed in terror as her powers abandoned her. She started to fall, but Kara caught her a moment later, as gently as she could.

“Nimda, identify location, Red Hood and Artemis. Astra, status,” Kara said. She felt relief when she saw Jason and Artemis had followed orders and were well back from the battle.

“Hostiles contained but making multiple break out attempts. Integrity of facility compromised. Partial collapse imminent,” Astra said.

Kara slammed down next to Jason and Artemis.

“Nimda, I need blue kryptonite restraints at my location and put me through to Cat,” Kara said as she knelt down, laying Bizarro on the ground. A set of blue kryptonite shackles appeared in a flash.

“Kara?” Cat asked.

“I need you to brace the interior of the hangar. A box that will allow our people to pass through but trap the Red Tornadoes,” she said.

“Working on it,” Cat said.

Kara looked up and saw Alice, who had been in the thick of the fighting, raise a paw and slam it down onto the floor of the hangar. Blue light spread out, covering the floor, then climbing the walls and spreading across the ceiling. Finally, a blue wall came down where the outer hangar wall had been.

“Done!” Cat said.
“Astra, pull our people back out of the hangar,” Kara said. She turned to Jason and Artemis. “Guard her. Be gentle with her when she wakes up. She’s a victim here. Do not remove the cuffs.”

Both of them nodded, and Kara was off like a shot at super-speed.

“Nimda, are all Red Tornadoes contained?” Kara asked.


“Are all of our people out of the hangar?”


“Transmat all Red Tornado units into the target zone of the Dragon’s Tooth, target them with annihilation cannons, and open fire,” Kara said.

The interior of the hangar lit up with the flash of a mass transmat, and when the light died away, all the Red Tornadoes were gone.


“Excellent. Spin up the platform’s antimatter generator, top off the annihilation cannons fuel cells, then spin the whole platform back down into stealth standby,” Kara said. “All units, this is Supergirl, resuming ground command. Blue Lantern, I will need to you maintain integrity of the hangar. Red Hood, Artemis, contain the prisoner. Everyone else, advance into the facility. Slow and steady, people. We’ve already been caught by one surprise. I don’t want another.”

Kara spotted J’onn as she walked out of the facility, and noticed that he looked grumpier than usual, which was kind of an accomplishment, all things considered. Alice chose that moment to bump up against her, and almost absently, Kara reached down and scratched the cat between her ears. The purr that came seemed to wash away Kara’s exhaustion and fill her with energy, despite her frustration.

“You want to tell me what the hell happened here?” J’onn asked as she stopped in front of him.

“We got tipped off as to what hole Cadmus was hiding in,” Kara said. “We came to dig them out.”

“And you didn’t think to tell the DEO about it?” J’onn asked.

“No,” Kara said. “They killed one of my people. Non might have been a criminal, and I might have hated him, but I was still responsible for his safety and wellbeing. Cadmus kidnapped and tortured him. I could not allow that to go unanswered.”

“Damn it, Kara,” J’onn said.

“J’onn, you had to know this was coming,” Kara said. “From the moment we found Non, the only way for this to be avoided was for the DEO to find them first, and that was never going to happen. At least, not until Marsdin figures out where her leak is.”

J’onn closed his eyes and shook her head. “I hate it when you’re right,” he said. He looked at her again. “We’ve been through two full rounds of telepathic scans, and I’m still not confident information isn’t still leaking on our end too, somehow.”

“You’ve noticed it too, then?” Kara asked.
“You mean the fact that the last three safehouses we raided were cleaned out between the time we pinpointed them and the time we moved on them?” J’onn asked. “Yeah, I’ve noticed.”

“I’m pretty sure they had warning tonight,” Kara said. “Not much, but enough to set a hell of a trap. One that would have killed a lot of people if it weren’t for a couple of cards I’ve been playing close to the chest.”

“What did you do with the Red Tornadoes?” J’onn asked.

“I transmatted then to the far side of the moon and hit them with annihilation cannons,” Kara said.

“That’s going to be hard to explain in a report,” J’onn said.

“I’d go with ‘Supergirl beamed them into deep space,’ and leave it at that,” Kara said. “No reason for Olivia to know about the Dragon’s Teeth just yet.”

“Were you ever going to tell us about them?” J’onn asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I’m not keeping secrets from you guys deliberately. I mean, from Olivia and the Justice League, yes. Bruce would piss the Batsuit if he found out about the Dragon’s Teeth or the Sunblade, and you know it. Sometimes, it’s easier to just not tell anyone anything than to figure out who trusts me enough that they won’t have a complete meltdown.”

“And every time telling someone the truth comes back and bites you in the ass, it gets that much harder to trust,” J’onn said. “I get it. But we need to figure out a middle ground, and soon.”

“So, how are we going to sort this one out?” Kara asked.

“I’m not sure what you mean,” J’onn said. “You came into possession of vital, time-sensitive intel. I was unavailable, so you shared it with Assistant Director Lane, who tasked you, a DEO asset, to lead an anti-Cadmus operation using other alien and metahuman DEO assists to assault an enemy stronghold.”

“You think anyone will actually buy that?” Kara asked.

“I think it all depends on what we take out of that mountain,” J’onn said.

“Well, so far, we’re got a lot of prisoners, but most of the labs were trashed. They left in a hurry though so—”

“Supergirl,” Astra’s voice came over the comms, “there is something you need to see.”

Kara felt a sense of dread fill her at the tone in Astra’s voice, and she could see it on J’onn’s face that he could hear the same thing she could.

Something was wrong.

“Was it like this last time?” J’onn asked.

“I only ever saw the ‘successful’ attempt the first time,” Kara said. She stared at the sight in front of her and let the rage seep into her veins. Girls. At least twenty of them. All with her face. All dead.

“I don’t understand,” Kara said. “I had protocols in place to prevent this. And last time, he couldn’t even start until he got my DNA from Red Tornado.”
“I believe I can answer part of that,” Astra said. “There’s a chunk of concrete in the corner, covered in blood. I believe it’s from the place where you fell after the missile struck you.”

Kara turned to J’onn. “The DEO didn’t clean the scene?” she asked.

“Of course we did,” J’onn said. “Doctor Hamilton supervised the scene.”

“!/zhaolium im zhaoghao/” Kara said. “Nimda.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Nimda asked.

“Where did these girls come from?” Kara asked.

“I’ve been running DNA analysis,” Nimda said. “So far, I’ve been able to identify twelve of them from police records. All have multiple arrests for prostitution.”

“They picked up hookers of the street, and used my blood to mutilate them,” Kara said shaking with rage. A meow and a bump against her hip drew her attention, and she looked down to find Alice next to her. She ran her hand through Alice’s fur, and the rage subsided a bit.

She turned to Astra. “Is there anything else I need to see?”

“The next room,” Astra said.

Kara turned and walked into the next room, and what she found there sent her blood right back to boiling. Twenty beds, all set up with the same equipment from the body-filled lab she’d just come from. Only these beds were empty.

“They were trying to create an army of Bizarros,” Kara said.

“It looks that way,” J’onn said.

Kara stared at the empty beds and thought of the bodies. Mutilated bodies. Every one stamped with her face, every one mutilated using her blood.

“Get everyone out,” Kara said.

“What?” J’onn asked.

“Get everyone out of the mountain,” Kara said. “Do it now.”

“Why?” J’onn asked.

“Because in ten minutes, I am going to turn this entire complex into a hole in the ground,” Kara said.

“Kara, you can’t,” J’onn said.

“Watch me.”

“I thought we were destroying the base, Sunshine,” Leslie said.

“We are,” Kara said.

“Looks more like we’re all standing around while you stare dramatically into the mid-distance like some brooding asshole on a CW show,” Leslie said.
“I adore you, Leslie, but learn a little patience,” Kara said. She reached up and tapped her earbud. “Visors on. Incoming in five, four, three, two, one.”

A line of fire streaked down across the sky and touched the mountain, and when they met, it looked like nothing so much as a sun being born. There was a flash of blindingly bright light, followed by a crack of thunder so loud Leslie felt it in her soul. When the light finally died away, there was no mountain left. Only a perfectly round crater.

Leslie stared at the crater for a moment, then turned back to Kara. Her helmet was already open, and she just gave a small, satisfied nod before she turned to J’onn, who stood on her other side.

“It will take Nimda a few hours to ID the remains of all the girls and process the bodies. We’ll cremate them and return the ashes to their next of kin,” Kara said. “If anyone objects to that, I don’t care. I will not let the Bizarro tech out into the world.”

“What about Bizarro herself?” J’onn asked.

“Once we have an ID, we’ll contact her next of kin if she has any,” Kara said. “I’ll see if Nimda can restore her memory, but if she can’t, we’ll retrain her mind, the same way we’re retaining Non’s.”

“And her powers?” J’onn asked.

Kara looked over to where Jason and Artemis sat with the girl who looked so much like her.

“That’s her choice to make,” Kara said.

“Kara-”

“No,” Kara said. “We failed her. *I* failed her. Just like I failed Non. I won’t take what she is away from her, just to make other people feel safe.”

J’onn nodded.

“Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to go deal with Maxwell Lord,” Kara said.

Kara touched down on the balcony outside Cat’s apartment and smiled as Krypto and Alice touched down beside her. Krypto let out a small whine and his war suit collapsed back into his collar, while Alice’s bright blue glow came back. Alice immediately bumped her head against Kara, letting out a meow that washed away a touch of the anxiety she was feeling. She leaned down and kissed Alice on the head, only for Krypto to let out a jealous whine. She rolled her eyes and gave him a kiss too, then opened the sliding glass door.

“Go find Carter,” she said. Krypto gave a soft bark, then tore off into the apartment. Kara followed him inside, closing the door behind her. Inside, she found Eliza and Lena sitting on the couch, arguing quietly about which brand of DNA sequencer was best, and Cat, floating a foot off the floor, sitting in lotus position and surrounded by a blue glow.

Alice took off running and jumped, vanishing into the blue aura that surrounded Cat, who then rose up high enough that she could simply drop her legs down onto the floor to stand up. Kara crossed the living room and pulled Cat into a hug.

“It was horrible,” she said.

“I know, love,” Cat said, hugging her back, putting enough of the ring’s power into it that Kara
could really feel it.

“What happened?” Lena asked.

Kara let go of Cat and turned to face Eliza and Lena.

“Astra’s fine,” Kara said. “She should be here shortly. She’s overseeing the storage of some items taken from the Cadmus base. But…” She took a deep breath. “Max had been experimenting on humans. Working to modify a human with Kryptonian abilities. The Bizarro experiments from the original timeline. He succeeded. I managed to take down Bizarro, and we have her in custody, but we found twenty girls in his lab. All dead.”

“My God,” Lena said.

“My fault,” Kara said. “I was watching for him to try abducting coma patients like last time. Instead, Cadmus was grabbing girls off the street.”

“Not your fault,” Cat said. “Kara, none of this is your fault.”

“It sure feels that way, though,” Kara said. “He killed twenty young girls, and everything we found suggests he was planning on creating an army of Bizarros. Probably enough to at least match the Kryptonians in number.”

Kara turned to Cat. “The night I told everyone the truth, I promised you I would never lie to you again, and I meant it. So, you should know, I’m going to put an end to Maxwell Lord. I’m not going to give him a trial. I’m not going to send him to jail. I’m not going to wait until sometime in the future and give him the chance to slip away again. I’m going to end him. Tonight.”

She watched the expression on Cat’s face. There was fear there, but also understanding.

“Are you sure this is what you want?” Cat asked.

“I am,” Kara said.

“Then I’ll still be here when it’s done,” Cat said.

Kara leaned in and kissed Cat. It was soft and chaste, but full of feeling. A thank you expressed in touch and tenderness.

When Kara pulled away from Cat, she turned to Eliza, expecting to see disappointment and disapproval. Instead, Eliza just gave her a nod.

“I trust you, sweetie,” she said. “Do what needs to be done.”

“Thank you,” Kara said before she turned to Lena.

“I need your help,” Kara said. “But I need you to understand. If you help me do this, you are helping me execute a man for his crimes.”

Lena stared up at her for a moment. “He killed twenty women?” Lena asked.

“At least,” Kara said. “Possibly more, if he’d been disposing of the bodies.”

“What do you want me to do?” Lena asked.

“Do you have a way to get a message to Lillian?” Kara asked.
“Yes,” Lena said. “Nothing that would help us track her, but I could contact her.”

“I need to send her an audio file.”

Lillian watched through the window of her office as the trucks were unpacked. They had lost a lot. There’d been no time to evacuate the bulk of their personnel, and the Red Tornadoes were a complete write off at this point. Lillian had no idea how, but telemetry from all thirty of them had flatlined at the exact same instant. Something which only underscored the threat that Supergirl was. And losing the girl would make things much, much more difficult since she couldn’t be replaced in time for the kickoff, but it had been a necessary sacrifice.

They’d managed to save the critical pieces though. The control system for the Project Brain nanites. The biosuits, and Lane’s genetically and cybernetically-enhanced soldiers. Indigo, as well.

And of course, the absolutely precious Red K.

This could still work. They would have to be careful, but it could still work.

The encrypted phone she carried chimed, and Lillian frowned. She took it out of her pocket, raising an eyebrow when she saw an email notification. She opened up the mail app and was even more surprised to realize the message came from one of the dead drop accounts.

To: Mother1240evnm@protonmail.com

From: SupergirlZorEl@protonmail.com

Subject: The Company You Keep

Message Body:

Hey, Lillian.

A little birdy told me about this email address, and I just wanted to say hi. I’m sorry I missed you earlier tonight, but I did want to say thank you. I haven’t had a workout like that in years.

Consider the attached file a thank you gift.

Love,

Supergirl.

Attached File: MaxIsADirtyLittleSnitch.mp3

Lillian tapped on the attachment.

“Ever been to Gotham, Max?” a distorted voice asked as the recording began.

Max looked up from the tablet he was working on at the sound of heels on concrete to see Lillian walking across the warehouse towards him.

“Lillian,” he said in a cheery voice. “I was just making sure everything is online.”

“Is it?” Lillian asked.
“Running perfectly,” Max said. “Of course, this place isn’t as comfortable as the last one, but that shouldn’t matter for too much longer.”

“True,” Lillian said. “Did you manage to save all of your research?”

“Every last bit, all safe and sound on the hard drives over there,” Max said, pointing to a case full of hard drives sitting on the end of his workbench.

“Excellent,” Lillian said. “I wanted to thank you, Max. Your contributions have been invaluable.”

“I’m just glad to help,” Max said as he looked back down at his tablet. “The sooner we can get rid of these aliens, the sooner we can get back to what matters. Making obscene amounts of money.”

“I’m afraid that isn’t in your future,” Lillian said.

Max frowned and looked up from the tablet, intending to ask her what she meant, only to find himself staring down the barrel of a pistol.

“Lillian?” Max asked.

“You really shouldn’t have talked to the Red Hood about us, Max,” she said.

“Now, wait a minute,” he said, and those were his very last words.

KPJT Channel 3 News Special Report

Leyna Nguyen Reporting Live From National City Police Headquarters

“The recent terror attacks on National City by the rogue agency known as Project Cadmus took a stunning turn just a short time ago as a white panel van pulled up in front of National City Police Headquarters and dumped the body of disgraced tech Mogul Maxwell Lord on the front steps. The drivers of the van fled the scene before police could respond, but eyewitnesses report that Lord had been shot in the chest, and the words ‘Traitor to Humanity’ had been carved into his forehead.”

“KPJT Channer 3 News has obtained cell phone footage of the entire incident, but we want to warn our viewers. This footage is graphic, and disturbing…”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

:zhaolium im zhaoghao

Literally: It fucker

Semantic: Motherfucker
Tuesday, January 19, 2016

“J’onn,” Olivia said, “I am going to ask you this once, and only once. Why is there a hole in Southern California where a mountain used to be?”

“How honestly do you want me to answer that question, Madam President?” J’onn asked.

“As honestly as possible,” Olivia said in a weary tone.

“Maxwell Lord pissed off Kara,” J’onn said.

Olivia closed her eyes and let out a long-suffering sigh. “J’onn, you assured me that her mental and emotional stability were being seen to.”

“They are,” J’onn said.

“Emotionally stable people don’t nuke California,” Olivia said.

“It wasn’t a nuke,” J’onn said. “It was something called a ‘displacement warhead’,” J’onn said.

“I don’t care what it was,” Olivia said. “Half the people in the Pentagon soiled themselves when it went off, and you’re telling me she did it because of a temper tantrum.”

“Would you like to hear why she was upset before you have your own tantrum?” J’onn asked.

“You need to watch your tone, Director J’onzz,” Olivia said.

“And you need to watch yours,” J’onn said. “Kara went after Cadmus last night, without involving the DEO, because someone is leaking information to the other side. She had to fight thirty Red Tornado units. Anti-Kryptonian weapons whose development was funded by *your* administration. Weapons fielded by people *you* allowed to remain in power. Then, once she’d dealt with that threat, she found the bodies of no less than twenty girls surgically modified to look like her. All of whom had been experimented on and killed by Maxwell Lord. *Then* she found evidence that Lord
was planning on using those same experiments to build an army of Bizarros, presumably to kill her and her people and take their place. So, when I say Maxwell Lord pissed Kara off, maybe you need to take a step back and understand that she has seen nightmares that the rest of us can only begin to imagine, and when something pisses her off, she isn’t being petty, or childish. She’s reacting to something that would make a lesser person break.

“So, yes, she destroyed the Cadmus facility. Specifically because she was afraid that if she allowed any of the technology in the facility to be taken by the DEO, the government would eventually use it. And yes, I’m pretty sure she did something that provoked Lillian Luthor or Sam Lane or both into shooting Max and dumping him in the street. And yes, I’m pretty sure that was her intended result. And no, I don’t blame her. The man was a monster and putting him down made the world a safer place for the rest of us.”

“Twenty girls?” Olivia asked.

“That we know of,” J’onn said. “All the records of the experiments were gone, so that may just be the ones where they hadn’t had time to dispose of the bodies.”

“Do you think that’s likely?” Olivia asked.

“No,” J’onn said. “In the original timeline, there were only six failures. It’s likely that there were more this time because Max was working under less favorable conditions, and more concerned about moving quickly than about getting caught.”

“So, he was being sloppy,” Olivia said.

“It would seem so,” J’onn said. “Madam President, I think it might be a good idea to delay your visit until after we find Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane.”

“I don’t think that’s really an option, J’onn. I need all the political capital I can get right now and changing the National City visit will make it look like I’m afraid of Cadmus,” she said. “We can’t afford any signs of weakness, given what’s coming.”

“I understand, ma’am, but frankly, until we’re sure Baker isn’t at least one of our leaks, I’m not sure we can afford to put you at risk, either,” J’onn said.

“Then shut Cadmus down,” Olivia said.

“We’re trying,” J’onn said, “but we’re still leaking information like a sieve, and I can’t seem to do anything about that. Even telepathic scans haven’t been able to find the leak.”

“We need to limit all Cadmus-related information to people we can be sure we can trust,” Olivia said.

“At this point, that circle is pretty small,” J’onn said.

“Who?” Olivia asked.

“Agents Danvers, Sawyer, Willis, Lane and Vasquez,” J’onn said. “All of them are loyal to Kara, and all of them hate Cadmus.”

“Fine then,” Olivia said. “Lock it down to them. They can use alien assets as needed. See if Astra will plug you into her intelligence network and go from there, but we have to shut this down, and soon, J’onn. National City cannot remain a war zone.”

“Agreed,” J’onn said.
“And J’onn… Tell Kara, no more bombs.”

“I’ll tell her,” J’onn said.

Olivia disconnected the call, and J’onn stared at the blank screen.

“I’ll tell her,” he said again, “but we both know she’ll do whatever the hell she wants.”

Cat sat at her desk, staring at her computer screen without really seeing the report she was supposed to be reading. Kara was out with Leslie, doing a patrol of a few neighborhoods outside of the City of Hope that had a fairly high alien population, just in case Cadmus decided to retaliate for the raid the night before. They were poorer neighborhoods, which meant Kara would come back wanting to start a ton of new urban renewal projects, and Cat would have to remind her that as vast as it was, there was a limit to her wealth.

Kara’s compassion and her generosity were just a couple of the things that Cat loved about her, but last night, she had discovered a new dimension to that love. Last night, she had discovered that she was more than willing to fight for it. She had guided Alice through the fight and had felt the same excitement she’d always felt during a good investigation or a juicy interview or a tricky negotiation.

That in and of itself wasn’t so surprising. What was surprising is what happened afterwards. Kara had looked her in the eyes and told her that she was going to kill a man that Cat had known for years, and Cat hadn’t just been okay with that. She’d been relieved. In fact, when she had woken up to reports that Cadmus had killed Max and dumped the body, she had been satisfied. One of the people who hurt Kara, who killed her employees and tried to kill her and her son was gone, and she couldn’t find it in herself to feel anything but happy about it.

*That* did bother her, and it was the reason she was glad Supergirl was out and about. She needed time to re-evaluate her own sense of self, and she did not want Kara to see her struggling with it and take it as a condemnation of what she had done, or second thoughts about their relationship.

“Come,” J’onn called at the sound of a knock on his door. The door opened and someone stepped into his office. He finished the sentence he was working on, then looked up from the report.

“Eliza?”

“Hey, J’onn,” Eliza said, holding up a bag of takeout. “I hope I’m not interrupting.”

“You are, but it’s the kind of interruption I like, and unless there is an alien fleet outside or a meta-human rampaging through the city, I can always make time for you,” he said. “Please, sit down.”

Eliza smiled as she pushed the door to, then walked over and took a seat.

“I don’t have quite the spy network you do, but I figured if you lived in Peru all that time, you had to enjoy tamales,” Eliza said.

“I do,” J’onn said.

“Good,” Eliza said, “because I brought a ton.” She sat the bag on his deck and pulled out one of the foil trays inside. “Cheese, pork, chicken or beef?” she asked.

“Any one is fine, as long as you brought hot sauce,” J’onn asked.
“Of course I brought hot sauce,” Eliza said. “What do you think this is, amateur hour?”

J’onn laughed as he took one of the trays and opened it, then added a couple of tamales to his plate before trading Eliza for another tray and taking a couple from that. They sat in companionable silence as they fixed their food. Eliza produced the promised hot sauce, three different bottles with varying levels of heat, and she doused her own with the hottest of the three, smiling as J’onn did the same.

“How has your day been so far?” Eliza asked.

“Wonderful,” J’onn said. “Nothing starts the day off quite like getting yelled at by the President.”

“I take it she wasn’t happy about the raid last night?” Eliza asked.

“More like she was unhappy with Kara’s idea of securing the site,” J’onn said. “I still can’t figure out why I had to be the one to explain why there’s a crater where that mountain used to be.”

Eliza looked up from her plate. “What did Kara do?” she asked.

“She dropped some sort of Kryptonian bomb on the Cadmus base to make sure none of it could be salvaged, but she overdid it a bit. The mountain the base was built into isn’t there anymore.”

“She blew up a mountain?” Eliza asked.

“I’m not sure blew up is the right term. Vaporized. Disintegrated. She called the weapon a displacement warhead, but I don’t know what, exactly, it displaces,” J’onn said. “Honestly, I wasn’t in the mood to ask, and she wasn’t in the mood to explain.”

Eliza sighed. “She’s scaring me. Not making me afraid of her. Making me afraid for her.”

“You’re not the only one,” J’onn said. “I think she was responsible for what happened to Maxwell Lord.”

“She was,” Eliza said. “And honestly, that’s what scared me. She walked into Cat’s apartment last night and told her straight to her face that she intended to kill Lord.”

“How did Cat take it?”

“Cat asked if she was sure. Kara said she was. And Cat said she would still be there after,” Eliza said.

“What do you think she would have done if Cat had told her not to?” J’onn asked.

“I think she would have kissed Cat goodbye, then done it anyway,” Eliza said. “Which is why I’m scared. I’m afraid she’s going to find herself in a place where she has to choose between doing what it takes to win a fight and doing what it takes to preserve her health and happiness, and she’s going to choose winning the fight, and end up destroying herself.”

“I think you’re right,” J’onn said. “I think we’ve already seen her make exactly that kind of decision once.”

“The fight with Clark,” Eliza said.

“Yes,” J’onn said. “I think she really would have killed him if she hadn’t found a way to force his hand.”
“So, what do we do?” Eliza asked.

“We pray it doesn’t come to that, and we do everything in our power to help her make sure it doesn’t,” J’onn said.

“I hope that’s enough,” Eliza said.

“So do I,” J’onn said. “So do I.”

“I’ve been expecting your call,” Bruce said.

“What do you know?” Clark asked.

“Nothing for sure,” Bruce said. “Kara’s communications are fiendishly well-encrypted.”

“You tried to hack her comms?” Clark asked.

“Of course,” Bruce said. “She would have been insulted if I didn’t at least try.”

“Why would you think that?” Clark asked.

“The hologram that popped up and told me so after I broke through a fake firewall,” Bruce said.

“Bruce,” Clark said.

“Her honey pots are very good,” Bruce said.

“Please never mention Kara’s honey pot again,” Clark said.

“It’s the correct term,” Bruce replied.

Clark sighed. “We’re getting off topic. What do you suspect?”

“My gut tells me she somehow sent the recording of Jason interrogating Maxwell Lord to Lillian Luthor.”

“You don’t think General Lane killed Lord?” Clark asked.

“If General Lane had killed him, we would never have found the body,” Bruce said. “Lillian Luthor, on the other hand, likes to make statements.”

“You think Kara intended to get Lord killed?”

“Hard to say,” Bruce said. “Even if she just meant to drive a wedge, I doubt she will shed any tears over his death, but Jason told me what they found inside the Cadmus facility and I could see it provoking a response.”

“I should go and talk to her,” Clark said.

“Why?” Bruce asked.

“Someone is dead,” Clark said.

“And I am no happier about that than you are,” Bruce said. “However, I think we need to trust her judgement.”
“I’m surprised to hear that from you,” Clark said.

“She’s earned our trust,” Bruce said.

“I didn’t think anyone earned your trust,” Clark said.

“I didn’t say she’d earned my unconditional trust,” Bruce said, “but given what has been going on, the fact that she has only killed Corben and Lord shows that while she may be a killer, she’s not an indiscriminate one.”

“What about Henshaw?” Clark said.

“Willis killed Henshaw,” Bruce said. “Not Kara.”

“That’s a fine hair you’re splitting,” Clark said.

“I’m not splitting hairs. I’m paying attention and learning from my mistakes,” Bruce said. “If Kara were going to go off the rails, it would have happened after the CatCo shooting.”

“You sound awfully sure of that,” Clark said.

“I know how I would react if someone took a shot at Selina or the kids,” Bruce said.

“Bruce, people shoot at Selina and the kids every single night,” Clark said.

“No,” Bruce said. “People shoot at Catwoman and the Bat family every single night. There *is* a difference.”

“I’m not sure I see one,” Clark said.

“That’s because you’ve never had a partner,” Bruce said. “You don’t understand.”

“You’re right,” Clark said. “I don’t. Either way, someone is trying to hurt the people you care about.”

“If someone shoots at Catwoman, it’s because Selina made the choice to put herself into harm’s way. If someone walks into Wayne Manor and takes a shot at Selina while she’s having lunch, it’s different. She hasn’t chosen to put herself into harm’s way, and she isn’t prepared to deal with the danger. It’s like the difference between Lois going on a dangerous assignment, and someone walking into the Daily Planet and shooting up the place.”

“Oh, for fuck’s sake” and hung up on me.”

“Diana,” Bruce said.

“Okay,” Clark said. “That sort of makes sense, but I still think someone should go talk to Kara.”

“Send Diana,” Bruce said.

“I tried. Diana just said, ‘oh, for fuck’s sake’ and hung up on me.”

Bruce didn’t answer. He just sat there, staring at the screen in front of him, slightly terrified.

“Bruce?” Clark said after two minutes.

“I’m sorry,” Bruce said, Clark’s voice breaking the spell. “I was just contemplating how badly we fucked up if Diana’s to that point.”

“Yeah, she seemed pretty pissed,” Clark said.
“Clark, if you want my honest advice, I’m telling you to leave this one alone,” Bruce said. “You and I have codes against killing. Kara doesn’t, and given what she saw last night, I’m having a hard time blaming her if she did intend for Lord to die as a result of her actions.”

“What was in that mountain?” Clark asked.

“You remember her talking about Bizarro?” Bruce asked.

“Hard to forget,” Clark said.

“Cadmus kidnapped twenty-one prostitutes, right off the street. Surgically altered them to look like Kara, then experimented on them. Kara captured the one they successfully turned into a Bizarro, and found the bodies of the twenty failed attempts,” Bruce said.

“My god,” Clark said.

“Exactly,” Bruce said. “So, leave this one alone.”

“Fine,” Clark said.

“I’m hanging up now,” Bruce said.

“I’ll talk to you later,” Clark said.

Bruce disconnected the line and pulled up his messaging app.

Bruce: Clark is being stupid again.

Diana: I am aware. Are you planning on being stupid with him?

Bruce: If I was, I wouldn’t have texted you.

Diana: I assumed, but I have had cause to question your intelligence of late.

Bruce: I’m not in a position to argue that point.

Diana: I will deal with Clark.

Bruce: When and how?

Diana: 30 seconds ago, by texting Lois.

Bruce: It might have been kinder to just beat him to death.

Diana: You assume I have an interest in being kind.

Diana: I also texted Selina.

Bruce: But I didn’t do anything.

Diana: You’re a man. Today, that is enough.

Kara sat on the couch with a smile on her face. She knew there were a dozen different things she should be worried about, but Cat was sitting next to her and she could feel Cat’s body heat where their thighs touched. That was really the whole of her world in that moment. Cat was with her. Cat was touching her. The rest could wait.
Cat looked over at her, giving her a quizzical look. “What are you so happy about?” she asked.

“Just being here with you,” Kara said.

Cat rolled her eyes and looked down at the layout she was working on, but Kara could hear the change in Cat’s heart rate and see the faint blush in her cheeks.

Kara looked down at the papers she was reading over regarding the sites for the next round of Transmat stations, but a moment later, Cat’s hand slipped into hers, lacing their fingers together.

Clark walked into the bullpen at the Daily Planet and looked around, spotting Lois sitting at her desk with her feet up on the corner as she read through her notes. He frowned. Her text had sounded urgent. ‘I need you at the planet now, Smallville.’ Lois wasn’t one to cry wolf, so it had to be important, but she seemed awfully casual for an emergency.

He crossed the bullpen and stopped by her desk. She looked up at him with such a look of annoyance on her face that he took a step back.


Clark nodded as Lois dropped her feet to the floor and stood up. He followed her into the conference room, and Lois slammed the door once they were inside.

“For fuck’s sake, Clark,” she yelled.

He winced. “You’ve talked to Diana,” Clark said.

Lois nodded. “I’ve talked to Diana,” she said. “What the actual fuck is your fucking problem?”

“She killed someone,” Clark said. “Again.”

“Lillian fucking Luthor killed Maxwell Lord,” Lois said. “Or hell, maybe my dad. I don’t fucking know.”

“Bruce thinks Kara provoked it,” Clark said.

“Oh course he does,” Lois said. “He’s a paranoid asshole with shit for brains.”

“I was thinking along the same lines before I called him,” Clark said. “That’s why I called Diana first.”

“And Diana wasn’t in a mood to put up with your shit, so you called Bruce,” Lois said.

“Lois-”

“Don’t Lois me, Clark,” she snapped. “We’ve had this conversation already.”

“I just wanted someone to talk to her,” Clark said.

“The fuck you did,” Lois said. “If you wanted someone to talk to her, you would have fucking called her. Not Diana. Not fucking Bruce. You didn’t want to fucking talk to her. You wanted to fucking judge her. What I don’t understand is why?”

“She’s killing people,” Clark said.
“That’s bullshit,” Lois said. “Quit lying to yourself. You work with Diana and she kills people. You work with the Lanterns and they’ve all killed people. You work with Arthur, and he sure as hell didn’t retake Atlantis in a bloodless coup. Why the fuck is Kara different?”

“Because it’s my fault!” Clark snapped. “Because she’s right. I’ve failed. I’ve failed her. I’ve failed everyone. She said it that day in her office. All this time, I thought I was this big hero, that I was saving the world, but I could have done so much more, and I let my fear get in the way. I could have changed the world. I could have made it a better place. I could have helped the aliens. I could have helped the Fort Rozz prisoners. I didn’t do any of that, and she’s the one left fighting a war because I was too afraid to make the hard choices. Because I’m a God damned coward.”

“Jesus, Smallville,” Lois said.

“I’m still doing it, too,” Clark said. “I’m still too afraid to make the choices she’s making.”

“What are you talking about?” Lois asked.

“I mean that I should be in National City,” Clark said. “She needs me, and I’m terrified to go help her.”

“Why?” Lois asked. “Clark, I’ve seen you face down things so scary I was afraid to even look at them.”

“I’m afraid you’ll tell me to go,” Clark said.

Clark saw the instant Lois understood what he was saying.

“You’re afraid I won’t go with you?” Lois asked.

Clark nodded.

“Clark, if you want us to move to National City so you can be close to your cousin, just go home and pack,” Lois said. “I’ve had a standing job offer in National City since Cat bought the Trib.”

“There’s more,” Clark said.


“She wants us to get married,” Clark said.

“Okay, so does half the floor,” Lois said. “There’s a betting pool on whether you can actually get me to the altar. Honestly, I kind of thought that’s where we were headed. Is that not what you want?”

“It is,” Clark said. “It’s what I’ve wanted for a long time. But she wants you to go into the Chrysalis chamber.”

“Like Lucy did?” Lois asked. “She wants me to become a Kryptonian?”

Clark nodded. “She wants to set a precedent. If a human marries a Kryptonian, they can choose to become a Kryptonian.”

“And you thought I’d say no?” Lois asked.

“It’s a lot,” Clark said. “You’d be giving up—”

“Yes,” Lois said.
“Really?” Clark asked.

“Of course,” Lois said. “If you’re trying to scare me off, you picked the wrong girl, Smallville. I love you, and you are stuck with me.”

Clark reached out and pulled Lois into his arms, kissing her. Lois returned the kiss with enthusiasm. When it was over, she pulled back and smiled at him.

“You know you’re still sleeping on the couch tonight,” Lois said.

“I figured,” Clark said.

“You also have to tell Perry we quit,” Lois said.

“Oh, come on!” Clark said.

“Go,” Lois said. “I have to call Cat and beg her to hire your dead weight.”

“You do remember that I have almost as many awards as you, right?” Clark asked as Lois took out her phone.

“Pulitzer or get the fuck out,” Lois said as she made a shooing motion.

Kara glared at Cat’s phone when it started playing ‘No One Mourns the Wicked’. Cat sighed as she let go of Kara’s hand. She stood up and walked over to her desk, picked up her phone and answered it.

“Hello Lois,” Cat said. “That depends. Are you planning on bringing the farm boy? Then no. Oh? He wants to be close to his cousin. What, is flying in from Metropolis to stab her in the chest too much trouble?”

Kara set her tablet down, stood up and walked over to Cat.

“Oh, he’s sorry and he wants to help? Tell him I would find it very helpful for him to go fuck himself.”

Kara rested her hand on Cat’s lower back.

“Love?” Kara asked.

“One second Lois,” Cat said. “Okay, you’re on speaker.”

“Hey, Lois,” Kara said.

“Hey short stuff,” Lois said.

“Hey short stuff,” Lois said.

“Why are you upsetting my girlfriend?” Kara asked.

“Clark wants to move to National City,” Lois said. “I was asking if I was still welcome to come work for her.”

“You want to move out here?” Kara asked.

“I honestly don’t care where I live, kiddo. I just want to be with Clark, and Clark wants… He wants to do more than get cats out of trees,” Lois said.
Kara looked at Cat, silently asking if it was okay. Cat stared at her for a moment, looking like she wanted to argue, but after a minute, the fight went out of her.

“Shit!” Lois said.

“What’s wrong?” Kara asked.

“Perry just threw a chair at Clark’s head, so if you say no, I’m pretty sure I’m going to have to learn to milk a cow,” Lois said.

“You shouldn’t tempt me. If I give Cat a picture of you milking a cow, she’d propose on the spot,” Kara said.

“I see how it is,” Lois said. “Though honestly, I can’t say I blame you. Cat’s a hottie.”

“You’ve not helping your case,” Kara said.

“I swear I’m not a threat,” Lois said. “In fact, I’m apparently getting married.”

“Kal talked to you?” Kara asked.

“Finally,” Lois said.

“What did you say?” Kara asked.

“I said yes,” Lois said, “to all of it.”

“I hope you don’t mind working for Vicki,” Kara said.

“I think we can live with that,” Lois said.

“What’s this ‘we’ stuff?” Kara asked. “Kal’s going straight to the assistant pool.”

“Oh! I call dibs!” Lois said.

“Call Nimda,” Kara said. “She’ll get you guys set up with an apartment in the Solarium.”


“Love you too,” Kara said.

“That goes for you too, Cat,” Lois said.

“I don’t want you to get hit by a bus,” Cat said.

Lois laughed. “I’ll take it,” she said. “See you both soon.”

Cat reached up and disconnected the call.

“Are you sure you’re okay with this?” Cat asked.

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “I love Kal, but we’ve never had an easy relationship.”

“I’m just worried he’ll get in the way of what you need to do,” Cat said.

“I’ve moved bigger obstacles,” Kara said.
“I know, but you shouldn’t have to worry about whether or not your family is going to support you,” Cat said.

“Family isn’t always easy,” Kara said.

The sound of someone knocking made them both turn around.

“Speak of the devil,” Cat said.

“Please don’t,” Kara said. “He’s an obnoxious little man whore.”

“The devil?” Cat asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “Decent enough guy, if you can get him to keep it in his pants, but he will honestly sleep with anything with a heartbeat.”

“You’re kidding me,” Cat said.

“I’m really not,” Kara said.

“I want to hear the rest of that story,” Cat said as she waved Adam in.

“Hey,” Adam said as he entered the office. “I hope I’m not interrupting something.”

“No, of course not,” Cat said. “It’s good to see you again.”

“It’s good to see you, too,” he said. “I, ah… I decided to stick around for a little while.”

“Great!” Cat said. She looked over at Kara. “Is the apartment ready?”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I had my people take care of it last night.” She walked around behind her desk and opened a drawer, pulling out a set of keys. “I had it furnished and the fridge stocked for you. I wasn’t sure what you liked, so I just pulled the receipts for when Cat furnished your apartment in Opal city and tried for best matches. I also had one of my personal shoppers pick you up some clothes, so you won’t need to go shopping. If you don’t like the furniture, or the clothes don’t fit, or there’s anything else you need, just let me know.”

“I’m sure it will be fine,” Adam said.

Kara smiled, a little amused at the fact that she’d just had Nimda send a drone to scan his apartment, and fab duplicates of his furniture and clothes. She’d added a couple of odds and ends to make it less suspicious, but even those matched the same style.

“I also set up an appointment for you tomorrow with Fiona Byrne and M’gann M’orzz. They’re a couple of figures in the local alien community and have been major players in the Beacon of Hope Foundation’s integration initiatives,” Kara said.

“Wow,” Adam said. “You do not mess around, do you?”

“She worked for me for over a year,” Cat said. “She never would have lasted if she wasn’t something special.”

“Your mom exaggerates,” Kara said. She looked over at Cat. “I’m not special at all. Just a normal girl. Just average little Kara Danvers. Average strength, average hearing.” she smiled as she reached up and adjusted her glasses. “Less than average vision.”
Cat grinned at her.

“I feel like I’m missing something,” Adam said.

Kara jumped slightly at the reminded that she and Cat weren’t alone, and she could feel a faint blush creeping into her cheeks.

Adam turned to Cat for a moment. “Do you think I could have a moment alone with Kara?” he asked.

“Your mom’s involved with most of the Beacon of Hope Foundation’s business, Adam. The conversation would probably be a bit more productive with her here,” Kara said.

“Uh… This is more… personal,” Adam said.

“Personal?” Kara asked, a sense of dread filling her. Surely he wasn’t going to do this again when he knew she was dating his mom.

“Adam,” Cat said, a slight look of panic on her face. “I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

Then it hit her. He didn’t know. He’d sat there all of last night, watching them together, and it just hadn’t clicked for him. Because fucking straight people.

“It’s okay, Cat,” Kara said. “Give us a minute.”

“You’re sure?” Cat asked.

“You’re sure?” Cat asked.

“It will be fine,” Kara said. “No broken bones, I promise.”

“Kara,” Cat said in a warning tone.

“Cat,” Kara said in an annoyed tone.

Cat huffed. “If you hurt him,” Cat said.

“I know, I know,” Kara said. “Go tell Vicki she’s Lois’s new boss.”

Cat gave Adam a hesitant look, before she nodded and headed towards the door.

As soon as the door closed behind her, Adam spoke.

“You know, I always feel like I’m only getting half the conversation when I’m around you two,” Adam said.

“You don’t say,” Kara said.

“Yeah,” he said. “I mean, I think it’s great that you two are such good friends. Having you around seems to make her really happy.”

Kara closed her eyes and took a deep breath, fighting back the urge to scream, because fucking straight people. She opened her eyes a moment later and looked right at him.

“Adam,” Kara said, putting every bit of Supergirl authority she could muster into her voice.

“Yes?”

“I’m busy,” Kara said.
“What?”

“I can’t go out on a date with you,” she said. “I’m busy.”

“I hadn’t even told you when yet,” Adam said.

“Well, yes, but two things. First, being as gay as I am is a huge time commitment, and I plan on being really, really gay, like, for the rest of my life, so I can’t work you in. Second, and this is just my thing, but I have a very strict policy against dating my future stepchildren.”

Adam stared at her for a moment, a look of utter shock and complete confusion on his face.

“Uh… oh… I… um… you… um… You’re gay?”

Kara rolled her eyes. “Very,” she said.

“And my mom is…”

“You know, I never asked,” Kara said. “I mean, I assume she’s bisexual, because she did marry four guys, and she dates men and women, but she could identify as fluid or pan or something. I was mostly too busy feeling incredibly lucky that she loves me and puts up with my emotional baggage and other assorted bullshit.”

“And you guys are…”

“Dating? Head over heels in love? Planning on spending the rest of our lives together? Yes. All of those things,” Kara said.

“Why didn’t you say anything last night?” Adam asked.

This time, Kara did scream. Not loudly, but there was definitely a scream of frustration.

"Adam, we were late because we were making out in the car. We spent the whole night flirting in front of you. I sat there and told her that I wasn't wearing a cheerleader outfit to bed for her. You even said we sound like an old married couple, and the only objection we had to that was the 'old' part. I spent half the night either holding her hand or with my arm around her shoulders. I fixed her food when it arrived. She told me she loved me. She called me cute. I fed her dessert off my own spoon. I leaned over and kissed her on the cheek when she got into the car. These are all things that happened right in front of you," Kara said. "Short of introducing myself by saying 'Hi, I'm Kara Danvers, I spent the last two days on a tropical island having sex with your mom,' I'm not sure how much more obvious we could get."

“Okay,” Adam said, taking a step back. “Geez. I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, that’s not good enough,” Kara said. “Your mother just got you back, and she’s probably down in Vicki’s office thinking she’s going to have to pick between her girlfriend and her son, and she and I have been through *way* too much shit getting to this point for me to let that happen. So I am going to need you to get right over whatever ‘she led me on’ bullshit is bouncing around in your head right now and deal with the fact that you let your own assumptions, preconceptions and prejudices talk you into doing something both stupid and hurtful, because like it or not, we’re about to become family, and I am already dealing with way more crap from men in my family today than I know what to do with.”

“Okay, see, now you’re sounding like what I imagined my mom would sound like,” Adam said.
“There’s a good reason for that. Now, are we good?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Adam said. “Yeah, I’m sorry. Really. It just never occurred to me.”

“Right,” Kara said. “For the record, my sister Alex, also a lesbian. Her girlfriend Maggie. Lesbian. Lena Luthor, who you will meet if you spend any real time here. Bisexual, but dating a lesbian who can and will break every bone in your body. Our friend Susan. Lesbian. Leslie Willis. Lesbian. Siobhan Smythe. Straight, I think, but completely off-limits from now until the heat death of the universe.”

“Is there anyone in this town I am allowed to date?” Adam asked.

Kara thought about it for a moment. “Yes, but just take it as law handed down from on high that anyone who works at CatCo, LCorp, or the DEO, or who lives in the Solarium are off limits, and I think we’ll do fine.”

“The Solarium?” Adam asked.

“Private apartment building,” Kara said. “It’s where my family and I live. Your mom, too.”

“Oh,” Adam said. “I guess it goes without saying that I didn’t realize you two live together.”

Kara frowned, because technically, they didn’t. Kara just hadn’t been home to do more than grab fresh clothes or some personal knickknack or other odds and ends since she’d gotten back from Krypton.

“I moved her to the Solarium after the shooting,” Kara said. “The security is a lot better there than at Waverly Towers. I’ve added a lot of upgraders to the Waverly buildings since then, so you should be safe there, but I put you in there because I figured a little bit of distance will make this easier on you and your mom. Give you guys separate corners to retreat to when you need a moment.”

“That… is actually a really good idea,” Adam said.

“Everyone is always so surprised,” Kara said. “You should go get settled in your apartment and start working on your pitch for tomorrow.”

Adam nodded. “Okay,” he said. “And I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to disrespect yours and Cat’s relationship.”

“I know,” Kara said. “But Adam… Two things.”

“Yeah?”

“First, it’s probably best if you don’t spread it around that Cat’s your mom. At least not until this whole Cadmus thing is settled. I don’t think they would go after you, but better safe than sorry,” Kara said.

Adam’s eyes got a little big. “Okay,” he said.

“Second, do you know what a shovel talk is?”

“Yeah,” Adam said.

“Good,” Kara said. “Consider this one yours. I reached out to you because I know how much Cat loves you, and I know how much she wants you back in her life. But I love *Cat* and I love *Carter* and I protect the things I love. If you hurt either of them, you will find out very quickly that
I am *not* the nice one. Understand?"

“Are you threatening me?” Adam asked.

Kara gave him a delighted smile. “YES!” she said cheerfully. “I’m so glad we understand each other.”

Kara looked up from the report she’d gone back to after Adam had left, smiling as Cat came in the door. Kara patted the couch next to her. Cat closed the doors and walked over, taking a seat.

“How did it go?” Cat asked.

“I told him I was gay. I told him you and I are in love, dating and that we’re planning on spending the rest of our lives together. He asked why we didn’t say anything last night. I may have implied that he was a bit of an idiot not to have picked up on it at dinner last night. There was a small amount of shouting, I told him he wasn’t allowed to date anyone who worked for CatCo, LCorp, the DEO or anyone who lives in the Solarium, and I may have given him a shovel talk about what would happen if he hurt you or Carter,” Kara said.

“You didn’t,” Cat said.

“I kind of did,” Kara said. “I mean, I know I should probably lie and tell you it was fine, but I promised. No lies.”

“Does he hate me?” Cat asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I think he was more embarrassed than anything.”

“Is he still staying?” Cat asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “And he’s still going to the meeting with Fiona and M’gann, so he might be around for a while.”

“Thank you,” Cat said. “For reaching out to him.”

Kara reached up and put and arm around Cat’s shoulders, pulling her close and pressing a kiss to her temple.

“He did make me think of something though,” Kara said.

“What’s that, love?” Cat asked.

“You think we should move in together?” Kara asked.

“Darling, you moved in weeks ago,” Cat said.

“Not officially,” Kara said. “I mean, all my stuff is still down in my apartment.”

“Oh,” Cat said, looking over at Kara. “I’m sorry, love. I had you, and I didn’t even think about your things.”

“It’s not that big a deal,” Kara said. “The only things I really have are my art supplies, my scrap books and my clothes.”

“You know what,” Cat said. “Why don’t we take the guest rooms and turn them into an office and
“Really?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Cat said. “We have a whole building full of space and can build out apartments at need if we ever need someone to stay with us, so we don’t really need a single guest room, much less two. I only have the guest room for my mother, and in ten years, she’s never slept in it once. You should have your own spaces within the house.”

Kara looked at her for a moment, and asked shyly, “Would it be okay if we just shared the office at home?” she asked.

“Are you sure?” Cat asked.

“I like being close to you when we’re working,” Kara said.

“I did notice you never went back up to your office on forty-two,” Cat said.

“Do you want me to?” Kara asked.

“No,” Cat said. “I love having you down here. To be honest, I hated it when you were up there.”

Kara smiled. “Good, because I love being here with you.”

“Well, the current arrangement isn’t going to work long term,” Cat said. “Today demonstrated that.”

“We could expand the office,” Kara said. “There’s a lot of things out in the bullpen that could be shuffled to another floor. It would actually improve the bullpen a lot if the only thing out there were reporters, and all the admin stuff was shifted elsewhere.”

“Keep talking,” Cat said.

“We don’t need an IT guy in the bullpen for example,” Kara said. “The guy out there doesn’t spend nearly as much time sitting around doing nothing as Winn did, but only because he’s not half as good, but it would be a lot more efficient if IT issues in the bullpen were handled by the general IT pool instead of having one guy sit out there and twiddle his thumbs ninety percent of the time. If we reduced the bullpen to just reporters, we could get rid of the entire seating area on the other side of that wall and put a second office in there with a sliding divider between them. We’d each have our own private office when we needed it, but we’d have a shared space most of the time.”

Cat frowned.

“You don’t like that idea?” Kara asked.

“It’s a good idea. Practical. Efficient. It allows us to each have our own private domains,” Cat said.

“You hate it,” Kara said.

“I hate it,” Cat said.

“Why?” Kara said.

“You’d be too far away,” Cat said.

Kara laughed and leaned down to kiss Cat. She stopped about halfway.
“What’s the matter?” Cat asked.
“Everyone can see us,” Kara said.
“Let them see,” Cat said.
Kara smiled and did just that.

Jeremiah sat at the desk in the small house just south of Hub City and stared at the computer screen, reading the headlines on the CatCo website.

Cadmus Facility Destroyed by DEO
Maxwell Lord Murdered by Cadmus
Krypton Inc. Announces New Transmat Stations
Center for Molecular Surgery Accepts First Patients
First Omegahedrons To Replace Aging Nuclear Power Plants
Supergirl and Livewire Foil Bank Robbery
Flamebird Puts Out Wildfires in Northern California
Martian Manhunter Rescues Workers Trapped in Collapsed Tunnel
Krypton Inc. and LCorp Planning Another Big Announcement?

The wording was different on the Daily Planet’s website, and CNN, and a dozen others he’d checked, but everywhere he looked, he saw Supergirl, the Kryptonians, and everything he’d lost. Everything they took from him.

He knew he was obsessing. Knew he should try to let go, to adjust to his new life, but a few weeks ago, he’d been happily married. He’d been raising an amazing daughter. And all of it had been taken from him, because he let Eliza take in Kara. He should have said no. He should have put Alex ahead of everything. Instead, he’d gone against his better judgement, and it had cost him months as a slave to the DEO, ten years of his daughter’s life, his marriage, and his relationship with his now adult daughter.

And every day, Alex was out there, risking her life, and every day, he felt any chance he might have of patching things up slip further and further way.

All because of Kara.

It was enough to make anyone hate her.
The Calm

Chapter Summary

J'onn goes to DC, Kara goes to therapy, Bizarro wakes up, Susan and Leslie have a talk, Winn gets someone a gift, James gets an offer, Olivia talks to Baker, Alex and Eliza make a discovery, Lucy's life kind of sucks, Lois and Clark arrive in National City, Cat learns a new way to use the Blue Lantern ring, Kara does some redecorating, and Nia has a dream.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is NSFW. There are sexy times, and the story definitely earns the Explicit rating here.

Also, the endgame starts with the next chapter. I am not going to lie. Things are going to get really rough, really quickly. For those of you who have stuck with it this far, thanks, and I'm sorry for what I'm about to do to all of you.

If you missed it last week, take a look at my Sanvers fic, Taking In Strays.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

J'onn picked up his phone and answered without bothering to check the caller ID. “Director J'onzz,” he said.

“Hello, J'onn,” President Marsdin said.

“Madam President,” J'onn said. “To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“I need you to come to DC this morning,” Marsdin said.

“May I ask why?” J'onn asked.

“I want you to read the minds of several people in order to eliminate them as suspects in our security leak,” Olivia said.

“Give me fifteen minutes,” J'onn said.

“I'll be waiting,” Olivia said.

“How do you feel about that?” Foster asked.

“What do you mean?” Kara asked.
“I mean, you deliberately provoked Lillian Luthor into murdering Maxwell Lord. It wasn’t accidental. It wasn’t a more severe reaction than you expected. You deliberately took an action which you knew would result in the death of a specific person, very likely in a horrific and painful manner,” Doctor Foster said. “Most people would have an emotional reaction to that, Kara. So, I’m asking how that makes you feel.”

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “I mean, I know how most people think I should feel about it. They think I should feel guilty, or conflicted, or that I should regret it.”

“But you don’t feel any of those things?” Foster asked.

“Not a one,” Kara said. “I woke up yesterday morning, saw that Max was dead. Went to work, had a good day. A little weird, but good. Went to the Genesis chamber and visited my daughter. Went home and had dinner, put my son to bed, made love to my girlfriend, and slept better than I had in weeks.

“So, no. I don’t feel guilty, I don’t feel conflicted, and I sure has hell don’t regret it. Maxwell Lord was a murderer, a criminal and a coward. He was a threat to me, a threat to my family, and a threat to the lives of every single person, human and alien, on this planet or any other. And I ended him. I killed the man with an email, and I feel *good*. I feel righteous. I feel like I delivered justice for every one of those girls he mutilated or murdered.”

“I can understand that feeling,” Foster said, “but do you understand why that make me nervous?”

“You’re afraid I’ll decide I have the right to chose who lives and who dies,” Kara said.

“Yes,” Foster said. “You see the danger?”

“Yeah. There aren’t a lot of people who could stop me if I decided to start killing people willy nilly,” Kara said.

“Yes,” Foster said.

“Not an unreasonable fear,” Kara said. “Especially since I did it before.”

“You mean the Red K incident,” Foster said.

“Red K, the Red ring,” Kara said. “Didn’t need any of that to do what I did on Starhaven 1.”

“Starhaven 1?” Foster asked. “I don’t think we’ve talked about that one.”

“Haven’t we?” Kara asked. “I thought for sure it had come up.”

“Tell me about it?” Foster asked.

“We had a group of Darkseid’s officers imprisoned on Starhaven in Universe 1. This was… Fuck, I don’t know. It was the day Ava and Nyssa died, so maybe two years into the war,” Kara said.

“Ava and Nyssa?” Foster asked.

“Ava Sharp. Head of the Time Bureau on Earth One, and Nyssa Al Ghul, Daughter of the Demon. Sara’s current and ex-girlfriends. Good women. I liked them a lot. Both of them reminded me of Alex. Strong, beautiful, tough, smart, loyal, hell on anyone who got into a fight with them. Really gay. Sara, Ava, Nyssa and Barda were holding down a small base for… reasons. I don’t remember why. It was important at the time, but then a division of Parademons boomtubed in and all we gave a
shit about was getting our people out. They managed to hold for nearly an hour. Powergirl and I had rolled up most of the division from behind, when the left flank just gave out. Ava and Nyssa rushed in to plug the hold to keep the Parademons from getting in behind Barda.”

Kara shook her head and stood up, walking across the office.

“I remember the screams. Not theirs. They couldn’t scream. They got ripped apart so fast they were dead before the blood hit the ground. Sara’s screams. Pain. So much pain. Mick had to cold-cock her and drag her off the field, or she would have died too.”

“What happened after that?” Foster asked.

“When we got back to central, I took Nyssa’s swords and I walked into the holding cells. I cut off the heads of two dozen prisoners. Put them in a bag, attached a note addressed to Darkseid, and flew out to the nearest enemy outpost. I killed everyone there, drove Nyssa’s swords through the outpost commander’s eyes, and left the heads as a gift,” Kara said as she stopped in front of a bookshelf and started looking over the various puzzles and toys there.

“My God,” Foster said. “What did Darkseid do?”

“He had their skulls cast in gold and sent them back to me with an invitation to join his army as the commander of his Furies. I carved the word no into the messenger’s forehead with my heat vision. The next day, he sent the messenger back with an offer of marriage.”

“What did you do?” Foster asked.

“I blew up the planet,” Kara said.

Foster stared at her for a moment, speechless.

“Pretty sure I got my point across,” Kara said as she picked up a pair of Baoding Balls off the shelf and started rolling them around in her hand.

“You blew up an entire planet?” Foster asked as Kara dropped back down onto the couch.

“More than one,” Kara said. “Starhaven wasn’t the first. It was just the first time I gave the order.”

“Kara-”

“It tore me up, that first time,” Kara said. “Bad memories, you know.”

“But the people…” Foster said.

“We got everybody we could off,” Kara said, “but once the hives go up, there’s not really a lot you can do.”

“How many were left?” Foster asked.

“I’m not sure,” Kara said looking down and the balls rolling around in her hand, listening to the chimes as they moved. “Three, maybe four billion. It’s hard to evacuate an entire planet. Even with transmat centers running constantly. And you have to have somewhere to evacuate them to. Starhaven had almost ten billion people when we started evacuating, and by that point, I’d gotten used to the fact that you never, ever get everyone out.”

“You blew up a planet with three or four billion people on it?” Foster asked.
“Yeah,” Kara said, spinning the Baoding balls faster. “I didn’t tell you this before?”

“No,” Foster said.

“Hmm…” Kara said. “I forget, sometimes.”

“You forget?” Foster asked.

Kara looked up at her. “Wouldn’t you?” Kara asked. “If you killed hundreds of billions of people, if you gave orders to burn entire solar systems, to sterilize galaxies, wouldn’t you forget?”

Kara looked back down at the balls she held in her hand, spinning so faster they were little more than a blur. “They weren’t people,” she said. “I couldn’t let them be people. They were numbers. I didn’t want them to be numbers, but they had to be. I couldn’t kill people. I couldn’t kill three or four billion people. But numbers. I could move numbers. Burn a world here, and that’s three billion less parademons Darkseid will have tomorrow. Blow up a solar system, that’s twenty-five billion less parademons we’ll have to fight next week.”

The balls began to glow red in Kara’s hand.

“That space station. I told you before, we had to blow it up, or a year from now, we’d lose the damn war. I know it was full of children. It was an orphanage. But they’re Czarnian children, and if Bernadeth had finished their training, there would have been a hundred new Furies, nearly as powerful as I am, so yes, Sara, I took a squad and I blew it the fuck up.”

“KARA!” Foster yelled.

Kara looked up at her, clenching her fist around the cherry red metal spheres in her hand, crushing them out of shape. She gave herself a little shake and blew a gentle stream of freeze breath to cool the ruined Baoding balls down to room temperature.

“Sorry,” Kara said.

“Where did you go just now?” Foster asked.

“Nowhere good,” Kara said.

“You’re still having flashbacks?” Foster asked.

“That one was the first one in a while,” Kara said.

“It sounded like you were fighting with Sara,” Foster said.

“That was a bad day,” Kara said. “A really, really bad day.”

“You bombed an orphanage?” Foster said.

“It was a Fury training center,” Kara said. “Granny Goodness liked to call them orphanages, because she would murder the children’s parents when she took them. No divided loyalties that way. After Granny died, Bernadeth kept the tradition. Training’s brutal. Brainwashing is worse. They turn out monsters. In the history of the God realms, only two people have ever walked away from the Furies.”

“Who were they?”
“Can we talk about something else?” Kara asked.

“We can talk about whatever you want, Kara,” Foster asked.

“How about puppies,” Kara said.

“Puppies?” Foster asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “We’re having a litter of puppies in about six weeks.”

“Oh,” Foster said.

“Madam President, Director J’onnz is asking to see you,” Elizabeth said from the intercom.

“Send him in,” Olivia said.

A moment later, the door opened, and the agent on duty let J’onn into the office. J’onn crossed the room and took a seat next to her desk as the agent closed the door behind him.

“Well?” Olivia asked.

“They’re all clean,” J’onn said.

“Damn,” Olivia said. “I knew, but damn.”

“I’m guessing this means you know who the leak is?” J’onn asked.

“The worst person it could possibly be,” Olivia said.

“Vice President Baker,” J’onn said.

“Yes.”

“This is not good,” J’onn said.

“That is an understatement,” Olivia said.

“What are you going to do?” J’onn asked.

“Dig,” Olivia said. “See if I can find leverage to force a resignation.”

“Kara might be able to help with that,” J’onn said.

“Her blowing up the Vice President’s residence would be the opposite of helpful,” Olivia said.

“She wouldn’t,” J’onn said. “I know it might not seem like it sometimes, but at the end of the day, she really does prefer to solve problems without violence if she can.”

“I know,” Olivia said. “She may be in the process of driving me insane, but considering what she’s been through, I understand her willingness to apply direct solutions.”

J’onn laughed. “That’s a polite way to put it.”

Olivia tilted her head slightly in acknowledgement. “Believe me, there was a time when I wondered if she was a bigger threat to everything I’m trying to do than Cadmus. Finding out the truth was humbling, to say the least.”
“I do understand,” J’onn said. “When I realized pieces of her story weren’t adding up, I make a complete ass of myself before she told me the truth. It got ugly, and I did some real, lasting damage.”

“Is that why the two of you run things through Agent Vasquez?” Olivia asked.

“Yes, it is,” J’onn said. “Kara and I were working together for about a year before she came out as Supergirl. She was feeding me the names of dangerous aliens that needed to be taken down and helping us get the ones who weren’t dangerous into our monitoring program. Not long after she came out as Supergirl, I realized she wasn’t telling me or Alex the truth about several things. I thought she was either an imposter, being controlled by Astra, or Astra had flipped her and was using her as a mole. Alex and I mouse-trapped her with Kryptonite.”

“Oh, Lord,” Olivia said. “I can’t imagine that ended well.”

“No,” J’onn said. “Kara put me through a wall, forced me to stand down the strike team I had ready to take her into custody, and walked out of the DEO like she didn’t have a care in the world, after telling me to come apologize when I came to my senses. Once she was gone, Susan ripped me a new one, threw her badge in my face, and told me to go fuck myself.”

“That sounds very much like Agent Vasquez,” Olivia said.

“Well, when Kara heard about it, she got me, Alex and Susan in the room with her. She told us all the truth, then gave Susan the authority to make decisions in the event that Kara and I disagree. She called it Adult Supervision.”

“I take it Agent Vasquez has done well in the role?” Olivia asked.

“Better than I expected,” J’onn said. “I knew she was an excellent operations director, and that she was good with tactics, but she has a talent for cutting through bullshit, and an absolute gift for strategy.”

“Sounds like Kara made a good choice,” Olivia said.

“Fendra aside, Kara usually does when it comes to who to trust,” J’onn said.

“Am I ever going to find out what happened with Fendra?” Olivia asked.

“Only if Kara tells you,” J’onn said. “It was bad though.”

“It makes me nervous having her out in the world,” Olivia said.

“I wouldn’t worry to much if I were you,” J’onn said. “If Fendra puts so much as a toe out of line, there’s an entire list of people just itching for an excuse to reduce her to a grease spot.”

“I’m not sure which is more disturbing. What you just told me, or the fact that you thought I would find that comforting,” Olivia said.

J’onn just gave her a weary smile. “Did you want me to scan Baker, just to make sure?”

“Yes,” Olivia said.

“Okay,” J’onn said. “How do you want to do this?”

Kara walked into the medical hall of Sanctuary with Alex, Maggie and Lucy right behind her.
“Do we have an ID?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Nimda said as a hologram of a mugshot appeared above the regeneration matrix. “Regina Maria Ruiz. Age twenty-two. Born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, August 31st, 1993. Attended school in Miami from age five until age fourteen. Reported as a runaway at fourteen. In and out of foster homes for the next three years. Arrested in Houston at seventeen for prostitution. Additional arrests in various states until she was arrested eighteen months ago in National City. No address of record.”

“Sounds like she’s had it rough,” Maggie said. Kara looked over at Maggie and could practically read the thoughts going through her head. How she might have ended up if her aunt hadn’t been willing to take her in.

“It definitely sucks,” Kara said, making a mental note to start looking into what it would take to set up homeless shelters for at-risk youth.

“Are you sure about this, Kara?” Alex asked. “I mean, I get your point about Non, but this girl wasn’t born with powers. Maybe taking them away would be better for her.”

“Maybe,” Kara said. “But she deserves the chance to make that choice for herself.”

Alex gave her a dubious look, but Kara ignored her.

“Nimda, open the regeneration matrix,” she said.

The mugshot vanished, and the top of the regeneration matrix opened. Kara looked at the girl inside. She was roughly the same build, but her skin tone was lighter and she was covered with freckles. Looking at her, Kara was pretty sure Nimda had tweaked the girl’s appearance just a bit, because the girl in the chamber looked like a twenty-year old model getting ready for a fashion shoot, while the girl in the mugshot had looked closed to forty than twenty.

The girl opened her eyes slowly, frowning as she looked around.

“Where am I?” she asked.

“You’re in my home,” Kara said. “A place called Sanctuary.”

“Who are you?” the girl asked.

“I’m Supergirl,” Kara said.

The girl just stared at her.

“Do you know who that is?” Kara asked.

The girl shook her head.

“Do you remember who you are?”

The girl thought about it, a look of concentration on her face, but Kara could see her struggling.

“I’m Reggie,” she said. “My name’s Reggie.”

Kara smiled. “That’s right. Do you remember anything else?”

Reggie frowned. “There was a man. A bad man. He hurt me. I tried to stop him, but he hurt me.”
“A man with a beard. Smiled a lot?” Kara asked.

Reggie nodded.

“He can’t hurt you anymore,” Kara said. “He’s gone. He can’t hurt anyone anymore.”

“Good,” Reggie said.

“Do you remember anything else?” Kara asked.

The look of concentration returned, but the girl didn’t answer, and as the silence stretched out, Kara could see tears starting to well up in her eyes.

“No,” she said.

“That’s okay,” Kara said. “We’re going to help you. I promise.”

It was near midnight and Susan lay on her back, staring up at the ceiling, her left hand under her head and her right arm holding Leslie against her side. Leslie’s head rested on Susan’s right shoulder, her right hand rested between Susan’s breasts, and her right thigh was applying a pleasant but undemanding pressure between Susan’s legs.

It was a pleasant enough way to spend the night, or it would have been if she could get her mind to shut up.

“Quit thinking so loud,” Leslie grumbled.

“Sorry, babe,” Susan said. “Something feels off.”

She felt Leslie tense up against her side and looked down at her. Before she could say anything, Leslie lifted he head to look at Susan’s face.

“Did I do something wrong?” Leslie asked in such a small voice that it broke Susan’s heart.

“No, baby,” Susan said. “No.” She took her hand out from under her head and reached up, cupping Leslie’s cheek in her hand and pulled her down into a kiss.

“You and I are good,” Susan said, “and if we’re ever not good, I promise you, we will sit down and talk it out until we are good again, okay?”

Leslie frowned. “That’s not what you’ve done before,” she said.

“What do you mean?” Susan asked.

Leslie shrugged and looked away. “Word is, you tossed Christy out on her ass after one fight,” she said.

“That’s bullshit,” Susan said. “Christy and I had problems for months. I only let her move in because her building went condo and she had to move or buy her apartment, and it was supposed to be temporary while she was apartment hunting. No one at the DEO knows about it because I don’t air my dirty laundry in public. I kicked her out because she was a complete shit about Kara *after* Kara saved her fucking life. It was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Hell, I quit the DEO over what went down that night. But I’ll be honest. I’m really glad it didn’t work out with her, because it means I get to be with you.”
A smile spread across Leslie’s face, and she leaned down, kissing Susan.

They never did finish their conversation.

Thursday, January 21, 2016

“Hey, Kara,” Winn said as he stood in the door of her and Cat’s office.

Kara looked up from her computer and smiled.

“Good morning,” she said.

“Is now a good time?” Winn asked.

Kara glanced over at Cat who gave a small nod.

“Sure,” Kara said. “Come in.”

Winn smiled as he walked into the office, and Kara noticed he was carrying a huge gift bag with a picture of Beebo on the side. When he reached her desk, he sat it down with a proud smile on his face.

“What’s this?” Kara asked.

“Well, I know it’s probably a little early,” Winn said, “but it’s for Kiera.”

“Really?” Kara asked. She took the back and reached inside, pulling out a full-sized Beebo doll.

“/īsem, beebo, w koli, rivihkhkieo/” the doll said.

Kara’s face lit up and she looked up at Winn, completely speechless.

“Turns out the AI module from an attendant is actually smaller than the voice unit on a Beebo doll, so this one is a lot smarter than the ones you can buy in the store,” he said. “It speaks every language Nimda has on record and uses some of the same nanotech as your war suit, so if necessary, it can walk around, call for help or a transmat evacuation, and even protect Kiera from danger.”

“Winn, I don’t know what to say,” Kara said.

“It was nothing,” Winn said.

“It wasn’t,” Cat said. “Thank you, Winn. From both of us.”

Winn blushed a little and looked down, clearly not comfortable with the thanks or attention.


“You are my sunshine, my only sunshine
You make me happy, when skies are gray…”

“Hey, Olsen,” Vicki said as she walked into James’ office.

“Hey, Vale,” James said as he looked up from the layout he was working on. “What’s up?”
“I was wondering if you’d heard the news yet?” Vicki asked.

“What news?” James asked.

“Okay, this is suddenly awkward,” Vicki said. “The news about Lois and Clark.”

“I’ve been pretty busy with layouts today,” James said. “Did something happen?”

“Yeah,” Vicki said. “Tuesday.”

“Oh,” James said.

“Clark and Lois are transferring here,” Vicki said. “They’ll both be feature writers for CatCo Magazine, and contributors at the Tribune.”

“Since when do you and Clark go more than five minutes without getting up in each other’s business, anyway?” Vicki asked.

“Since Thanksgiving,” James said. “Clark and I had a disagreement about something.”

“Must have been big to take the shine off that apple,” Vicki said.

“You know how people used to call me Clark’s side bitch?” James asked.

“No,” Vicki said in a complete deadpan. “Never heard anyone say anything like that.”

James gave a bitter little laugh. “They got it wrong,” he said. “Clark is Bruce Wayne’s side bitch.”

“Lovely mental image, but I’m pretty sure if it were true, Selina would have sent me pictures and a gloating email,” Vicki said.

James laughed, this time in actual amusement. “Selina would totally do that. After she sent Diana an email asking if she wanted to come over and play too.”

“Sounds right,” Vicki said. “So, really, what happened?”

“I asked Clark to trust me about something,” James said. “Instead, he listened to Bruce, and things got fucked up, and I’m not sure how to reconcile the person I thought I knew with the person Clark actually is.”

“That can be tough,” Vicki said. “Good news is, you’ll have a lot of opportunity to work on it.”

“I guess I will,” James said. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure,” Vicki said.

“How did you deal with it?” James asked. “When you and Bruce split up, how did you get used to not having him in your life?”

“Well, there was a lot of alcohol,” Vicki said. “A lot of bad nights, a couple of one-night stands that still make me wonder what the fuck I was thinking, more crying than I want to admit, and a lot of eighty-hour weeks, so I think you can sum it up as ‘not well’. But, then, unless you want to tell me something about you and Clark, I don’t think it’s quite the same.”
“No,” James said. “But I lost my best friend and my girlfriend on the same day, get shot by the end of the week, and then I got one hell of a wakeup call from Cat.”

“She does that a lot,” Vicki said. “Look, James, I actually came here to see if you’d be willing to go back out in the field with Lois. She’s a hell of a reporter, and the two of you did a *lot* of good work. But if that’s going to be a problem, I’ll find somebody else.”

“No,” James said. “I’m interested. I like this Art Director thing, but being out in the field… I think I need it. I don’t think I’m cut out for life behind a desk.”

“No shame in that,” Vicki said. “A year ago, I’m be feeling the same way.”

“What changed?” James asked.

“The number of times someone has tried to stab me to death,” Vicki said. “What’s that old saying? ‘A sucking chest wound is nature’s way of telling you to slow down.’ I loved the life. Too much. I was making the same mistakes Bruce made. Chasing the next high, taking stupid risks because I was sure I could handle it. I had to get out before I got myself killed.”

James nodded. “That, I can understand.”

“So, should I tell the boss she needs to find a new Art Director?” Vicki asked.

“Yeah,” James said. “I think you should.”

“Good,” Vicki said. “You know, James, if you need someone to talk to, or someone to hold your hair back during the hangover, you’ve got my phone number.”

James smiled. “I might take you up on that,” he said.

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Friday, January 22, 2016

“How’s she doing?” Kara asked as she watched Byara and Reggie walk through the first responder command center. Byara was gesticulating wildly as she told some story, and Reggie was smiling as she listened intently.

“She’s doing well,” Ursa said. “Byara is fond of her.”

“I can see that,” Kara said. “What’s she like?”

“Gentle,” Ursa said. “I don’t think we’ll make a warrior out of her, but she loves animals. I think she’ll make a good hound master. I’ve scheduled time for her in one of the teaching machines to take the veterinary and zoology course loads.”

“I appreciate you taking her on,” Kara said. “I wish I had time to see to it myself, but between Supergirl and Danvers International, I hardly have a free moment.”

“It’s no trouble,” Ursa said. “I admit, I had my doubts when you brought her to us, but she’s well liked. Even Mur likes her.”

“Mur doesn’t like anybody,” Kara said.

“You see why I’m impressed,” Ursa said.

“Has she remembered anything else?” Kara asked.
“Bits and pieces,” Ursa said. “Men with beards make her skittish.”

“If I’d been through what she went through, I’d be skittish too,” Kara said.

“At least you finished Lord,” Ursa said. “And it was cleverly done too. Getting the enemy to fight amongst themselves.”

“It was hardly a fight,” Kara said. “Lord was dangerous when he had time and a lab on his side. In a fight, he wasn’t much of a threat.

“Even so, the enemy has deprived themselves of a resource. That’s a victory.”

“Agreed. While I’m thinking about it, how is Non?”

“Now that is a complicated topic,” Ursa said. “Physically, his brain is repaired, and we’ve put him through every basic education package we have for the teaching machines, along with all the language packs. But mentally, he’s still a very knowledgeable child. We keep him under red sunlamps as much as possible. The re-education programs the attendants have aren’t designed with a patient who can throw battle cruisers in mind. Cir spends her free time with him.”

“Were they friends before?” Kara asked.

“No. But Cir had a brother who suffered a similar injury. I think Non reminds her of him, and her presence speeds his progress.”

“Good,” Kara said. “The sooner he’s able to help, the lighter all our loads will be.”

“Yes,” Ursa said. “Though that does raise another question.”

“What question is that?” Kara asked.

“When will you send Cat, Alex and Maggie to the Chrysalis Chamber?” Ursa asked.

“I’m not sure,” Kara said. “I want to be careful of the precedents I set. If we’re going to offer someone the chance to become one of us, there has to be a certain level of commitment. I don’t want it to become ‘date a Kryptonian, get superpowers’. I’ve been holding off on making the offer to Cat until we’re officially engaged. I’ve been holding off on offering it to Alex until she and Maggie get engaged.”

“I can see your point on the rules, and I think eventually we will need to codify that, but I think you’re making a mistake in waiting.”

“I’m surprised to hear you say that.”

“I’m surprised I feel that way, but every time I look at Lucy, I’m reminded of how much of an asset she is to us. She works hard, she’s loyal, and she’s been invaluable on the Advisory Council. I doubt we’d have made as much progress on designing the new government as we have without her. Alex is the same, and she and Maggie are both fierce warriors. The battle with that creature the night of the DEO bombing was proof of that. And after seeing how fiercely Cat fought the night we attacked the Cadmus facility, no-one would question you bringing her into the fold. She’s a mate worthy of you. And as you pointed out, the more of us there are, the lighter the load for all of us.”

“There’s also the question of whether they would be willing to go into the Chamber,” Kara said. “It’s a lot to ask.”
“I think that’s a more honest answer than the one you gave before,” Ursa said. “You fear their rejection.”

“Astra said you were a good judge of people,” Kara said.

“It’s a valuable skill for a rankless,” Ursa said.

“I know it’s cowardly,” Kara said. “But as long as I don’t ask, there’s always the possibility. But when I ask, if they say no, then there’s the certainty that I’ll lose them someday.”

“That, I do understand,” Ursa said. “I think everyone here has seen more loss than anyone should ever have to deal with.”

“Do you think anyone will object if I make the same offer to my foster mother?” Kara asked.

“I don’t think anyone here expects you to do otherwise. But sooner is better.”

“I’ll take that under advisement,” Kara said.

Olivia watched as the door opened and Vice President Baker walked into her office.

“Afternoon, Phil,” Olivia said. “To what do I own the pleasure?”

Baker waited until the door was closed, then said, “I’ve been hearing some chatter in the back channels and I wanted to talk to you about it.”

Olivia sighed. This had been inevitable, but she hadn’t realized quite how plugged in Baker must be. She’d expected to make it through the trip to National City, and deal with this when she got back. She gestured to the seat next to her desk, figuring there was no reason to put it off any longer.

“Have a seat,” she said.

Baker walked over and took the seat next to her desk.

“What have you heard?” Olivia asked.

“There are whispers going around that you’re looking for a new running mate for the twenty-sixteen election cycle,” Baker said. “I figured it was a rumor started by someone with bad information, but you know how these things are. I thought we should get out ahead of it.”

“It’s true,” Olivia said.

“It is?” he asked. “I see. Can I ask why I’m being replaced?”

Olivia considered him for a moment. She’d never been terribly fond of him, but her campaign manager had insisted that she needed someone from the Democratic old guard to secure party loyalty, and as much as she hated to admit it, they’d been right. Adding him to the ticket had jumped her ten percent in the polls overnight. That didn’t stop her from disliking him, and she was in no mood to cut him any slack.

“Because you’re a traitor,” she said. “You’ve been providing material aid and support to a domestic terrorist organization, including sending Lillian Luthor top secret and compartmentalized information.”

“And what led you to that conclusion?” Baker asked.
“Process of elimination,” Olivia said. “Only seven people who aren’t Supergirl’s partisans even knew that recording existed. I knew I didn’t send it to Lillian. Reed wouldn’t piss on Sam Lane to put out if he was on fire. She sure as hell wouldn’t send the man’s accomplice classified information. Pierson doesn’t have the spine to cheat on his taxes, much less commit high treason. Wellesly doesn’t give a shit if someone is green and has five heads, as long as there are laws in place to let him prosecute green, five-headed criminals, and Durgan is working with the DEO to figure out a comprehensive defensive strategy to deal with an attack by the Guardians of the Universe and gets along very well with Director J’onzz. That just leaves you and the video tech who set up the playback. You were really the only suspect, but when Director J’onzz visited the other day, everyone else on the list agreed to a telepathic scan. Even the video tech.”

“Well,” Baker said, “you certainly seem to have all your bases covered. You do realize it will never hold up in court?”

“Yes, which is why you haven’t been dragged out of here in handcuffs yet,” Olivia said. “I don’t suppose you would be willing to make this easy and just resign and spare us all a lot of trouble?”

“No,” Baker said. “I don’t think so.”


“I suppose you’ll have your little pet reporter do a hatchet job on me?” Baker asked. “That is, if she can stop fucking her freak girlfriend long enough.”

“No,” Olivia said. “I thought we’d start with a ‘more in sorrow than in anger’ speech. Something about how your behavior is becoming erratic. We’re not sure your mental health is up to snuff. I’m sure Ms. Nal can come up with something to get the point across.”

“So that’s it? Just out in the cold after I helped you win this office, all so you can curry favor with the roaches.”

“Unless I can find a way to put you behind bars where you belong,” Olivia said. “You sure you don’t want to resign? Because this is going to be a nasty, nasty fight, and your reputation is going to be destroyed when it’s over.”

Baker stared at her for a minute. She could see him thinking and see the moment he came to a decision.

“Give me a week,” he said. “Let me get all my ducks in a row while you are out visiting the roaches in National City.”

Olivia leaned forward. “February first,” she said. “Not a day later, or I don’t care what will stick. I will have you dragged out of here in handcuffs.”

“You should watch your temper, Olivia,” Baker said. “That much venom can’t be good for you.”

Olivia was very careful not to show any reaction as Baker stoop up and walked out of the office, but the moment the door was closed, she leaned back in the chair and shook with anger and fear.

The son of a bitch knew, which meant Cadmus knew, and everything was at risk.

Kara smiled as she walked down the path leading through the Embassy greenhouse, taking in the
sights and the sounds of the red leaves of home rustling in the gentle breeze created by the air
circulators. It was hard to believe this place hadn’t even existed just a couple of months earlier.
Everything looked like it had been there for years.

Well, everything except what was stalking her.

“I know you’re there, Harley,” Kara said.

She smiled at the adorable little grumble and the equally adorable pout on Harley’s face when she
stepped out of the bushes.

“No fair using powers,” Harley said, sounding like an aggrieved five-year-old.

Kara laughed and stepped forward, wrapping her arms around Harley, picking her up and twirling
her around.

“I didn’t use my powers,” Kara said as she sat Harley back down and kissed her on the cheek. “I just
saw your blue hair.”

“Isn’t super vision one of your powers?” Harley asked, eyeing her suspiciously.

“Yes,” Kara said, “but I wasn’t using super vision. Just regular vision.”

“Okay,” Harley said. “But you’re on thin ice.”

Kara looked down and tapped the walkway with the toe of her boot. “I think this is concrete.”

Harley narrowed her eyes, trying to decide if Kara was serious.

“Where’s Pam?” Kara asked.

“I’m here,” Pam said, appearing out of the trees. “Did you need something?”

“I wanted to say thank you,” Kara said. “This is amazing.”

“It was easy,” Pam said. “They’re wonderful plants. Hardy, vital, and eager to drink up the sun.”

“Still, without you, it would have taken decades to see this kind of growth,” Kara said. “You’ve
given us a small piece of home back.”

“You should thank your Lasla,” Pam said. “She was extremely helpful in teaching me about the
plants.”

“I will,” Kara said. “How are the two of you doing?”

“We’re doing well,” Pam said. “The apartment you gave us is nice.”

“And the medication?” Kara asked.

“Working as promised,” Pam said.

“Do you need anything?” Kara asked.

“We could use a bazooka,” Harley said.

“Harley,” Pam said in an exasperated tone.
“What? Mine got confiscated last time I was arrested.”

“I think we’ve got it,” Alex said.

“I think you’re right. I can’t believe I missed it,” Eliza said as she stared at the DNA model in front of them.

“I would have probably missed it too,” Alex said.

“What made you think about it?” Eliza asked.

“Maggie’s been playing this video game called Mass Effect,” Alex said. “Something Winn and Kara got her hooked on. One of the sub-plots is about this race called the Krogan who were sterilized by another race using a retrovirus to insert a genetic mutation. It stuck with me because it was so similar to what the Guardians did to the Kryptonians and the Tamaranians.”

“I wasn’t even thinking about the virus,” Eliza said.

“That’s because you were too focused on how the vulnerability to Kryptonite works and weren’t thinking about why it exists in the first place,” Alex said.

“What do you mean?” Eliza asked.

“Have you ever heard the phrase ‘a location with a high biological diversity’?” Alex asked.

“No,” Eliza said.

“It’s a phrase I’ve heard some of the ex-soldiers at the DEO use. It basically means any tropical hellhole where every single living thing is trying to kill you and eat you, and is more than capable of doing so,” Alex said. “Which describes Krypton to a T. The environment was incredibly hostile. Lots of evolutionary pressure because of how extreme the environment was. Kryptonians, as a species, are immune to almost every form of radiation imaginable, so it’s always been counterintuitive that they would have an extreme reaction to a mineral which *only* occurs naturally on Krypton, and which only affects them. You see some weird shit in nature sometimes, so I kind of brushed it aside until Kara mentioned that the Guardians had tampered with them on a genetic level, and I started to wonder, and now we know.”

“The vulnerability to Kryptonite was part of the same virus that prevents them from fully processing red sunlight,” Eliza said.

“It probably also means that Kryptonite *isn’t* naturally occurring on Krypton, either,” Alex said. “It’s something the Oans created and seeded on the planet to make the world even more dangerous to the Kryptonians.”

“Just when I thought I couldn’t hate those little blue bastards any more than I already do, they find a way to prove me wrong,” Eliza said.

“Mom!” Alex squeaked.

Eliza looked over at Alex. “What? You didn’t think I know those words?” She looked back at the display. “I mean, I heard them often enough coming from you and your sister.”

Alex gave her a sheepish look. “Sorry.”

Eliza laughed. “You were teenagers,” Eliza said. “I wanted you to learn good manners for when you
need them."

“I used to think you did a good job on Kara, until I learned enough/kryptahniuo/ to realize just how foul-mouthed she really was,” Alex said.

“She still thinks I didn’t know,” Eliza said. “What time are you and Maggie leaving?”

“She’s going to call when she and Lucy are done at the Federal Prosecutor’s office,” Alex said.

“You need to go pack or anything?” Eliza asked.

“We’re going for three days, and if I forget anything, Nimda can fab it,” Alex said.

“Want to help your mom figure out how this pesky little gene keeps the photocondria from discharging the stored energy?” Eliza asked.

“Absolutely,” Alex said.

“Did you see the look on his face when he opened that last file?” Maggie asked as she and Lucy walked out of the building.

“I did,” Lucy laughed. “I thought he was going to cry.”

“Guy is a Federal Prosecutor,” Maggie said. “You’ve got to figure prosecuting a woman for having puppies in a public park isn’t what he signed up for.”

“You suggesting he reduce the charges from indecent exposure to littering was just mean,” Lucy said.

Maggie snickered as they reached her Porsche. She popped the locks and they both climbed in.

“It will be nice when we don’t have to come over and walk them through every single detail of every single case,” Lucy said as Maggie started the car.

“You’re telling me,” Maggie said as she backed out. “Alex and I were supposed to head for the beach three hours ago.”

“Little cold for that, isn’t it?” Lucy asked.

Maggie started forward, pulling out into traffic and heading them towards the Solarium. “Not out at Sanctuary,” she said.

“Kara loaned you the love nest?” Lucy asked.

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “She and Cat have Carter this weekend. What about you? You have any plans?”

“No,” Lucy said. “Not unless I want to have dinner with my sister tomorrow night.”

“What about Zatanna?” Maggie asked.

“She’s got a date,” Lucy said.

“Oh,” Maggie said, frowning. “I thought you and she were a thing. Or moving towards being a thing.”
Lucy snorted derisively. “I wish,” she said. “She’s smart, beautiful, funny, fun to be around, and completely uninterested in giving Clark Fucking Kent the time of day. Of course she’s not interested in me.”

Maggie glanced over at Lucy before looking back at the road. “Sweetie, I have seen Zatanna look at you. She’s interested.”

“Maybe,” Lucy said, “but her exact words when I asked her out where, ‘You’re cute and heartbroken and I don’t want to be your rebound.’”

“You’re cute and heartbroken and I don’t want to be your rebound.”

“Ouch,” Maggie said. “Jesus fuck, girl, you have the worst luck.”

“Tell me something I don’t know,” Lucy said.

“I have a list of every lesbian bar in the country,” Maggie said. “And you have transmat access.”

“Pass,” Lucy said. “I don’t want to be the one keeping secrets in a relationship.”

“That’s going to make it hard to find somebody,” Maggie said.

“Honestly, I think I’m just going to have Nimda run me off a promethium alloy vibrator and call it a day,” Lucy said. “I’m sick of getting my hopes up, and I’ve never had a vibrator let me down.”

“You’ve never had the power go out when you’re five seconds away from coming,” Maggie said.

“Note, make sure my vibrator runs off Jara crystals,” Lucy said.

Maggie sighed. “I wish I could give you some advice, but I doubt a time-traveling alien is going to walk up to you in a gay bar and say, ‘please help my sister realize she’s gay.’”

“Yeah,” Lucy said. “That definitely sounds like a one-off.”

Saturday, January 23, 2016

“So,” Kara said as she stood in the living room of the apartment she’d had Nimda throw together, “what do you think?”

“It’s nice,” Kal said with forced enthusiasm.

“Yeah,” Lois said in a less enthusiastic tone. “Really nice. Though it seems a little…”

“It’s too big, isn’t it?” Kara asked. “Oh, I knew it! You always talk about how much you love your place in Metropolis, and it’s so small and cozy, but eight hundred square feet just seems so little for two people, and you told Nimda you wanted an office for you and Clark and a spare bedroom, so I thought a little extra space would be okay.”

“How big is this?” Lois asked.

“Thirteen hundred square feet,” Kara said.

“Uh huh,” Lois said in a skeptical tone. “How big is Cat’s penthouse?”

“Oh, seven thousand square feet,” Kara said. “Kind of ridiculous, right? All that space for just three people.”
“Totally,” Lois said in a flat tone. “Lucy’s place seemed pretty big too.”

“I know,” Kara said. “Five thousand square feet. I don’t know what I was thinking went I divided the floors into six apartments each. Everybody just rattles around in their apartments like peas in a barrel.”

Lois’s eyes narrowed. “Did Cat make a suggestion or two about how to set up the apartment?”

“No,” Kara said. “I took care of it all by myself. I wanted to make sure my baby cousin was comfortable.”

Lois smiled and shook her head. “You have spent entirely too much time with Cat Grant,” she said.

Kara just smiled.

“I don’t want to complain. I do appreciate the free apartment, but can we make a couple of adjustments?” Lois asked.

“Sure,” Kara said. “A few tweaks shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Did you get Lois and the farm boy settled?” Cat asked.

“I did,” Kara said as she walked into the den. She smiled when she sat the way Cat was dressed. She was wearing the same outfit she’d worn the day she wrote the Supergirl article. A green and black abstract print georgette blouse, a gold chain around her neck and a loose black pencil skirt. She’d always loved that outfit.

She dropped down onto the couch next to Cat. “He’s going to make the announcement during the press conference with Olivia.”

“He should get you to write it for him,” Cat said.

“I offered,” Kara said. “He reminded me that he’s a Peabody Award-winning journalist, so I figured I’d let him have it.”

“You sound tense,” Cat said. “Was he being an ass?”

“No,” Kara said. “He’s fine. I’m just worried.”

Cat took Kara’s hand in her own, lacing their fingers together and lifting their hands up, so she could kiss the back of Kara’s hand.

“What are you worried about?” Cat asked.

“Cadmus,” Kara said. “Even with Simon and Max dead, Lillian is insanely dangerous, Sam Lane is just as bad, and we’re no closer to finding them than we were Tuesday morning.”

“No luck with Astra’s people this time?” Cat asked.

“Nothing,” Kara said.

“What about Baker?” Cat asked.

“J’onn’s visit to the White House confirmed Baker is in Cadmus’ pocket, which means that there’s an anti-alien bigot one heartbeat away from the Oval Office, but without evidence, Olivia can’t do a
thing to remove him before the election,” Kara said. “She’s started quietly looking for a new running 
mate, but it’s only a matter of time before word gets back to him, and unless he resigns, replacing 
him is going to cost her at the polls.”

“Has Nimda been able to find any leverage?” Cat asked.

“Nothing worth going public with,” Kara said. “Whoever vetted him as a running mate didn’t do 
their job at all, but there’s nothing any number of other politicians didn’t shrug off without so much 
as batting an eyelash.”

“I told Olivia he was a bad choice,” Cat said.

“What did she say?” Kara asked.

“She said he was like oatmeal,” Cat said. “Bland, inoffensive and reliable. I told her no one was that 
boring unless they were hiding something. Admittedly, I was expecting secret trips to a Dominatrix, 
or embezzling campaign funds. Not ‘secretly part of an anti-alien hate group’.”

“Cat Grant not thinking big enough,” Kara said. “I never thought I would see the day.”

“Brat,” Cat said.

“You know you love it,” Kara said.

“I love you,” Cat said.

“That’s good, because I love you too,” Kara said. “Where’s Carter at?”

“He managed to talk Sam, Ruby, Lena, Astra, Winn and Kaldur’ahm into a game of Diplomacy,” 
Cat said.

Kara laughed. “Oh, god,” she said. “We’ll never see any of them again.”

“Oh, please,” Cat said. “My son will conquer Europe by dinner time.”

“I don’t know,” Kara said. “Ruby is pretty vicious.”

Cat rubbed her thumb along the back of Kara’s hand. “Do you have to be anywhere?” she asked.

Kara smiled at her. “I was thinking about spending the day with my girlfriend,” Kara said, “unless 
my boss has something she wants me to do.”

Cat let go of Kara’s hand and practically pounced, years of yoga, spin class and pilates paying off as 
she effortlessly climbed onto Kara’s lap and straddled her.

“Your boss definitely has something for you to do,” Cat said.

Kara let out an exaggerated gasp and pressed her hand over her heart. “Ms. Grant! I don’t think this 
is appropriate,” she said.

“I told you that first day, Kara. I expect utter devotion,” Cat said.

“But Ms. Grant—”

Cat pressed a finger to Kara’s lips. “It’s your job to tend to my every need, Kara. Isn’t it?” she asked. 
As she reached down and caught Kara’s hand, guiding it down between her legs, and up her skirt.
Kara sucked in a breath when she found soft, damp curls and wet, silky folds instead of the silk or lace barrier she’d been expecting.

“And right now, I definitely have a need for you to tend to,” Cat said.

“Of course, Ms. Grant,” Kara said as she slid two fingers inside of Cat. “Whatever you need.”

“I need… OH!”

Kara smiled as she curled her fingers inside Cat, finding the right spot in her front wall. Cat fist ed her hands, gripping Kara’s blouse as Kara pressed her thumb against Cat’s clit.

“Is that okay, Ms. Grant?” Kara asked as she reached up with her other hand and started unbuttoning Cat’s blouse.

“It’s… possible,” Cat said, voice ragged and broke by panting as Kara’s fingers slid into her again and again.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said as she pushed Cat’s blouse aside. “I know you demand perfection. I’ll try to do better.” She leaned forward and closer her mouth over Cat’s left nipple, sucking gently as she applied just a touch of super-speed to make her hand vibrate.

The noise Cat made was delicious, and a moment later, Kara felt Cat’s hands thread through her hair, which was finally long enough for Cat to get a good grip as she pulled and arched her back, pressing her breast against Kara’s mouth.

“Oh, God, love…” Cat moaned. “I’m close… so… so…”

Kara let her teeth scrape lightly over Cat’s nipple as she pinched the other one with her free hand. Cat’s grip on her hair tightened as Cat began to shake and let out a low whine as she came apart.

“I love you,” Cat said when it was over. “God, I love you so much.”

They lay in bed together, touching, kissing, caressing and exploring each other, and Cat loved it, every minute of it. She looked at Kara with awe and wonder, not sure how she came to this moment, how she had been so lucky as to love this beautiful treasure and be loved by her in return. To be desired by her.

She did know it was a miracle. Everything about Kara was a miracle. From her surviving the destruction of her world, to her escape from the Phantom Zone, to her choice to relive a decade of hell to try and save entire universes, to the simple fact that Kara loved her and her son.

“I love you,” Kara whispered as Cat kissed her way along Kara’s neck.

“I love you too,” Cat said as she slipped a hand down, cupping Kara’s sex in her hand. Kara moaned, rocking her hips against Cat’s hand. The simple reaction sent a thrill through Cat, but not nearly as much as Kara’s next words.

“I want you inside me,” Kara said. “Please, Cat. Please, I want you inside me.”

Kara’s words lit a fire in Cat’s heart and between her legs, and she leaned forward, kissing Kara roughly before pulling back. She reached over towards the bedside table, intending to get the strap on Kara had put there when she’d officially moved in a few days earlier, but Kara caught her wrist and looked up at her.
“Use the ring,” she said.

Cat looked over at her.

“The ring?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded. “You’ll be able to feel it,” she said.

Cat stared at her for a moment, more than a little surprised, but she glanced at the ring on her finger, and then back at Kara who gave her an encouraging smile. She closed her eyes, picturing it for a moment.

She gasped when she felt a hand surround her, and opened her eyes, looking down to see Kara’s hand on a glowing blue and black cock between her legs. Kara stroked it gently and Cat’s breath caught, making Kara laugh a little.

“If you like that, Ms. Grant, I can think of something else you might in enjoy,” Kara said, a wicked grin on her face that practically made Cat’s heart stop.

Kara slid down, her hand still gripping Cat’s cock, and she met Cat’s gaze as she tilted it back, running her tongue along the underside. Cat fisted her hands in the sheets, trying her best not to come embarrassingly quickly as she felt Kar flick the tip of her tongue through the tiny cleft in the head of it. She was still looking into Kara’s eyes, seeing a mix of lust and love staring back at her as Kara wrapped her lips around the head of Cat’s cock, and slowly took the entire shaft in her mouth. Cat’s head dropped back when she felt it slip down into Kara’s throat, but Kara didn’t even slow down until Cat felt Kara’s lips pressed against the skin around the base of the construct.

She looked down again to see Kara looking up at her, and when their eyes met, Kara started moving again. Kara moved up and down the shaft, and Cat whimpered when she felt two fingers slip inside her and press upwards, finding her g-spot with ease. It was too much. Cat prided herself on her self-control, but it was just too much.

“Kara,” she hissed, a warning of what was about to happen, but it just seemed to encourage her, and Cat couldn’t hold back anymore. She screamed as she spilled over the edge again.

She fell back on the bed, panting, the world blurry around her. The was a momentary sensation of cold as she slipped out of Kara’s mouth, but than Kara’s hand was around her again, warm and strong as Kara settled beside her.

“I love you,” Kara said, before she leaned down and kissed Cat. Cat wrapped her arms around Kara, kissing her back, sucking gently on her tongue, one hand slipping down and squeezing Kara’s ass. Kara let go of Cat’s shaft and moved, throwing a leg over Cat, straddling her, and Cat could tell Kara was getting ready to mount her.

She was having none of it. She reached out with the ring, using a bit of power to pick them both up and flip them, so she was on top. She sat up, between Kara’s legs and reached down, gripping her cock and positioning it at Kara’s entrance.

She looked up at the sound of Kara’s deep, rhythmic breathing, recognizing the exercises that let Kara shut down her powers. She waited, watching for the moment she was quickly coming to recognize when Kara seemed to relax, just so. Kara’s eyes found hers, and Cat rocked her hips forward, burying herself inside, and Cat groaned. It was amazing, feeling Kara like this. Like being wrapped in liquid fire. She sat for a moment, just feeling it as she stared down at Kara.

Not too long though. She could see the need on Kara’s face. One which Cat knew was there without
even having to ask. She lowered herself down, letting her weight settle on top of Kara. She ran her hands up Kara’s sides and along Kara’s arms, until she reached Kara’s hands and threaded their fingers together.

“/sokao:zhao:lo:dh , eh , kat,/” Kara pleaded. Please, fuck me, Cat.

Cat did. She started rocking her hips, thrusting into Kara. It took her a few strokes to find her rhythm. This wasn’t like the times she’d worn a strap on. Not a dull pressure against her clit. She could feel Kara, feel the inside of her, feel her folds and the scalding wet heat, and it was incredible, enveloping. Kara wrapped her legs around Cat’s waist, hooking her ankles in the small of Cat’s back and pulling gently each time Cat drove into her.

“/finudio/” Kara begged, and Cat complied, picking up the pace, thrusting into her faster, harder.

“/!r:ao,/” Kara whispered. “/!lizrhom/”

Cat lifted herself up, her fingers still laced through Kara’s, bracing herself so she had better leverage and could put more force into her thrusts.

“/!zhao:zhil/”

Kara looked up at her, and Cat could tell her control was slipping. She could see a faint glow in the back of Kara’s eyes.

“Come for me!” Cat demanded. “Come for me, Kara.”

Kara tensed, her back arching and her head rolling back and Cat found feel Kara squeezing her cock, tight spasms tugging and pulling Cat over the edge as Kara fell apart under her.

When it was over, Cat lowers herself down and wrapped her arms around Kara, hugging her just as tightly as she could, kissing her everywhere she could reach. The cheek, the neck, the ear.

“I love you,” she said, again and again. “I love you, I love you, I love you.”

Kara answered her, every time. “/zhao: va:hda:hr w rrip/” I love you, too.

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Sunday, January 24, 2016

“Just a little further,” Kara said as she guided a blindfolded Cat down the hall of their apartment.

“You know this is completely ridiculous, right?” Cat asked.

“Mom,” Carter said, “don’t be a spoilsport.”

Cat rolled her eyes, even though neither of them could see.

“Fine,” she said.

Kara leaned in and kissed her cheek. “It will be worth it, I promise,” Kara said.

“It had better be,” Cat said.

Kara led her a few more steps and steered her through a turn, leading her into what had she was sure was the second guest bedroom.
“Okay,” Kara said.

Cat took off the blindfold, and what she saw took her breath away.

Gone was the elegant but somewhat sterile décor of the room she’d set up for her mother years ago. In its place was a nursery full of cheer and warmth. The walls and ceiling were painted a bright sky blue, with lovingly rendered clouds covering the ceiling and upper edges of the wall. One corner was dominated by a yellow sun with a smiling face looking down at the center of the room. The lower half of the walls were covered in brilliant sunflowers, each one unique, and all of which seemed to spring up from the green carpet. The furniture in the room was all stained white, and all of it handmade with incredible care and skill. Two heavy-duty rocking chairs with /kryptahniuo/ lettering carved into the wood. A changing table. A bookshelf filled with baby toys and a Supergirl teddy bear occupying a place of pride. In the center of the room, a mobile hung from the ceiling with a colorful rainbow of dragons hanging from the arms above a beautifully-carved crib covered with more of the /kryptahniuo/ lettering.

Cat stepped forward, running her hands over the script on the crib as she read the words. They were prayers, asking Rao safety, for long life, for happiness, for family and purpose. She looked over at the rocking chairs, and saw more prayers, these asking for patience and wisdom as they guided their child through life.

“Do you like it?” Kara asked, and Cat could hear the hesitation in her voice. “I mean, I know I probably should have talked to you first, but I just wanted to surprise you. If you don’t like it-”

“I love it,” Cat said.

“Really?” Kara said.

Cat turned towards Kara, taking in the worry on her face, and felt her breath catch.

“Darling, it’s wonderful,” Cat said.

Kara’s face lit up in one of her blinding smiles, and she turned to Carter, who was holding a white box, and gave him a little nod. Carter held the box out to her. Cat took it and opened it to find a deep red piece of leather folded inside. At least, she thought it was leather until she picked it up and found it was much too light.

“It’s the blanket my cousin was wrapped in when he left Krypton,” Kara said. “He gave it to me, for the crib.”

Cat looked up at Kara for a moment, then back down at the blanket in awe as she realized how precious what she was holding was. This was a piece of Krypton. Not a piece of Kryptonian technology that had been recreated on Earth, but an actual piece of Kara’s homeworld. One of the very last such items in existence.

She didn’t realize she’d started to cry until she felt Kara brush a tear off her cheek.

“Cat?” Kara asked.

Cat looked up at Kara, and couldn’t seem to find the words, but if the smile on Kara’s face was anything to go by, Kara understood.

The room wasn’t familiar to her, but Nia spent enough time in doctor’s offices and hospitals over her life to recognize one when she saw it, and this place was definitely a hospital. There were things that
were strange about it. Things that didn’t make sense to her. Things that were just subtly off. The architecture was weirdly organic, with curves and arches and lattice work. It was strangely beautiful, but it didn’t hold her attention.

The window called to her like a siren, tempting her closer, and Nia answered, approaching slowly. It was daytime. Bright light streamed in the window, and as she stepped closer, she could see outside. The sky was red, and blood rained down above. Massive towers, tall and beautiful, rose up like pillars out of the ground. They seemed to shimmer in the unnerving silence, and as she watched, shields grew out of the walls like flowers.

She looked down to the ground, so very far below, and saw people running towards the buildings, fleeing towards safety, real or imagined. Fires burned, and as Nia watched, a tin solder fell from the sky. Men and women and children ran from the soldier as it opened its mouth and breathed fire.

Supergirl appeared, standing in the path of the fire, which rolled off her with no effect, but the tin soldier multiplied. First two, then four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two. More and more until Nia lost count.

Nia looked to the sky and saw more of the tin soldiers. She saw Superman, Flame Bird, Martian Manhunter, and dozens of men and woman wearing Supergirl’s emblem fighting the tin soldiers.

She looked to the left. A flash of blue, the color of the sky on a new day full of promise. A cat, fast and strong, faced down six of the tin soldiers and a pair of green knights leading a blue puppet.

She looked to her right, and through the window of CatCo the CatCo building, she saw a puppet lying on the ground, its strings cut while a black man with blonde hair stood over it, covered in blood, tears running down his face.

She looked to the DEO building, where another puppet marched through the halls with a gun until she reached the command center. There was a short-haired woman there, staring up at a screen and barking orders. The puppet shot her in the back, and the woman fell to the ground, dead.

She turned and saw a woman with red hair and brown eyes fall from the sky and land in a graveyard.

She saw Supergirl on her knees in a graveyard, clinging to the blue cat as she cried.

She saw President Marsden standing in a church, surrounded by coffins, as far as the eye could see. Hundreds. Thousands.

Nia jerked awake, sitting up in bed as her heart raced, the dream still fresh in her mind, and with it, terror at the knowledge that something terrible was coming, and there was no way she could stop it.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

!sem ,beebo, w kolirvihkkhieo

Beebo want cuddles!

kryptahniuo

Kryptonian (Language)
Please, fuck me, Cat.

Faster!

I love you too.
The Gathering Storm

Chapter Summary

Kara and Cat come to a decision. Olivia and Nia arrive in National City. Kara gets a warning, and Cadmus puts their plan into action.

Chapter Notes

Okay, folks. This is it. From here to the end of the story, things are going to be intense, and is going to go to a very dark place. I'm going to warn you now. Devils in the Dark goes out on a very Empire Strikes Back kind of note. There is not a happy ending here. That said, enjoy the ride.

Also, if you missed it, I posted a one shot called Protection this week. Check it out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Monday, January 25, 2016

National City Tribune

National City Prepares to Welcome the President

By Siobhan Smythe

Excitement is in the air today as National City prepares for the arrival of President Marsdin. Excitement which is felt perhaps nowhere more than among National City’s alien population, due in large part to Marsdin’s very outspoken public support and advocacy on behalf of alien rights. A massive rally is scheduled for early this afternoon in The City of Hope, the Kryptonian-built enclave which offers free and discount housing to aliens and disadvantaged humans alike. Prominent local aliens, including Supergirl, The Martian Manhunter and Flamebird are expected to appear, as is Superman.

However, while many citizens, human and alien alike are happy to see President Marsdin visit our city again, her appearance hasn’t been without controversy. Last time President Marsdin visited National City, it was in the wake of the attack on former CatCo shock-jock Leslie Willis, who was attacked by government operative turned anti-alien terrorist Hank Henshaw as part of an effort to discredit Supergirl and frame her for murder. That visit was punctuated by an attempted assassination of the Girl of Steel herself, using an anti-tank missile enhanced with alien technology, and marked the beginning of a campaign of terror by both the anti-alien terrorist organization Project Cadmus and the hate group PHAN, who style themselves the Planetary Hygiene Action Network.

Many prominent Republicans have called the visit reckless and irresponsible, saying that visiting National City while Cadmus and PHAN are still at large places the leader of our nation at unacceptable risk. Many of those same Senators have in recent weeks attacked President Marsdin, saying that her inability to bring Cadmus and PHAN to justice demonstrates a lack of leadership,
ignoring the fact that the DEO has shut down dozens of Cadmus and PHAN facilities, capturing or killing over three hundred members of the terrorist organizations as well as millions of dollars’ worth of equipment.

Especially prominent among President Marsdin’s more vocal critics is Senator Miranda Crane of California. Crane, who is holding her own rally today as well, is widely regarded as the most outspoken anti-alien member of the Senate. She has gone on record as saying that Marsdin’s signature of the Alien Amnesty Act amounts to treason, which panders to a liberal base that would sell our humanity to monsters and criminals for the sake of political correctness.

Nor has Marsdin’s visit drawn universal support from National City’s alien population. While still overwhelmingly popular amongst our alien residents, some members of the alien community have spoken out against Marsdin, pointing out that Project Cadmus was originally a government program which captured and experimented on aliens. They claim that Project Cadmus is responsible for hundreds of deaths, and the desecration of countless alien bodies, and point out that despite her pro-alien stance, Marsdin allowed Cadmus to operate virtually unrestrained for the first three years of her administration. Accusations which Marsdin herself has acknowledged are true.

It remains to be seen whether or not Marsdin can win over her critics among the alien community, but it is expected that people on both sides of the political aisle will be watching National City very closely to see which gathers more support; President Marsdin’s rally in the City of Hope, or Crane’s rally in McDaniel Park.

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Kara smiled as she walked into her and Cat’s newly-expanded and remodeled office carrying a tray from Noonan’s with two lattés and a bag on it. Cat looked up at her, returning the smile as Kara circled around their new desk, and sat down.

“One latté, slightly scalding,” Kara said as she passed one of the cups over to Cat, then dug into the bag and pulled out an orange mango bagel and a tub of mango cream cheese.

“Thank you,” Cat said as she picked the latté up and took a sip. “Mm. Delicious.”

“The coffee, or my outfit?” Kara asked in a cheeky tone as she spread cream cheese on her bagel.

“Both, darling,” Cat said.

Kara laughed and leaned over, kissing Cat on the cheek. “Love you,” she said.

“Love you too,” Cat answered. “What time are you leaving for the airport?”

“I’ve got about forty-five minutes,” Kara said. “Air Force One is scheduled to land at 11:30 AM. Still no idea why she wouldn’t just let me transmat her and her people instead of flying.”

“I imagine the Secret Service had something to do with that,” Cat said.

“Probably,” Kara said. “It just seems wasteful to burn all that fuel and spend all that time in the air.”

“True, but when Krypton Inc. puts all the airports out of business, I’m sure she’ll be more reasonable,” Cat said.

“I wish you could be there,” Kara said.

“So do I, love,” Cat said, “but you’ll be amazing. You always are.”
“Oh, I’m not worried about the speech,” Kara said. “I just meant I’m going to miss you.”

Cat glanced out to make sure no one was looking into the office, then turned back to Kara. She lifted her hand, and closed it, making a fist. Kara watched as Cat concentrated for a moment, then opened her hand, revealing a faintly glowing blue heart-shaped pendant on a chain.

“Go on,” Cat said.

Kara reached out and picked up it, smiling as she realized it was a nearly perfect duplicate of the betrothal pendant Cat had tried to give her the day after she’d returned from Krypton.

“Cat,” Kara said, her voice filled with emotion.

“No promise needed,” Cat said.

Kara looked up at her. “That isn’t why I said no that day,” Kara said.

“I know,” Cat said.

Kara lifted the chain over her head, and let it settle around her neck, tucking the pendant down into her shirt before she smiled up at Cat. She reached up, placing her hand over where she could feel the pendant resting against her chest. Where she could feel Cat’s warmth and love and the promise of their future together. She stared at Cat, at the woman she loved, the woman who was her rock, and who was going to be her daughter’s second parent. The woman she wanted to spend the rest of her life with.

“Ask me tonight,” Kara said.

“What?” Cat asked.

“Tonight. After all of this is over. If you’re ready, ask me again.”

Cat reached out and took both of Kara’s hands in her own, squeezing them gently and smiling, with unshed tears in her eyes.

“Tonight?” Cat asked.

“If you’re ready,” Kara said.

Cat nodded, and the tears spilled from her eyes. “Tonight,” she said.

Kara gave a little tug, pulling Cat forward, so she could lean in and kiss her.

Nia sat quietly in the President’s office about Air Force One, listening to President Marsdin rehearse the speech she’d written for today, pen in hand, ready to make any adjustments she might ask for, but her mind was already at their destination, running through the dream from the night before, and her vow to find a way to make a difference this time.

“Nia?” Marsdin said, making Nia jump slightly. She looked up at the President.

“Sorry,” Nia said. “What did you say?”

“I asked if you were okay,” Olivia said. “You seem distracted.”

“I…” she stopped, not sure how to say it without seeming crazy. “I have a bad feeling about today.”
“About your visit to the Medical Halls?” Olivia asked.

Nia shook her head. “No,” she said. “It’s just… It will sound crazy.”

“Nia, we’re flying across the country to visit an alien city built out of the pieces of a crashed spaceship and abandoned buildings by a woman who can fly,” Olivia said. “I’m pretty sure we left crazy behind when Superman caught his first plane.”

Nia laughed. “When it put it like that, it sounds… less crazy.”

“Well, as your President, I am ordering you to tell me what crazy thing is going on in that head of yours,” Marsdin said.

Nia sighed. “Okay, but just remember, crazy or not, I write really good speeches,” Nia said.

“Noted,” Marsdin said.

“Have you ever heard of a race of people called the Naltorians?” Nia asked.

“Yes,” Marsdin said.

“Really?” Nia asked.

“Yes,” Marsdin said. “Why do you ask?”

“Well, you see, I might have told a tiny fib on my application for this job…”

“You know, if you’d told me six months ago I’d be on a first-name basis with the President, I would have thought you were crazy,” Maggie said. “Still gorgeous, but definitely crazy.”

Alex smiled as they touched down on the landing deck of the DEO building. “If you’d told me six months ago that there was going to be a video of me making out with my incredibly hot girlfriend with ten million hits on YouTube, I would have thought you were crazy.”

“Nah,” Maggie said. “You would have taken one look at me and fallen hopelessly in love.”

Alex rolled her eyes. “You aren’t wrong,” she said.

The two of them walked through the doors separating the landing deck from the command center.

“About time you two showed up.” Susan said without turning away from the status displays she was looking at. “I thought I was going to have to send Livewire to find you.”

“We got delayed,” Alex said.

“Making out on top of the DEO building again?” Susan asked as she finally turned around to face them.

“That was once,” Maggie said.

“Twice,” Susan said. “Three times if you count the hangars at the desert facility.”

“You do remember that I’m your superior officer, right?” Alex asked.

“You do remember that I called the President of the United States a damn stubborn fool to her face, right?” Susan asked.
“No,” Alex said. “I’m too jealous to forget, but to answer your question, we were rechecking the security preparations at the rally site.”

“Good,” Susan said. “How are we doing?”

“Everything looks good,” Alex said. “The anti-sniper shield is in place, the Secret Service has agents on ever rooftop in Little Krypton except for the Genesis Chamber.”

“Which they bitched about at length, by the way,” Maggie said.

“Yeah,” Alex said, “I don’t see Ursa budging on that.”

“I take it things got tense?” Susan asked.

“She informed the Head of the Secret Service detail that any human who approached the Genesis Chamber would be kicked out of the solar system without benefit of a space suit,” Alex said.

“That sounds like Ursa,” Susan said.

“Where’s Leslie?” Maggie asked.

“She’s in the transmat ready room with Alpha team,” Susan said. “Lucy’s downstairs waiting to greet the President when she arrives, J’onn is at the Airport, and Supergirl is on her way.”

“How long until Air Force One lands?” Alex asked.

“Ten minutes,” Susan said.

Kara touched down next to J’onn who was in full Martian Green as Air Force One was taxiing up to the designated debarkation zone.

“How are we doing?” she asked.

“So far, so good,” J’onn said. “No sign of Cadmus or PHAN.”

“That’s good,” Kara said. She looked out at the plane as the boarding ramp pulled up to it. “This would all go so much faster if she’d just use the transmat.”

J’onn glanced over at her. “You have somewhere better to be?”

Kara looked at him, a huge grin on her face. “Cat’s going to propose tonight,” she said with a little excited bounce on the balls of her feet.

J’onn smiled and reached up, putting a hand on her shoulder. “I’m happy for you,” he said.

“Thank you,” Kara said. She took a deep breath and nodded as the hatch on the plane opened. “Okay. Head in the game.”

She expanded her senses, reaching out and listening for anything that didn’t belong. Any hearts beating too fast, anyone where they weren’t supposed to be, anyone at all that was out of place or acting oddly.

She found nothing.

Olivia appeared at the hatch with her son, Oscar, and started down the ramp. An attractive young
woman in a pink skirt suit followed them a moment later. Kara assumed this was Nia.

“Let’s go,” J’onn said. He started forward and Kara followed. The two groups met at the foot of the boarding ramp. J’onn shook Olivia’s hand, then knelt down so he could look Oscar in the eye as he shook his hand as well before standing up and shaking Nia’s. Kara did the same.

Olivia stepped past them and headed towards the podium that had been set up, and Kara tensed. She had argued against this. She had recommended waiting until they reached the safer and more controlled environment of /zrhygrraha sm haahreeth/, but Olivia had insisted on making an initial address upon arrival before her longer speech later in the day.

“Good morning,” Olivia said. “Today I have the very great honor of returning to National City to see some of the recent changes that our new neighbors from beyond the stars have made to this beautiful city. But as excited as I am about that, I feel that it’s very important that I point out a few things before I get started.

“The changes I am here to see today have come quickly and have all too frequently come in response to acts of hate and violence. There are some among us who fear these changes, who believe our neighbors are a threat to us. To that, I would like to say, look at the changes our neighbors have wrought. They were attacked, they discovered members of the government plotting against them, they were insulted, some of them were kidnapped, some were tortured, some were murdered. Out of fear. Out of hate. Out of bigotry.

“They did not reply in kind.

“Instead, when faced with the worst humanity has to offer, they built a hospital, a market, and a hall dedicated to order and justice. They build towers which shelter human and alien alike, regardless of their ability to pay, or the color of their skin, or who they choose to love. They provided food and clothes and health care to those who can’t afford it. They gave us cures for diseases that have plagued mankind for thousands of years. They shared their technology to help us start to undo the damage that centuries of greed and ignorance have done to the environment.

“That is the kind of people our alien neighbors are. The kind that meet the worst in others with the best in themselves. And that is why I am so very glad to have the opportunity to see first-hand the City of Hope that they have built, not just for themselves, but for everyone who needs that shining beacon, and the promise of a better future for everyone.”

Her remarks finished, Olivia turned and headed for the Presidential limo, placing a hand on Oscar’s shoulder and leading him along with her. Nia and J’onn followed, with Kara bringing up the rear.

When they reached the limo, Olivia waited patiently as Oscar climbed in, then waved Nia into the limo as well.

“Supergirl, would you ride with us?” Olivia asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. Olivia climbed into the limo. Kara touched her bracer, giving a command to retract her cape into her war suit.

“See you back at the DEO,” Kara said.

“See you there,” J’onn said.

Kara climbed into the limo, taking the seat next to Olivia which was the only one left. The Secret Service agent closed the door behind her, and Kara looked over at Oscar and Nia.
“Hi,” she said.

“Hey,” Oscar said.

Kara gave him a smile before she turned to Nia. “You must be Nia.”

Nia nodded. “Yes,” she said, more than a little flustered. “That’s me.”

“Well,” Kara said, “it’s nice to put such a lovely face to a lovely name and voice.”

“Oh,” Nia said, blushing furiously. “Um, thank you.”

Kara smiled at her, then turned to Olivia.

“I’m guessing you wanted to talk?” she asked.

“Yes,” Olivia said. “Do you have a genetic scanner with you?”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Built into the suit.”


“Oh, Karan said. She keyed a command into her bracer and a small sensor rose up out of the top surface of the brace. Kara pointed it at Nia, and a small hologram popped up in a color too red for human or Durlan eyes to see. She read the results, careful to keep her expression neutral.

“Am I looking for anything specific?” Kara asked.

“Signs of alien heritage,” Olivia said.

Kara turned off the sensor and looked over at Olivia.

“Absolutely not,” Kara said.

“It’s not what you’re thinking,” Olivia said.

“That’s good, because right now what I am thinking is that as soon as we reach the DEO, you and I need to find a private room, where I can explain to you in great detail, and at great volume with the most colorful language I can why you will never, ever ask me to do that again,” Kara said.

“Supergirl,” Nia said.

Kara turned back to Nia. “Yes?”

“Thank you for trying to protect me, but please tell her what the scanner says,” Nia said.

Kara looked at Nia for a moment, then turned back to Olivia.

“She’s half Naltorian on her mother’s side,” Kara said.

“Well,” Olivia said, “that’s unfortunate.”

Kara turned back to Nia. “You’ve been seeing the future?” she asked.

“I have dreams,” Nia said.

“Dreams that come true,” Kara said.
“Yes,” Nia said. “It’s happened to me three times. The night before the CatCo shooting, the night before the DEO bombing, and last night.”

“So, we’re taking a dream seriously?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. She looked around the room at the faces there. People she knew and trusted. Alex, Maggie, Lucy, Astra, Susan, Leslie, Kal and J’onn. Olivia and Nia were there as well, not that it mattered. Whatever anyone might think, whatever anyone might say, what happened today would ultimately be on her.

Just like it always was.

“Naltorians are known and highly sought after for their precognitive abilities,” Astra said. “I imagine that’s why her family has not registered.”

“Yeah,” Nia said. “Mom didn’t think telling the government where to find a group of people who can see the future was the best idea. She didn’t even need her powers to know how that would end.”

“Smart woman,” Kara said. “Look, I know that to a lot of you, this is going to sound crazy, but the truth is, you don’t have to believe. We cannot ignore the possibility that Cadmus and PHAN are planning to attack the rally.”

“Agreed,” Alex said.

“So, we cancel the rally,” Kal said.

“No,” Kara said. “We let them attack, and the moment they’re committed, we bring down the hammer.”

Kal looked at her, shock on his face. “Invite an attack in the middle of the city?”

“It’s a sound strategy,” Astra said. “Lure them into the City of Hope and activate the defenses. The shields will protect the buildings and the people, and we can pin them down and defeat them in detail. But numbers concern me. If they mean to attack, they must have a reasonable expectation of victory.”

“Which means they’ll most likely have a numerical advantage,” J’onn said.

“That, or some way of negating our powers,” Astra said.

“We should expect both,” Kara said.

“Agreed,” Astra said.

Kara looked at Nia. “You said the sky was red?”

“Yes,” Nia said, “but I don’t know what it means. A lot of it was symbolic. Tin soldiers, green knights, puppets.”

“Could be a sunlight filter, like the one Lex used,” Kara said. “A force field which blocks out the shorter wavelengths. It would be like fighting under a red sun.”

“The sun suit present on our war suits would counter that, wouldn’t it?” Kal asked.

“That’s what the sun suit was designed for,” Kara said. She looked over at Nia. “Tell me about the
“Tin soldiers.”

“They were dressed in red and green,” Nia said.

“Metallo’s with red and green kryptonite power systems,” Kara said.

“Could the green knights be Lanterns?” Kal asked.

“I don’t think so,” Kara said. “I think they’re Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane in Lexosuits.”

“What about the puppets?” Nia asked.

“I have no idea,” Kara said.

“More jello molds, maybe?” Leslie asked.

“Maybe,” Kara said. “We have too much territory to defend. We need the League, the Titans, anyone we can get.”

“I’ll call Batman, Wonder Woman and Nightwing,” Kal said.

“Call Arthur and the Lanterns too,” Kara said.

“You want the Lanterns here?” Kal asked.

“No,” Kara said, “but I need everybody I can get if we’re going to be sure we come out on top.”

Kal nodded. “Right. I get it.”

“Astra,” Kara said. “Go to Ursa. Have her call up the City Militia. Get everyone ready. Make sure the Kryptonians understand the Lanterns are off-limits today.”

“I will see to it,” Astra said.

“City Militia?” J’onn asked.

“Yeah,” Susan said. “Supergirl had Ursa start organizing the aliens who live in the city with military experience. She figured they might come in handy at some point.”

“And neither of you mentioned this to me?” J’onn asked.

“I notified Adult Supervision,” Kara said.

“And Adult Supervision made the decision to keep it off the books,” Susan said. “She told me about it after we found out about the Non leak.”

J’onn didn’t look like he liked it, but he nodded in acceptance.

“Understood,” J’onn said.

“Leslie, you’re on jello detail. I’ll leave you Chase as backup. We’ll keep you here, in case they send one of those things against the DEO. We have Kaldur’ahm at CatCo, so if one of those things shows up there, he should be able to hold it long enough for you to get there and cook it.”

“You got it, Sunshine,” Leslie said.

“Alex, I need you to run the DEO teams. Maggie, I need you to keep NCPD out of this. Olivia, you,
Nia and Oscar will go to the Solarium. It’s the safest place in the city.”

“I’m not going to hide,” Olivia said.

“Yes, the fuck you are,” Kara said. “You can go to the Solarium, or I will personally transmat your stubborn fool ass back to the White House. Those are your options, and if you don’t like them, you can kiss my Kryptonian ass.”

Nia’s eyes got so wide Kara was afraid they were going to pop out of her head.

“Well,” Olivia said, “I suppose when you put it that way, I’ll go to the Solarium.”

“Smart choice,” Kara said.

“We’ll use the militia as the crowd for the decoy rally,” Kara said. “J’onn, I’ll need you to go and talk to M’gann. We’ll need her on stage to play Marsdin.”

“Susan, you’re quarterbacking. If the DEO loses eyes and ears in the field, transfer tactical command to me.”

“Right,” Susan said.

“Time is short,” Kara said, “but take ten minutes and call the people you need to. Don’t leave things unsaid. Susan, a word before you go?”

Everyone else started filing out of the room, but Susan waited. As soon as they were alone, Kara held out a small metal vial to Susan.

“What’s this?” Susan asked.

“Time,” Kara said. “It’s the item we brought back from Earth One.”

“Oh, shit,” Susan said. “You’re giving this to me?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Why me?” Susan asked.

“Because, out of everyone I could give it to, you are the only one who would never ask for it, and the only one I trust never to abuse it,” Kara said.

“God, I wish you would stop trusting me so much,” Susan said, staring at the vial.

“The final decision is yours,” Kara said, “and you should be sure, because once it’s done, it can’t be undone. You use that, and you’re one of us, and there are consequences.”

“What consequences?” Susan asked, looking up at Kara.

“You’ll stop aging,” Kara said. “You’ll need to eat like I do. And you will have a big, huge fucking target on your back, every day of your life.”

“Jesus, Kara,” Susan said. “That’s a lot.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “On the other hand, if things work out with you and Leslie, you’ll both still be ridiculously hot on your hundredth birthday.”
“Wait,” Susan said. “Leslie doesn’t age?”

“No,” Kara said.

“Show me how to use this,” Susan said.

Cat smiled as her phone started playing ‘Going to the Chapel of Love’ by the Dixie Cups. She’d had something slightly less ridiculous selected as Kara’s ringtone, but Kara had grabbed her phone and changed it after their conversation that morning, and honestly, Cat couldn’t bring herself to change it back.

She swiped to accept the call and lifted the phone to her ear.

“Hello, love,” Cat said.

“Hey,” Kara said. “I don’t have a lot of time. I need you to listen carefully.”

Cat straightened up, knowing immediately that something was very, very wrong.

“We think Cadmus is going to hit the rally in /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/. I need you to call Sam, tell her to pick up Ruby and Carter from school. Have her use the transmat and get them back to the Solarium as soon as possible,” Kara said.

“Okay,” Cat said. “I’ll get it taken care of.”

“Cat,” Kara said.

“Yes?”

“I love you,” Kara said. “I have loved you since 10:15 a lifetime ago, and whatever happens today, I will always, always love you.”

“It’s bad, isn’t it?” Cat asked.

“Very,” Kara said. “Please, whatever happens, either stay at CatCo, or go to the Solarium.”

“Okay,” Cat said. “Kara…”

“Yes?”

“I love you,” Cat said. “I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Don’t you dare disappoint me.”

“Never,” Kara said. “I’ll see you tonight.”

“You better,” Cat said. “Now go kick their asses.”

“Damn right,” Kara said, and the line went dead.

“Mom,” Alex said.

“Hey, Alex,” Eliza said. “I—”

“Mom, listen,” Alex said, cutting Eliza off. “It’s happening. Cadmus is going to hit the rally in Little Krypton.”
“What do you need?” Eliza asked.

“President Marsdin, her son, one of her aides, and a bunch of Secret Service agents are about to transmat into the ballroom downstairs. Go down, play host. Do not leave the Solarium unless the evacuation alarm sounds. If it does, get to the nearest transmat point. They’ve all been set to go directly to the entry hall at Sanctuary,” Alex said.

“Okay,” Eliza said. “Be safe.”

“I’ll try,” Alex said. “I love you. Kara sends her love.”

“Tell her I love her.”

“I will. I have to go.”

The line went dead.

“Hey, Cat,” Sam said. “What can I do for you?”


Sam didn’t need to be told twice.

Jason, Artemis and Kaldur’ahm all got texts at the exact same time. All three of them picked up their phones, looked at an identical message, then at each other.

“I have it,” Kaldur’ahm said. “Go.”

“We’re on our way,” Bruce said.

“Be careful,” Clark said. “We have no idea what we’re up against.”

“When has that ever stopped us?” Bruce asked.

“I can’t think of a single time.”

“Is it really that bad?” Arthur asked.

“We do not know,” Diana said. “But I do not believe Kara would have called for aid were it not truly needed.”

Arthur stared at the screen for a moment.

“She’s taken in Kaldur’ahm?” Arthur asked.

“Yes,” Diana said. “Taken him in, given him a purpose and a home. He’s even fallen in love, I think.”

“Atlantis will send aid,” Arthur said.

“Hey, Bruce,” Hal said. “What’s up?”
“We have a League-wide mobilization,” Bruce said. “How many Lanterns are on Earth right now?”

“All six Green Lanterns. Star Sapphire is off world,” Hal said. “What’s happening?”

“Supergirl thinks Lillian Luthor is going to try to wipe out the Kryptonians in National City,” Bruce said.

“SHIT!” Hal said. “When is this happening?”

“Two O’Clock, Pacific Time,” Bruce said.

“Fuck me,” Hal said. “Are you doing this quiet or loud?”

“We’re staging quiet, but it’s definitely going to get loud,” Bruce said.

“Right. I’ll get everyone together,” Hal said.

“Hal,” Bruce said.

“Yeah?” Hal asked.

“Supergirl doesn’t trust Lanterns,” Bruce said.

“Why not?” Hal asked.

“It’s a long story,” Bruce said. “But she asked for your help. Please make sure Guy is on his best behavior.”

“Right,” Hal said. “I’ll pair him with John.”

“Good call,” Bruce said. “I’ve got to go.”

The flashes of the transmat died away, leaving Raven, Koriand’r, Donna, Cassie and Gar standing in the Batcave.

“What’s going on?” Donna asked.

“Cadmus is going after the President’s rally today,” Dick said. “Kara’s asking for help.”

“Beating up a bunch of anti-alien bigots? Sounds like my idea of fun,” Koriand’r said.

“Astra,” Kara said, catching up to Astra on the landing deck.

“Yes, Little One?” Astra asked.

“Let the Kryptonians know I’ve unlocked tier-two combat functions on the war suits. They have access to sunblades and sunshields,” Kara said.

“Understood,” Astra said. “Power threshold?”

“Assume power outputs equivalent to a betahedron augment pack,” Kara said.

Astra stared at her for a moment, surprise written on her face. “How?” she asked.

“I got creative with the power sources when I built the suits,” Kara said. “There’s a reason I’ve been
“Understood,” Astra said. “And Little One…”

“Yes?” Kara asked.

“You are the best daughter a mother could ask for,” Astra said, “and I could not be prouder of the woman you have become.”

Kara stepped forward and wrapped her arms around Astra, squeezing her tightly. “Thank you, Mother,” she said. “/ukiem w rrip , eh ,astruh./”

“/ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir/” Astra replied.

“I have a freaking lightsaber,” Alex said, staring at the sunblade hilt in her hand.

“Is that really what you want to talk about right now?” Maggie asked.

Alex looked up to see Maggie walking into the ready room and stood up. She pressed the hilt against her bracer, and it melted back into the suit.

“Hey,” she said.

“Hey yourself,” Maggie said walked right into her arms, then she kissed Alex like the world was about to end.

“Scared?” Alex asked when the kiss was over.

“Yeah. You?” Maggie asked.

“Terrified,” Alex said. “This is going to be our life, isn’t it?”

“For now, but not forever,” Maggie said. “You come back to me, Alex Danvers. You understand?”

“I promise,” Alex said. “You do the same.”

“Damn right,” Maggie said. “You’re not getting rid of me that easy.”

“I wouldn’t want it any other way,” Alex said. “You and me. Ride or die.”

“Ride or die,” Maggie agreed.

Lena smiled as Holst’s Venus started playing. She picked up her phone and accepted the call.

“Hey,” Lena said in a soft voice.

“Hello, /eh shed krigia/,” Astra said.

“How’s the President’s visit going?” Lena asked.

“Not well,” Astra said. “One of her advisors warned us that Cadmus intends to attack the rally.”

Lena closed her eyes. “How bad?”

“We’re expecting a full-scale attack,” Astra said. “We believe they mean to wipe out all the aliens in
“I’m sorry,” Lena said.

“You have nothing to be sorry for,” Astra said.

“My mother—”

“Is responsible for her own actions,” Astra said. “And I did not call to discuss her.”

“You’re calling to say goodbye,” Lena said.

“Yes,” Astra said. “I mean to come back to you, but if I do not, I do not wish to leave anything unsaid.”

“I love you,” Lena said. “I wasn’t even sure it was possible for me to love someone, but I do. I love you so much.”

“I love you, too. You are the best thing this world has given me. I know your people give rings as betrothal tokens, but on Krypton, the tradition is to give a pendant.”

Lena reached up, covering the pendant Astra had given her with her hand.

“You mean…?” Lena asked.

“I gave it to you as a promise of protection,” Astra said. “Will you also accept it as a promise of my intent?”

“Yes!” Lena said. “Absolutely, yes!”

“Then I will see you after the battle, my love,” Astra said.

“Be careful,” Lena said. “Come back to me.”

“I will try,” Astra said. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Lena said, and then Astra was gone.

Susan watched the status displays in front of her, checking and rechecking to make sure everything was in place. So many last-minute changes. So many places where everything could fall apart. It was her job to make sure it didn’t, and she was terrified.

She felt something touch her left hand, and glanced down, watching as fingers laced through hers. She looked up, and smiled at Leslie, then turned back to the status boards.

“I never thought I would hold a sunblade,” Kal said.

“Well, you’re holding it wrong,” Kara said. “If you don’t loosen your grip, you’re going to break your wrist the first time you hit something.”

Kal looked up at her. “Always so encouraging,” he said.

“Yeah, encouraging you to keep herself alive, baby cousin,” Kara said.

“Thanks,” Kal said. “I’m just not used to fighting with a weapon.”
“When this is over, Astra and I will teach you how to use it properly,” Kara said. “I… Hey Lucy.”

“Sorry,” Lucy said. “I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “Kal, can you give us a minute?”

“Sure,” Kal said. He stowed the sunblade back in his bracer and gave Lucy’s shoulder a light pat on the way out, leaving them alone in the training room.

“Hey,” Lucy said.

“Hey,” Kara said. “You okay?”

“No,” Lucy said with a shake of her head.

“What’s wrong?” Kara asked.

“What isn’t?” Lucy asked. “We’re about to go into battle, and my dad is going to be out there on the other side, trying to kill my friends, trying to kill me, and everyone is making calls, or holding hands, or making out with their girlfriend in the ready room, and I just… I don’t have anybody.”

“Hey!” Kara said. She reached out and pulled Lucy into a hug. “You’ve got me, Lucy. You’ve always got me.”

Lucy hugged Kara back with every bit of her strength.

“I’m scared,” Lucy said. “God, I am so scared.”

“I know,” Kara said. “It’s okay to be scared. I’m scared too.”

“How do you deal with it?” Lucy asked.

“You just do it anyway,” Kara said. “You let yourself be afraid, you acknowledge the fear, and you do it anyway.”

“You make it sound so easy,” Lucy said.

“It’s not,” Kara said. “But you’re strong, Lucy, and I will-”

A shrill Klaxon filled the room, ringing out from the PA system, and from both of their war suits as their helmets automatically deployed.


Lillian watched the video feeds as the drones released the Red Kryptonite Aerosol into the atmosphere above National City.

“Are you sure this will work?” Lane asked.

“Yes,” Lillian said. “Max may have been a spineless coward, but he *was* a genius. It was almost a shame I had to kill him.”

“He brought it on himself when he sold us out,” Lane said.

“Yes,” Lillian said, more than a little annoyed that Lane had missed the point. “Yes, he did.”
She stood up and walked over to the waiting Lexosuit and stepped into it. The suit immediately came to life, wrapping her in armor and weapons. Once it was sealed, she turned and looked at the staging area.

Sam Lane stood in another Lexosuit alongside Indigo, their alien puppet, and two-hundred and forty of Lane’s men. Every one of them was special forces-trained, enhanced by her cybernetics and Max’s gene mods, wrapped in suits derived from Simon’s biogel and armed with red and green Kryptonite weapons. Instruments of purification that would rid the world of the alien filth. And the best part was, Supergirl’s little confessional video had given her the perfect name for them.

Hero Killers.

And today, they would earn that name.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zhrhythrhsh im shahrrehth
City of Hope

.ukiem w rrip, eh, astruh,
I love you, Astra

.ukiem w rrip, eh shed kir
I love you, Little One

eh shed krihia
Bright One
The Delicate Sound of Thunder

Chapter Summary

Cadmus attacks The City of Hope

Chapter Notes

Warning: This chapter contains LOTS of graphic violence. Bad things happen to people you love, and some of it will never get better.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Monday, January 25, 2016

Kara marched into the command center with Lucy and Kal on her heels to see Alex, Maggie, Leslie, Susan and J’onn staring up at the status boards.

“What the hell is going on?” J’onn asked as he looked over at them and saw them in sealed helmets.

“Lillian has flooded the atmosphere with aerosolized Red K,” Kara said. “I have sensors all over National City and Metropolis to monitor for it, and safety protocols built into the war suits to automatically isolate and decontaminate.”

“Thank god for that,” Susan said. “If I’m reading this right, any Kryptonian who got dosed at these concentrations would be frothing at the mouth like a rabid dog.”

“Oh, God!” Kal said. “Krypto!”

“Has a full war suit built into his collar,” Kara said. “He’s also in the Solarium, which is hermetically sealed and running on recycled air. He’s safer than we are.”

“So, what do we do?” Kal asked.

“My first instinct is to go out there and kick Lillian in the teeth, but things have changed,” Kara said. “I assumed the plan was to disable our powers then come in and kill us, but I’m guessing that she’s pumping Red K into the atmosphere to make us go crazy so that she can come in and play the hero. If the Kryptonians start killing people, and Cadmus comes in and puts us down, they look like heroes, and if Marsdin is killed in the process, Baker pardons them and pins a medal on them.”

“That’s actually kind of brilliant, in the sickest way possible,” Maggie said.

“That’s Lillian Luthor to a T,” Kara said. She looked over at Susan. “We can still salvage this. I have a plan, but it is risky as hell, so I’m asking Adult Supervision.”

“What’s the plan?” Susan asked.

“We give Lillian what she wants,” Kara said. “We slap an image inducer on Donna Troy, and Victor
Stone. Donna plays me, Victor plays Kal. They start fighting on the stage. The Secret Service agents rush ‘Olivia’ to safety, and when Cadmus shows up, we hit them with everything we can throw at them and keep hitting them until they don’t get back up. Then we hit them a few more times, just to be sure.”

“What about after?” Alex asked. “You guys can’t spend the rest of your life in your suits.”

“Nimda’s already working on building a nanite cloud to clear the air. We should be safe again within twelve hours,” Kara said.

“You’re sure you’ll be safe out there?” J’onn asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Even if our suits are breached, the decontamination protocols will keep us stable.” She looked over at Susan. “What do you say?”

“Being the adult sucks,” Susan said. “But fuck it, I vote we go. We’re not going to get a better chance than this.”

“Then get Marsdin on the line,” Kara said. “We can’t do this without her approval, because if this turns to shit, she’s going to be the one who has to wear it home.”

CatCo News Special Report
Live from The Market Square in The City of Hope

“This is Siobhan Smythe reporting live from the market square in the City of Hope, where just moments ago, a fight broke out between Supergirl and her cousin Superman. No one is sure what sparked the confrontation, but just moments before President Marsdin was set to take the stage in order to address the crowd, Supergirl and Superman began arguing on stage. The Man of Steel apparently moved to strike Supergirl, but she was faster, and knocked him off the stage before he could land a blow. The Martian Manhunter moved to intervene, only to be attacked by Supergirl’s aunt, Flamebird.

“The entire market square is in chaos, with spectators fleeing in a panic, and right now, the DEO is nowhere to be seen.”

Kara watched Siobhan’s report on the head up display in her suit, trying her best to fight back the sick feeling it gave her. It was a little too much like watching the footage of her rampage under the influence of Red K. It still surprised her that after all she’d been through, all the horrible things that she’d seen and done, that the Red K incident still stood out as one of the most horrific events of her life.

“Fuck me,” Susan said. “We’ve got incoming from the east.”

“How many?” Kara asked, knowing she wasn’t going to like the answer at all.

“I make it two-hundred and forty-three contacts,” Susan said. “It looks like Indigo is with them.”

Kara turned and used her x-ray vision to look through the wall.

“I see them,” Kara said. “Two Lexosuits plus Indigo. The rest are wearing some kind of organic armor, possibly related to the jello mold. It also looks like they’ve been enhanced in the same fashion as Hank Henshaw.”
“Strength estimate?” Susan asked.

“Kryptonian-level threat, at least,” Kara said. “We’re in for a fight.”

“All units, this is Mother,” Susan said, “As of now, I have tactical command.”

“Acknowledged,” Kara said. “Mother has tactical command.”

“Supergirl, can we transmat them into orbit like we did with the Red Tornadoes?”

“Nimda?” Kara asked.

“Negative,” Nimda said. “They are each wearing a class-three jammer. We will be unable to lock on to anything within a meter of one of the jamming devices. We are only able to communicate because we upgraded to quantum encryption after the Desert Facility incident.”

“No go on transmat,” Kara said.

“Understood,” Susan said. “All units, wait for my signal.”

Kara watched, waiting until the hostiles started descending into the market square.

“All units,” Susan said. “Mousetrap! Mousetrap! Mousetrap!”

Lillian watched as her army of Hero Killers dropped towards the market square. So far, she only saw the Martian and three of the Kryptonians, but she had no doubt the rest would make an appearance soon.

She didn’t have to wait long.

Before the first Hero Killer even touched down, the two brawls on the ground abruptly ended as the combatants broke apart. Flamebird changed, her face shifting, turning green, revealing the visage of another Martian. Supergirl’s hair turned black and her face reformed and her suit melted away to reveal black Amazonian leather. Superman’s face vanished, replaced by Cyborg, who lifted his arms, turning them into cannons.

At the same time, there were flashes of light all over the market square as groups of armored DEO agents and superheroes alike appeared, immediately going on the attack.

Lillian stared down, completely stunned at the idea that the DEO was trying to trap her. A flash behind her cast a dark shadow below and Lillian turned to see thirty-two angry Kryptonians, three Amazons, a Tamaranian and six Green Lanterns screaming down on them as they descended, weapons bare and ready.

Lillian did the smart thing; she turned and ran.

“The Lexosuits and the Coluan are making a break for it,” Hal Jordan said.

“I see it,” Susan said, “stay on target.”

Kara dove into the formation of Cadmus cyborgs below her, swinging her sunblade in an arc that should have bisected her target. Instead, the blade bit into him, stopping as it slammed into the spine. The blade twisted in Kara’s grip, but unlike Kal, she was a skilled swordswoman, so instead of the
shock shattering her wrist, she was able to turn the blade, dragging it between the cyborg’s ribs as she passed.

His scream still echoed through the square as Kara touched down, but when she looked up, she could see he was already regenerating. She immediately snapped up her shield as he opened up with what she expected to be heat vision. It wasn’t. Ice couldn’t form on the surface of her sunshield, but the steam pouring off as it tried told her everything she needed to know. A fusion of cybernetics, genetic modification and technology, armed with Kryptonite weapons. Lillian had studied the TED Talk well.

“All units, be aware, hostiles are cybernetically-enhanced Bizarro type. Weapons and armor augmented with red and green Kryptonite. Assume better than Kryptonian strength,” Kara said. “Assigning designation, Hero Killer.”


“Mother, Supergirl requesting weapons release,” Kara said.

“Supergirl, you are weapons free,” Susan said.

“Nimda, Supergirl, adjust fire, over,” Kara said.

“Supergirl, Nimda, adjust fire, over,” Nimda responded.

“Fire mission, photon mortars, blue k load, fire pattern steady rain, target my location, and fire for effect,” Kara said.

“All units, all units, incoming fire, danger close, say again, danger close,” Nimda announced.

“Jesus fuck, did you just call down artillery?”

“Cut the chatter, Stewart,” Susan snapped. “Supergirl, Team Seven’s flank. Danvers, cover Team Five.”

Kara shot across the market square as large canisters the size of beachballs began bursting overhead, dropping golfball-size submunitions that stopped falling about a meter off the ground and began pulsing with bursts of bright blue. The Hero Killers screamed as the light hit them, and Kara smiled as she drove her sunblade into the gut of the one trying to flank Team Seven.

This time, he didn’t regenerate.

“Batman, HK behind you. Jordan, Team Seventeen needs cover. Cyborg, Zatanna needs cover. Raven, fall back and let the Amazons cover you, Ursa, they’re trying to turn Militia Six’s right flank,” Susan snapped, giving orders as fast as she could, watching the monitors, as the Hero Killers pushed them back, further and further. Kara’s mortars were keeping them from being completely overwhelmed, but how the fuck was she supposed to deal with more than two hundred Kryptonian-level threats? The good guys definitely had the numerical advantage. There were almost three hundred DEO agents in the field, but even with slaver rifles, they weren’t doing much more than slowing the Hero Killers down and giving them targets than Susan *had* to defend.

“We’re losing, aren’t we?” Leslie asked.

“Unless something changes, and soon,” Susan said. “Zatanna, they’re grouping up near the flower shop. Hit them now!”
Cat sat in her office, watching the battle unfold on dozens of displays around her, the holographic feeds coming in from the surveillance cameras all over Little Krypton, listening to the comm chatter through her earpiece. The fighting was intense. It was like the raid on the Cadmus installation writ on a larger scale, and as best she could tell, Kara was the only thing holding the battle back from becoming a complete rout.

She was everywhere. The instant a line wavered, or one of the Hero Killers got too close to one of the DEO teams, she would be there, sword and shield in hand, driving the enemy back, buying time for the defenders to rally.

The artillery fell, over and over. The spheres would pulse maybe a dozen times before they fell to the ground, and more would arrive to take their place, keeping the enemy weak.

Kryptonians swinging lightsabers fought enemies who could stagger them and drive them back. Enemies dressed in living uniforms, laced through with red and green veins of Kryptonite, and swinging swords with inlays of both of the poisonous substances.

Amazons and Atlantians moved across the square, devastating anyone who came within reach. Two honest-to-god sorceresses stood there, attacking with magic, striking down any enemy that dared to leave the ground. Vigilantes from Gotham stood next to aliens from so many worlds. Even the Green Lanterns, who Kara distrusted so deeply.

They all fought like demons, but it wasn’t enough. Even when the drones swooped in, attacking the Hero Killers, it wasn’t enough. The good guys had the numbers, but the power balance was all too obviously in Cadmus’ favor, and something was going to give.

When it happened, it happened suddenly. Alex was holding two of the Hero Killers off a team of DEO agents, Maggie on one side, and a big bruiser of an alien on the other. The alien missed a block and jumped back to avoid the sword blow, and it was just enough of an opening for one of the Hero Killers to rush through, and finally, Kara and Susan didn’t see the weak point fast enough, and Cat watched as ten DEO agents died before they could even scream.

Kara was there a moment later, and the Hero Killer died too as she drove her sunblade into his eye, but it was too much. Cat couldn’t watch and do nothing. She got up and went into the second office, the one adjoining the office she and Kara shared, took off her shoes and sat down in the lotus position. She closed her eyes, focusing her mind, focusing her dream of a future with Kara.

Alice licked her face once before she charged for the balcony door.

“We’re losing,” Susan said.

“Yeah,” Leslie said.

“There’s just too many of them,” Susan said.

“Yeah,” Leslie said.

“Go,” Susan said.

“Already gone!” Leslie said. She turned around and reached out for the nearest electrical outlet, calling to the flow of electrons, ready to jump into the current.

It didn’t answer.
“Go!” Susan said.

“I can’t,” Leslie said. “My powers aren’t working.”

Susan turned towards her, and Leslie saw her eyes go wide.

Kaldur’ahm sat at his desk, watching the news feed coming in from the CatCopter. No one was actually on scene in Little Krypton. The moment the fighting had started, every reporter in the city had suddenly found themselves outside the perimeter, barred from re-entry by the perimeter force field.

Kaldur’ahm didn’t question why. The fighting was brutal, and more than anything, he longed to be out there, fighting with his friends, helping in any way he could. Sitting here, helpless, was the most frustrating thing he could imagine.

“Hey, Jackson,” Winn said.

Kaldur’ahm looked up at Winn, to see him looking into Cat’s office.

“Hello, Winn,” Kaldur’ahm said.

“Where’s Cat?” Winn asked.

“She’s in the inner office,” Kaldur’ahm said.

“I’m going to go in and sit with her,” he said.

Kaldur’ahm glanced at the office. Cat hadn’t closed the doors, hadn’t sealed herself away for privacy, and he knew she was fond of Winn. It took only a moment to make the decision.

“Very well,” Kaldur’ahm said.

Winn walked into Cat’s outer office, then through the side door into the inner office, and was relieved to find Cat. She was sitting in the middle of the room, her shoes off, in lotus position, surrounded by the blue light of the ring.

That was okay though.

He walked over and picked up one of the heavy crystal decanters from the bar service that Kara insisted was a waste of space, walked back over, and stood behind Cat, ready to do what he needed to, the moment he could.

He wasn’t sure why it was so important for him to kill Cat. He just knew that it was.

Susan turned towards Leslie, more out of instinct than because she had some idea of how to help with malfunctioning powers, but that instinct saved six lives. When she looked at Leslie, she saw Chase walk into the command center with one of the slaver rifles. There was just a moment of confusion before everything made sudden, horrible sense.

Puppets. Mind control.

Chase lifted the rifle and fired and the whole world seemed to crawl to a stop. Susan looked down to see green lightning slowly crawling over her body. She looked back up to see the pulse slowly
coming out of the rifle, headed right towards the command consoles.

Susan reached out and grabbed Leslie, surprised at how light she felt as Susan carried her to safety, before going back for the five techs that were working the consoles, moving each of them out of the path of the pulse from the slaver rifle. Once everyone was safe, she ran over and snatched the rifle out of Chase’s hands and slung it, then pulled zip cuffs from Chase’s tactical vest, cuffing her wrists and ankles.

She glanced back, considering dropping out of superspeed, assuming she could figure out how, but it occurred to her to wonder if there were more puppets. She had to know, so she headed out of the command center and walked the building, floor by floor, room by room, checking for others. She found six of the twenty or so people in the building engaged in various acts of sabotage. She restrained them all and carried them to cells in containment, and went back to get Chase as well, clipping a meta-human dampening collar on her before locking her in a high security cell.

Finally, she walked back into the command center and looked at the one problem her speed couldn’t fix. The pulse had only moved a few inches, but the command consoles weren’t something she could move in the time she had, so she took a deep breath, relaxed, and as she did, the world sped back up, and the pulse slammed into the command console, smashing it to splinters.

“Supergirl, Mother is blind. You have command.”

“Supergirl acknowledges. Mother is blind, I have command.”

“What the fuck just happened?” Leslie said.

“Chase. She’s a metahuman who has the ability to turn off another meta’s powers,” Susan said. “Cadmus has her under some form of mind control. She’s one of the puppets from the dream.”

“Fuck,” Leslie said. “But where did she go?”

“Holding,” Susan said. “Kara gave me a little gift before she left.”

“Wait, didn’t Dreamgirl say there was a puppet at CatCo?” Leslie said.

“Go,” Susan said.

This time, when Leslie reached out for her powers, they answered.

“Supergirl, Mother is blind. You have command,” Susan said.

“Supergirl acknowledges. Mother is blind, I have command,” Kara said. Her mind cycled through options and settled on one.

“All units, Supergirl has tactical command. Wonder Woman is rapid response. Acknowledge,” Kara said.

“Wonder Woman acknowledges. I am rapid response,” Diana said.

Kara lifted into the sky, floating up so she could see the entire battle. “Supergirl has overwatch,” she said, looking down at the battle, taking it in, letting it flow through her as she absorbed the details.

They were losing. Not badly. Not yet, but the power deficit was too much, and the heavy hitters were spread too far, and Kara took a deep breath, because one thing was obvious. She could not win this fight.
Kara Zor-El could not win this fight.

But there was someone who could. Someone who could still turn this into a victory.

So, she did what she had to do. She took Kara Danvers, and Kara Zor-El, and Cat’s girlfriend and Kiera’s mother and Alex’s sister and all the things she couldn’t be right then, and she put them in a box. She stripped herself down, putting everything in a box, until there was only her. The person Kara hated above all others.

She became the Survivor, because the Survivor could win this fight.

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Leslie materialized in the middle of the bullpen and the woman sitting across from Kaldur’ahm’s desk screamed.

Leslie rolled her eyes. “Oh, grow up,” she said as she turned around and looked into Cat’s office. She felt a moment of panic when she saw it was empty.

“She’s in the inner office,” Kaldur’ahm said.

Leslie sighed in relief as she turned towards him. “Cadmus has people in the building.”

“Clear the bullpen,” Kaldur’ahm said as he reached down and opened the bottom drawer of his desk to pull out his water pack. Everyone in the room got up and headed for the nearest exit. Kaldur’ahm pulled off his jacket, and took out his water bearers, attaching them to the tank before he strapped it on. He was still adjusting the straps when Leslie heard the sound of the elevator and looked over to see a group of people walking towards them.

“Try not to hurt them,” Leslie said.

Kaldur’ahm glanced over at her, giving her a curious look. “That will make this harder.”

“I know,” Leslie said.

“Any chance they will listen to reason?”

“None whatsoever,” Leslie said as she stepped forward and delivered fifty thousand volts to the first of the mind-controlled CatCo employees.

“All units, situation is under control,” she said. “Stand by for new priorities.”

“You have a strange definition of ‘under control’ Little One,” Astra said.

“Flamebird, cut chatter. Mother, Supergirl, is the DEO secure?” the Survivor asked.

“Yes,” Susan said. “Puppet has been neutralized.”

“Supergirl acknowledges. Puppet neutralized. Prepare for incoming friendlies.”

“All DEO teams, all Bats, tighten your grouping and cease fire,” the Survivor said.

“What?” Damian shouted.

“Robin will cut chatter. DEO and Bats will tighten groupings and cease fire,” the Survivor snapped. “Beast Boy, fall back to Nightwing’s position.”
She watched as the DEO agents bunched up and stopped shooting.

“Nimda, transmat all DEO teams, Bats and Beast Boy to headquarters,” the Survivor said.

There was an enormous flash as the DEO teams and all the Gotham vigilantes and Beast Boy vanished.

“Amazons, fall back ten meters and dig in. Danvers, Sawyer, six meters to your left, move. Jordan, hostile flanking the Lanterns, left side, neutralize. Martians, prepare to relieve Ursa’s squad. Stewart, punch a hole thirty degrees left. Martians, go for relief. Aquaman, that’s a trident, not a quarterstaff, stab the hostile. Fendra, fall back nine meters and hold. Nimda, shift city shields into active defense mode. Cyborg, concussive cannon. Move forward one meter, turn thirty degrees right, give one ten-second burst at one-hundred eighteen percent power, one point five-meter elevation, dead level.”

Victor fired, and the concussive blast slammed into one of the Hero Killers, knocking him into five others and driving them all against the side of one of the buildings. They screamed as the shield flared, dumping energy into them instead of trying to repel them. When Victor’s cannon shut off, six melted lumps of metal fell to the ground, and the Survivor knew everything she needed to win the battle.

“All non-flight capable units, prepare for transmat evacuation,” she said.

It had been decades since Astra had been in a fight this fierce. The last had been the Trinons at Gangaran’s Star. A nasty little war that had only really lasted one battle but had left an entire world ravaged. This moved faster. Was more personal. It was the kind of fight you never wanted to fight. The kind of fight where you looked men in the eyes as you killed them. They kind where they looked you in the eyes as they killed you.

And they were doing a good job of killing the humans. The DEO had lost nearly seventy or so agents so far, and their blood stained the square. The Hero Killers were dying, but slowly, and one by one. Trapped in the environment suits by the poison in the air, the Kryptonians did not have full use of their powers, and it was showing. Kara’s forces had the enemy by weight of numbers, but the enemy had them outgunned and it was showing, right up until the moment Kara took command.

As the orders started to flow, Astra could feel the tempo of the battle shift slowly. It became less responsive, less reactive and more deliberate. Removing the humans from the fight gave the remaining forces greater mobility, made them harder to pin, allowed Kara to adjust more easily. When she killed six of them with one shot, Astra knew, beyond a doubt, that they would win the day.

“Flamebird, two steps back, ten degrees right,” Kara ordered. Astra obeyed, stepping back, watching the move come together, seeing the trap Kara was laying.

“Superman, one step back, four degrees left,” Kara ordered.

Kal stepped back, closing the line, and Astra smiled, waiting for the hammer blow.

Then it happened. One of the Hero Killers rushed at Kal. He raised his blade, but his grip was wrong, and Astra heard the bones shatter from the shock. Kal screamed, and Astra turned, thrusting her blade into the Hero Killer’s heart.

Kal staggered back, her powers already knitting his wrist. He only needed a moment, and Astra gave it to him, holding both their positions for just a few seconds, but as Kal stepped forward to retake his post, one of the Hero Killers rushed a gap that was too wide. Astra moved right to intercept, but he
hit her before she found her footing, and they went down in a tangle of limbs.

The Survivor watched Astra fall, and deep inside of her, a piece of her soul screamed, demanding she protect her. The Survivor ignored it. This was war and she was a general. She husbanded her resources carefully and she spent them when necessary.

She gave the order to tighten the line.

Astra knew what would happen. What had to happen.

“Kal, back five steps, Ursa left one, back three, Fendra back four and all hold,” Kara ordered as dispassionately as if she’d been telling an attendant what she wanted for lunch.

Astra didn’t hate her, didn’t blame her. Knew it had to happen and was happy that her daughter and her love would live, even if she wouldn’t see it.

She stroked her sun blade across the neck of the Hero Killer who’d knocked her down, and left him a dead man, but his compatriots were there like pack hunters on wounded prey. They raised their swords, ready for the kill, when something blue and winged slammed into them, screeching a battle cry Astra didn’t understand.

Astra used the distraction to scramble to her feet, and just had time to recognize Bliix in a Militia uniform before the Havanian was run through by three different swords.

Astra screamed her rage, and stepped forward, ready to kill every one of them but Kara’s voice stopped her.

A blue-skinned woman with wings died to buy Astra time. Astra screamed in rage. A raw, animal sound that the Survivor had heard all too often.

She ignored it. There was only the purpose. Only the goal. Only numbers below her, and an equation to be balanced. A Kryptonian brought her closer to the desired outcome than a Havanian, so she would accept the trade.

“Flamebird, back three meters, five degrees left, and hold.”

Cat guided Alice across the battlefield, moving here and there, this way and that, somehow knowing where she was needed, where Kara wanted her. She tore the throat out of one of the Hero Killers without thinking about it. Pounced on another, driving him down onto Diana’s sword. Caught the head of one of them in her jaws and jerked hard enough to hear a sound like a spring breaking, and he didn’t get back up when she let him go.

She worried as she fought. Worried she didn’t feel more of what was happening, worried she felt too much. She was filled with anger, with rage, at these monsters who wanted to take her family from her. She hated them because they made Kara feel so far away, the future so hard to reach. She wanted to help people. All she ever wanted was to help people. To be worthwhile, and to be worthy of love.

“Blue Lantern, six hostiles moving north. Pursue and destroy,” Kara said.

She turned, and saw them, breaking off, breaking away. They’d been summoned somehow. She
didn’t know how, didn’t care. They were a threat, and Kara needed her to go after them.

She saw six of them break off. Saw where they were headed. She couldn’t spare anything to go after them. Except she could. She didn’t need the cat. She sent it.

She called for the next round of evacuations. Everyone on the field who couldn’t fly vanished. Some of her people screamed in dismay, but the Survivor didn’t care.

She ordered them up, into the air.

Maggie was not a woman easily frightened. She’d been in fire fights. She’d faced down aliens that most people would consider monsters. She’d lived through explosions, attempted murder, and Alex Danvers’ cooking. She thought she was prepared for anything.

She was wrong. This fight was the worst she’d seen in her life. She’d watched men and women she worked with every day die by the dozens. She could smell the stench of burning flesh. She could feel the blood drying on her skin. Hear the clash of metal and the screams of pain, and taste the bile rising in her throat. She was running on fear, adrenaline and X-Kryptonite.

She was a cop. She’d always wanted to be a cop. Since she was a little girl, she’d dreamed of wearing a badge and catching bad guys, and later, she’d added getting the girl to the list. She had never once in her life wanted to be in a sword fight thirty feet up in the air, going toe-to-toe with mutant zombie cyborgs who were intent on murdering her, her girlfriend, her best friend, and thousands of innocent people.

She didn’t like it, and she sure as hell wasn’t trained for it. She’d been through the basics of the DEO sword training, because there were a lot of aliens where swords were actually a better choice than guns, and even had a few lessons from a fucking Amazon Princess, but the X-Kryptonite was what was keeping her alive. It was obvious she had more time to get used to the powers the X-Kryptonite augment in her war suit gave her than the Hero Killers had to get used to their powers.

They were children, playing with guns, and she used her experience to outpace them. Literally. None of them seemed to have clocked to the way they could manipulate speed to their advantage. They swung their swords with more skill, but she was reacting so fast it was like they were fighting in slow motion, and she had all the time to see their blows coming.

It was the blow that she didn’t see coming that got her. She was fighting three of them at once, twisting, turning, blocking, driving back. She never saw the fourth one come in behind her. One minute, she was holding her own, and the next, three feet of Promethium and Kryptonite were sticking out of her chest.

The Survivor saw it happen. The gap opened when one of the Militia dropped under an attack instead of parrying it, and his opponent used the gap to rush over him and drive a sword through Maggie’s back, a few inches below her heart.

In the time Alex had been at the DEO, she had seen some nasty fights, but nothing that even came close to the sheer scale of the fight around her, or the sheer scale of death. The people around her, some family, some friends, some colleagues, some strangers, fought like demons and all too often died that way. It was a nightmare of terror, desperation and pain, and all Alex could think, in the rare second she had time to think about anything, was that this had been Kara’s life. Day-in, day-out for
years, this had been her sister’s reality.

She understood now the differences she saw in Kara. Understood the mulishness, the merciless practicality, and the propensity to just roll over any problem that got in her way and apologize later. She understood the way Kara fought, fast, hard and utterly brutal. And as she watched her sister move around the battlefield like a vengeful god, her face implacable as she drove the enemy back or plugged a hole in the lines or simply ended a threat with a horrifying finality, she finally understood why Kara insisted on what she called ‘adult supervision’.

The only ones who came even close to matching the power, skill and speed Kara brought to bear were Wonder Woman, Artemis, and Donna Troy. Alex thought Kara could probably take all three of them at once. In a battle with screaming monsters, every one of them bent on ended her life, Kara was the most terrifying thing on the field.

But at the end of the day, she was just one woman, and even with Kara, Alex knew the fight wasn’t going well. They had the numerical advantage, but the Hero Killers were individually stronger and more powerful than anything the good guys had on the field, and that was with Kara dropping a steady rain of blue Kryptonite on them. Something which couldn’t last forever.

For the first time in her life, Alex was afraid she was going to die.

“Supergirl, Mother is blind, you have command,” Susan said, and Alex felt her heart sink. Without solid command and control, they were done. She listened to the back and forth chatter as Kara took command, as responsibilities were shuffled, and icy surety that they were going to die settled in.

Rage came with it. Rage because she wasn’t going to get the life she wanted with Maggie. Because she wasn’t going to get to watch her niece grow up. Because entire universes were going to be consumed by Darkseid because Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane couldn’t stop being rampaging bigots for five fucking minutes.

“All units, situation is under control. Stand by for new priorities,” Kara said.

Alex heard the words but didn’t quite believe it. It was easily the calmest she’d ever heard her sister, and there was nothing but absolute certainty in Kara’s voice.

The orders came after that, each one fast and sure. There was never a moment of hesitation or doubt in Kara’s voice. She never wavered. She cut their numbers, beaming away the DEO teams and Batman’s vigilantes. At first, Alex thought she was crazy. Giving up numbers in the middle of a fight ran counter to everything she’d been taught, but the heavy hitters weren’t pinned down defending the baseline humans anymore. The tempo of the battle changed within moments, and suddenly, they were winning. She could feel it.

Kara cut their number again and moved the battle up into the air. Alex didn’t know why, but she knew Kara’s end game was close. She knew enough about how her sister liked to break down problems and approach solutions that she could see Kara doing it. She could see her twisting the situation to suit her, and she smiled, because they were going to win, and she was going to get the life she wanted with Maggie.

Then a scream rent the air. Not just a scream. There was screaming and dying on both sides, and it hadn’t touched her, but this one did. This scream reached down into her soul and ripped her heart out, because she knew without a doubt who it was.

She turned towards the unholy sound and her world shattered. Maggie was dead. A sword through her heart. It wasn’t possible, but it was. Maggie was dead, and the world was wrong.
She charged, screaming all the way, slamming into the monster who took Maggie away from her. She hit him, she punched him, she kicked him and clawed at him as she dragged him across the sky. She heard someone calling to her, but she didn’t answer. The monster who’d shattered her world tried to run, but she held on, dragging herself up his body until she could shove the hilt of her sunblade into his eye socket.

She switched it on.

His screams stopped as the plasma blade burst out of the back of his skull. He died instantly, but the rage she felt only grew. She switched her sunblade off, about to drop the corpse from her grip and find another target, when something slammed into her back. Pain blossomed in her stomach as she lost all feeling before that point. She looked down, and saw a wide, flat blade sticking out of her and through the corpse of the man who’d killed Maggie.

Before she could react, they were both flung across the bay, and the last thing Alex felt before darkness took her was the water screaming up at her at three times the speed of sound.

Alex screamed and charged him, slamming into him at full speed.

“Danvers, return to position!” she ordered.

Alex ignored her.

The Survivor noted the flash of transmat as Maggie disappeared.

“Danvers, return to position!” she ordered.

Two more peeled away, chasing Alex.

The Survivor accepted that Alex was gone, and adjusted with a few short, clipped orders, moving the fight higher into the sky.

“Agent Vasquez,” Nimda said.

“Yes?” Susan asked.

“Agent Danvers is in the bay, and I can’t get a transmat lock. Without immediate assistance, she will die.”

“Wentworth, you’re in charge,” Susan said. She didn’t wait for a response, she just ran.

A flash in the distance. She looked and saw green lightning streak out onto the bay before disappearing below the waves. She turned back to the battle.

Just a little higher.

The two who went after Alex returned.

Alex was nowhere to be seen.

The Survivor noted it, disregarded it, and kept moving the fight upwards.
Cat guided Alice across chasing the six Hero Killers that had fled the battle. She leapt, coming down on the back of one of them, driving him into the pavement. She sank fangs made of hope and will into his neck, bit down, twisted, and was rewarded with the broken spring sound of his neck snapping.

She looked up as the five remaining Hero Killers turned to face her and licked the blood off her chops. She crouched, shifting from side to side, judging the distance, until she was ready to pounce. Only, when she did, it wasn’t one of her, but five. An Alice for each Jabberwocky she faced.

The fights that followed were short, they were vicious, and most of all, they were satisfying. She tore through them, snapping necks, tearing out jugulars and femoral arteries, clawing and biting and destroying the monsters who threatened her home and her family and her future. The demons who threatened her hope.

When it was over, she stood among the ruins of her enemies, ready to go back to the larger battle, but something caught her attention, and she looked in the direction they’d fled, in the direction of the Genesis Chamber. There she spotted Lillian Luthor, Sam Lane, and the alien Kara called Indigo.

Panic and rage filled her as she started to run. Five became three, and each was stronger for it, but it wasn’t enough, not to be sure. Cat poured every drop of hope, every ounce of will, and every bit of power she had into the constructs. She pushed so hard, even her personal shield vanished, the power pouring into preparation for the three killing blows.

She leapt into the air, three bodies moving with a single purpose. She raised her claws, set to destroy her prey.

Winn’s decanter struck first.

She felt something go wrong. Something went terribly, terribly wrong.

It wasn’t the battle, so she set it aside. Her soul screamed and raged and cursed her.

She didn’t care. She put it aside.

She was the Survivor, and only her purpose mattered.

Lillian smiled as the Blue Lantern constructs vanished into thin air.

“So much for Cat Grant,” she said.

“Good riddance,” Lane said.

“I have shut down the defenses of the Genesis Chamber,” Indigo said. “We now have access to the building.”

“Well, this will be a bit harder without the extra help, but let’s put an end to this Kryptonian infestation, shall we?”

“Well, that was fun,” Leslie said.

“How did they manage to recruit so many people who work here?” Kaldur’ahm asked.

“Not recruit,” Leslie said. “Mind control.”
“Mind control?” Kaldur’ahm asked with a look of horror on his face.

“Yeah.”

“Winn is in with Cat!”

Leslie didn’t wait for further explanation. She vanished into the electron cloud, and re-coalesced inside the inner office. The scene that greeted her was something out of a nightmare. Cat’s hair was matted with blood and broken glass. Her scalp was split open and bleeding freely. Her head resting in a pool of her own blood that was rapidly spreading out across the floor and Winn knelt over her, a huge shard of glass in his hand as he reached towards her throat.

Leslie didn’t think. She just acted to protect the woman that, despite everything, she loved with all her heart.

“Lady Kara, the Genesis Chamber has been breached,” Nimda said. “Indigo has control of the defenses.”

“Understood,” the Survivor said. “Prepare to evacuate all fliers except myself and the Lanterns.”

She gave orders. Moved the battle higher until she was no longer above it. Until it raged around her like a storm.

Still she watched. Still she gave orders. She moved only when she had to. Fought only when she had to. Until finally, the battle was high enough.

Until she was high enough.

“Lanterns, on my mark, I need a spherical one-hundred-meter diameter level-seven containment field, centered on me. You will need to be external to it. Cruz, stand by to play catcher’s mitt.”

“Understood,” Hal replied.

“Nimda, final evacuation now,” the Survivor said, so calmly she might have been ordering a coffee.

There was a flash, a single great flash all around her, and suddenly she and the Lanterns were alone with the Hero Killers.

“Lanterns, go,” the Survivor ordered, and the world beyond the battle disappeared, cut off by a wall of green, trapping the Hero Killers inside with her. A good hundred and sixty of them still drew breath, and as one, they turned towards the one person they could still reach. The person they thought was a hero. The person they thought was their prey.

The Survivor overrode the Red K protocol on her war suit and deactivated it, leaving her floating in the sky wearing just the button-down shirt, slacks and ballet flats she’d worn to work that morning. She lifted her arms straight out to the side, and reached down into herself, whispering the words of the Torquasm Vo meditation she used to control the flow of solar energy from her cells. Only this time, she did the very thing she had warned Lucy to never do. She turned the dial up. All the way up.

She felt the heat on her skin as the energy began to build, saw the air ripple and shimmer as she raised her core temperature. Felt even the Kryptonian barrier fabric catch fire as her skin heated up, until it felt like she might explode.
Then she released it. Every drop, every erg of solar energy stored in her body, released in a single instant, turning the air inside the Green Lantern’s containment field into Superheated plasma.

If they had been at full strength, the Hero Killers might have been able to shrug it off, but they weren’t. Kara had been pounding them for almost forty minutes with blue kryptonite radiation. Whatever good the Bizarro gene mods might have done to protect them had been very effectively neutralized, and everything else was just machinery.

Broken machinery, when the flare of her power died away. Broken machinery with anything and everything organic burned away, with the circuitry melted and ruined, and the metal itself cooked brittle and hard.

And they fell. Her, and the ruined, charred corpses of the Hero Killers. As one, they fell.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth

City of Hope
Lillian and Sam entire the Genesis Chamber. Kara deals with the aftermath of the battle.

Monday, January 25, 2016

Lillian retracted her helmet as she looked around the Genesis Chamber, and a moment later, Lane did the same.

“My God, it’s huge,” he said.

Lillian thought he had a talent for understatement. She’d known the building was enormous, but she hadn’t really grasped the sheer scale of it until she stood at its heart.

“There must be thousands of Birthing Matrixes,” Lillian said.

“Fifty thousand in this chamber,” Indigo said. “However, this building is modelled on the Genesis Chamber in Argo City, and has a larger sub-chamber which can hold as much as four hundred and fifty thousand additional units.”

“They’re going to breed us out of existence,” Lane said.

Lillian rolled her eyes. Lane was right, in the general sense, but wrong on the details. He imagined a tidal wave of Kryptonian children pouring out of this building in a few months. But children needed parents. No matter how good the robot nannies were, thirty Kryptonians couldn’t hope to tend to half a million children. No. It was much more insidious than that. This was a building designed to last for thousands of years. They wouldn’t displace the humans in one overwhelming rush. Instead, it would be a death by a thousand cuts. Slowly, over generations, they would seed colonies all over the world. They would intermarry. Take the best human stock and breed it into the Kryptonian lines. Build chambers like this wherever they went, and let natural selection do the rest.

“How many Birthing Matrixes are currently active?” Lillian asked.

Indigo stepped up to the podium and placed her hand on it, interfacing with the system. “Fifteen are currently active.”

“Do we have sufficient quantities of liquid kryptonite?” Lillian asked.

“Yes,” Indigo said.

“Good. Begin infusion,” she said. “And start with Supergirl’s little bastard.”

Lillian watched as a drone floated up from beneath the central platform and held out its hand.

“Kryptonite, please,” the drone said.
Lillian took the vials of liquid kryptonite off her belt and handed them to the drone, which floated off towards the wall. She used the Lexosuit’s imaging system to zoom in and watched as the drone connected the vial to an injection port for a moment, then moved on, repeating the same action fifteen times before returning to the central platform and offering her the vial. She took it, noting there was a still a bit of Kryptonite left, and attached it to her belt.

“How long will it take to kill them?” Lane asked.

“Most are already dead,” Indigo said. “Kara Zor-El’s daughter is resisting, but life signs are failing.”

Lillian frowned, wondering why the first one they’d infused was taking the longest to die. Maybe it was half human. More resistant because of a mixed heritage. It was an interesting question to ponder. Maybe she could get access to tissue samples of the fetuses and run a comparative analysis once this was all over.

“Cellular function has ceased in all Birthing Matrixes,” Indigo said.

The entire chamber echoed with the sound of rending metal as the doors were ripped outwards.

Lillian turned towards the god-awful noise, but before she could react, a green beam of some sort struck her, Lane and Indigo, encasing them all in green energy. She tried to move, but even with the power of the Lexosuit, she couldn’t do much more than turn her head.

She watched as Supergirl and all six of Earth’s Green Lanterns flew into the chamber. Supergirl set down next to the console, as one of the Lanterns - Jordan, she thought - moved Indigo out of the way. Supergirl put her hand down on the console.

“Nimda, relay through my suit and retake control of the chamber,” Supergirl said.

There were a few moments of quiet, then Lillian heard footfalls at the door. She turned to see the other Kryptonians along with the Justice League and Batman’s little street gang coming into the chamber.

“Little One?” General Astra called out.

Supergirl lifted her hand off the console and turned around. The tint vanished from her helmet, allowing Lillian to see her face, and Lillian immediately knew something was wrong. There was no rage. No fury. Her face was completely devoid of emotion.

“What did you do?” she asked, but even her voice was wrong. Flat, like she was asking what Lillian wanted for lunch.

“We eliminated a threat,” Lane said.

“They were children,” Supergirl said. “You murdered fifteen innocent children.”

“They’re dead?” one of the Kryptonian women asked.

“Yes,” Supergirl said. “All of them.”

The Kryptonian woman who’d spoken drew her energy sword and turned it on.

“Then I claim their lives,” the woman said.

John Stewart stepped between the Kryptonian and Lillian.

“Now wait just a minute,” Stewart said. “I know tempers are running a little high here, but no matter
what they’ve done, they’re still entitled to a trial.”

“You can give their corpses a trial,” the woman said.

“Stand down, Aethyr,” Supergirl said.

“Stand down?” Aethyr asked. “You cannot mean to spare them.”

“This happened on Embassy grounds. That means they are subject to Kryptonian law.”

Aethyr stared at Supergirl for a moment, then she deactivated her sword. “Kryptonian Law?”

“Yes,” Supergirl said. “Astra, Byara, Mur, Gor, Div, Cir. Take them. Peel them out of the suits and put them in the holding cells in Kandor Tower.”

Stewart turned towards Supergirl. “I can’t let you do that,” he said. “The Lanterns will take them, and we’ll turn them over to the DEO. They will face justice. I promise you.”

“You will allow it,” Supergirl said, in that same cold, emotionless tone. “The Genesis Chamber stands on the grounds of the Kryptonian Embassy. They murdered Kryptonian children on ground subject to Kryptonian law. We have the right to hold them accountable for their crimes under Kryptonian law.”

“She’s right.”

Lillian turned towards the crowd, surprised to see Superman standing at the front of it.

“You need to back off, John,” he said.

“Look, Superman, you of all people know we can’t turn them over to an angry mob,” Stewart said.

“I’m not asking you to,” Superman said. “But they murdered Kryptonians on Kryptonian ground, and if you try to take them out of here, you are going to have to fight every Kryptonian here. Including me.”

“Kal,” one of the other Lanterns said, shock in his voice.

“You will also face the League,” Wonder Woman said as she stepped to the front of the group.

“You need to stand down, John,” Batman said as he pushed through the crowd.

“You’re agreeing to this?” John asked.

“Yes,” Batman said. “Legally, she’s right. Morally, she’s right. And you just watched her kill a hundred and sixty of those things single-handedly, so if you don’t back down, I’m pretty sure she will make you before the rest of us could get in a punch.”

Lillian glanced over at Supergirl and frowned as she watched her make a quick series of odd hand gestures.

“Her powers are blown,” one of the Lanterns said. “The only reason she can even fly is that fancy suit of hers.”

“Guy, if you think that would stop her from wiping the floor with all of you, you are an idiot,” Batman said. “If you make this a fight, you’ll lose. She already has you beat.”
“Batman is right,” Diana said. “If you do not stand down, she will kill you.”

“No, I won’t,” Supergirl said. “John, I understand your concern, but they murdered fifteen Kryptonian children on Embassy grounds. They are subject to arrest and trial under Kryptonian law. You will stand down, or you will be subject to arrest for obstruction of justice and aiding and abetting a fugitive. If you wish, the Kryptonian provisional government will hear a request for extradition from the Green Lantern Corps, but only after they are taken into custody.”

“You’ll give them a trial?” John asked.


“If you—”

“No,” Supergirl said. “No ‘ifs’. Do not mistake this for a negotiation. This is a Kryptonian Embassy. You have no jurisdiction here.”

“We’re Green Lanterns,” one of them said. “We have jurisdiction everywhere.”

“GUY!” the other five shouted at once.

“Is that so?” Supergirl asked.

“What Guy means is—” John started to say,

“Nimda, send them somewhere they have jurisdiction,” Supergirl said.

All six Lanterns vanished in a flash of light. Their constructs vanished along with the Lanterns, freeing Lillian, Sam and Indigo, but six of the Kryptonians were on them before Lillian had time to react.

“Ursa,” Supergirl said. “You will see to arrangements for a trial. There is a neural imprint AI of Alura in Sanctuary. Have her review all preparations. She will make sure everything is done correctly.”

“Yes, Lady El,” Ursa said.

“Lucy,” Supergirl said.

“Yes?” Lucy asked.

“Will you prosecute?” Supergirl asked.

“Yes.”

“Aethyr,” Supergirl said.

“Yes, Lady El?”

“See to arrangements for the dead. The day after tomorrow, at Sunrise. Those that died in the militia as well, if their families wish it, or if they have no family. They spilled their blood for our cause. Father Rao will light their way home.”

“Yes, Lady El.”

Supergirl turned back to Lillian.
“Did you know one of them was my daughter?” she asked in that same strange, emotionless voice.

“We killed her first,” Lillian said. “Sent her to join your little reporter.”

Finally, Lillian saw the first flicker of emotion in Supergirl’s eyes.

“You didn’t know she was dead, did you?” Lillian asked, but whatever spark she’d made in Supergirl died almost as quickly as it had been born.

“Take them,” Supergirl said.

Clark watched as Astra and a hand full of other Kryptonians dragged Lillian Luthor, Sam Lane, and the Coluan out of the Genesis chamber, and walked over to Kara.

“Kara?” he asked.

She turned to look at him, and he got the first good look at her face he’d had since setting foot in the chamber, and almost flinched. He’d seen the look on her face before. Seen it on Bruce’s face a few times. Usually when the situation involved kids. Seen it on rescue workers after a bad incident. Seen in on survivors. The look of someone who was there, and functioning, but not quite connected to the world.

“Lady El,” Nimda said before Clark could say anything.

“What is it?” Kara asked, and Clark had never in his life heard someone sound so tired.

“You’re needed at the Medical Hall in the Solarium,” Nimda said.

“Can it wait?” Kara asked.

“No,” Nimda said. “You’re listed as the next of Kin for both Alex Danvers and Cat Grant. Decisions must be made about their medical care within the next twenty minutes.”

“They’re alive?” Kara asked, and Clark thought she sounded almost confused.

“Yes,” Nimda said. “Both are badly injured, but they are alive. As are Maggie Sawyer and Winn Schott Jr.”

“Understood,” Kara said. She looked at him and seemed to focus on him for the first time.

“Can you deal with cleanup?” she asked.

“Yes,” Clark said. “The League will take care of it. Go.”

“Nimda, transmat me directly into the decon chamber,” Kara said.

Clark watched her disappear in a flash of light and turned back to the others. “We’ve got cleanup duty,” he said. “Wonder Woman, do you think you could go talk the Lanterns down before they do something stupid?”

“I will try,” Diana said. “Nimda, where did you send them?”

“The photosphere of the sun,” Nimda said.

“Wonderful,” Diana said. “At least I have a few minutes to think of what to say.”
Eliza sat in the waiting area of the Medical Hall, doing her best not to stare at the clock. Kaldur’ahm and Leslie were there with her, and she wasn’t sure if that was a blessing or a curse. Kaldur’ahm was brooding, and Leslie was pacing. They’d been there less than half an hour, and she was ready to scream at them both.

The door opened before there was any actual screaming, and she looked over as Kara entered. She immediately felt her heart sink at the look on Kara’s face. It had been years since she’d seen her daughter look that detached. Not since the first week after Alex left for college.

“Hey, Sweetheart,” she said.

“So, where are they?” Kara asked.

“They’re in surgery,” Eliza said. “Nimda said Maggie will be in surgery for a few hours. The injuries will be easy enough to repair. The sword missed her heart and her spine, but her liver and most of her digestive tract need to be replaced. The organ regenerator is working on it right now. She’ll make a full recovery.”

She watched Kara’s face, and could tell that Kara knew that she was trying to soften the coming blow, and for once, wished she wasn’t so smart.

“What about Cat and Alex?” Kara asked.

“You should sit down, sweetheart,” Eliza said.

Kara sat down next to her, but the detached mask stayed on her face, and Eliza’s heart ached for her.

“They’re in bad shape,” Eliza said. “Nimda’s working on keeping them alive, but it was touch and go for both of them at first.”

“And now? Nimda said there were medical decisions to be made.”

“Yes,” Eliza said. “There’s extensive brain damage in both cases.”

“How did Cat get hurt?”

“It was my fault,” Kaldur’ahm said.

“No the fuck it wasn’t,” Leslie snapped. “This is Cadmus’s bullshit, and no one else’s. If you start on that self-pitying bullshit, Nimda’s going to has to grew you a new ass, because I’ll shove a lightning bolt up your old one.”

“What happened?” Kara asked again.

“Cadmus has mind control nanites,” Leslie said. “That’s what Dreamgirl’s puppets were. Chase tried to kill everyone in the DEO control room. Trashed the console. That’s why Susan transferred command. I got to CatCo in time to stop a mob from storming Cat’s office, but Winn was already inside. Smashed her head in with one of those crystal decanters.”

“What is he?” Kara asked.

“Nimda’s got them all in isolation at the Medical Hall in Little Krypton,” Leslie said. “Working on a way to neutralize the nanites without damaging the host. She says she thinks the nanites might be what caused the neural scarring in Non.”
“Sweetie, are you okay?” Eliza asked.

“No,” Kara said. “What happened to Alex? I lost track of her during the battle.”

“She went into the bay,” Eliza said. “She and one of the Hero Killers were impaled on the same sword. Nimda said the body of the Hero Killer was too close to her, and its jammer kept Nimda from transmatting her to the medical hall. She was without oxygen for almost eight minutes by the time Susan could reach her. She there was also a lot of blood loss.”

Kara nodded.

“Nimda, prognosis for Alex Danvers,” Kara said.

“Severe cerebral hypoxia resulting in damage to speech centers of the brain. Estimate with ninety-nine percent probability that she will lose her ability to speak. Estimate seventy-eight percent probability that she be unable to regain the ability to speak.”

“Prognosis for Cat Grant,” Kara said.

“Severe blunt force trauma to the occipital lobe and cerebellum. Estimate ninety-four percent probability that she will be unable to see. Estimate with one-hundred percent probability that she will experience lifelong loss of fine motor control.”

“Do both prognoses include use of Regeneration Matrix?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Nimda said.

“Assume use of Chrysalis Chamber,” Kara said.

“Use of Chrysalis Chamber followed by Regeneration Matrix will result in full recovery for both parties. Alex will be required to have her speech skills retrained. Cat may need to relearn her fine motor skills.”

“Production time for a Chrysalis Chamber?”

“One hour, seven minutes,” Nimda said.

“Take three chambers from the Molecular Surgery Center,” Kara said. “Fabricate replacements as quickly as possible but reserve the fabbers at Sanctuary and Solitude for production of additional Regeneration Matrices. Cycle Alex, Maggie and Cat through the Chrysalis Chambers and Regeneration Matrices.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

“Kara, Maggie doesn’t need—” Eliza started to say.

“I won’t separate them that way,” Kara said. “I won’t.”

Eliza looked at Kara, at the flat face and empty eyes and decided now wasn’t the time to argue.

“Okay,” Eliza said.

“I need you to do something for me,” Kara said.

“What is it?” Eliza asked.
“I need you to talk to Carter. Tell him what’s happened.”

“Sweetheart, no. That should come from you.”

“No,” Kara said. “I can’t feel it yet, and he won’t understand that.”

“What do you mean, you can’t feel it yet?” Eliza asked.

“I mean I can’t feel it yet. There’s too much happening. When I feel it, I’m done, and I can’t be done, so I can’t feel it yet.”

“Kara, you’re not making any sense,” Eliza said.

“Tell Carter that Cat is hurt. Tell Carter that his sister is dead. Tell him that Kara loves him, and she would be with him if she could.”

“Kiera’s dead?” Eliza asked.

“Lillian got into the Genesis Chamber,” Kara said. “All the children are dead.”

“Oh my God,” Eliza said.

“I have to go,” Kara said. “I can’t be here now.”

“Kara, wait!” Eliza said, but it didn’t do any good. Kara stood up and walked out of the room.

“What the hell just happened?” Leslie asked.

“I don’t know,” Eliza said.

The transmat deposited Astra in the decontamination chamber, and it immediately began to cycle, clearing any traces of Red K off her.

“Nimda, connect me to Lena,” Astra said.

“Astra?” Lena asked.

“I am here, Bright One.”

“Are you okay?” Lena asked, and the fear Astra could hear in her voice made Astra’s heart ache.

“I am uninjured,” Astra said. “Cadmus is no more, but the battle did not go well.”

“How bad is it?”

“I do not have the exact numbers. I saw dozens of DEO agents and a number of aliens die in the fight. But that only touches the surface of the matter. Lillian and Sam Lane gained access to the Genesis Chamber.”

“Oh my God.”

“It’s as bad as you fear. They injected liquid Kryptonite into the Birthing Matrixes,” Astra said. “All the children are dead.”

“Astra, I’m sorry,” Lena said, and Astra could hear the pain and horror in her voice.
“I know,” Astra said. “I need you to put aside whatever you are doing and come back to the Solarium.”

“You’re afraid the other Kryptonians will come after me,” Lena said.

“I fear it. I am sorry. I know you would never do such a thing. But the others only know that you are Lillian’s daughter.”

“I understand,” Lena said. “Will you be there?”

“I can’t. Kara… Kara had a daughter in one of the Matrixes.”

“Oh God.”

“Cat, Alex and Maggie are all injured, and Kara is alone.”

“Go, love. Be with her.”

“Be safe, my Bright One. And know that my intentions have not changed.”

She sat in the office, staring at nothing and trying desperately to be numb. To be the Survivor. To be the woman who was made of some strange alloy of detachment, necessity and brutal practicality.

She wanted to be the Survivor because the Survivor never had to live with the pain and the guilt. She just came when summoned by fear and desperation and destroyed whatever was put in front of her. She spent the lives of loved ones like they were coins, sacrificed those who should be protected, and left…

…and left…

“Little One?”

She looked up to see Astra standing in the doorway to the office.

“May I sit?” Astra asked.

She nodded.

Astra crossed the room, sat down next to her, and wrapped an arm around her shoulders.

“You did well, Little One,” Astra said.

“I won,” she said.

“Yes,” Astra said. “When I first saw the force we faced, I would not have believed it possible. I witnessed it with my own eyes, and I can scarce believe we survived.”

“I won,” she said.

“I know, Little One,” Astra said.

“Lady Kara?” Nimda asked.

“Yes?” she asked.

“President Marsdin is asking to speak with you.”
“Have one of the drones escort her to the penthouse via the elevator,” she said. She turned to Astra. “Go. Be with Lena. Tell her that she may visit Lillian before the trial if she wishes.”

“Little One-”

“Go,” she said. “There’s work to be done. I will not leave it unfinished.”

Astra stared at her for a moment before she finally nodded. She stood up. “If you need me…”

“I will call,” she said.

Olivia and her detail followed the drone into the apartment that obviously belonged to Cat and Kara. The style was all Cat, but the sand and the terracotta in the color palette wasn’t something she could ever imagine Cat picking for herself. On top of that, all the paintings on the walls were signed in Kryptonian.

Olivia found herself wondering why Kara had chosen this place for the meeting. Some sort of power play, maybe? An attempt to establish dominance by meeting in a place that was so clearly hers?

She supposed she’d find out soon enough.

The drone led her into a large office, and again, the styling was pure Cat, but the color palette was the same sand and terracotta that she’d seen in the living room. She was also surprised to find it a shared workspace. The desk was obviously built for two, with a pair of identical throne-like chairs behind the desk, two computers, and even a split layout to the media wall, though there was a lot of Kryptonian tech on display. Instead of TVs, the media wall was made up of holograms. One of the attendants floated in the corner, and there were dozens of odd little objects laying around that had a Kryptonian feel to them.

But in the middle of it all sat Kara. She wasn’t behind the desk. She sat on one of the sofas in front of the desk, leaning forward, her elbows on her knees, and her forehead resting against the heel of her hands.

“Kara?” Olivia asked.

She sat up, and looked at Olivia and for one moment, Olivia wasn’t sure it was Kara. She’d never seen the girl look so completely lifeless.

“Yes?” Kara asked.

“Are you okay?” Olivia asked.

“No,” Kara said. “You wanted to talk.”

“What happened out there?” Olivia asked.

“I won,” Kara said.

“You won?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “Mission objective was to destroy Cadmus and capture or kill Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane. I killed the entire Cadmus attack force and captured Indigo, Lillian and General Lane. All objectives were met. I won.”

“Kara, do you know how many people died today?” Olivia asked.
“No,” Kara said. “Nimda, fatalities as a result of the fight with Cadmus?”

“Final total is unknown at this time. Fourteen individuals are still in surgery with a non-zero chance of death due to complications. At present, two-hundred and forty Cadmus operatives, designation Hero Killers, seventy-three DEO agents, fourteen members of the /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ militia, and fifteen Kryptonian children in the /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ Genesis Chamber.”

Olivia stared at Kara for a moment, not quite believing her ears.

“Kryptonian children?” she asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “My people seeded fifteen Birthing Matrixes the day after the National City Earthquake. Lillian pumped liquid Kryptonite into the nutrient feed lines. They died within a matter of seconds in most cases. The longest held on for four minutes.”

“Kara, I’m sorry,” Olivia said.

Kara closed her eyes. “I’m tired.”

“You don’t look well,” Olivia said.

“Blew out my powers,” Kara said. “Did you need anything else?”

“No,” Olivia said. “No, you get some rest. I need to go find Nia.”

“Olivia.”

“Yes?”

“Tell everyone,” Kara said.

“About the children?” Olivia asked.

“Yes.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Why?”

“They need to understand.”

“Understand what?”

“What comes next,” Kara said.

“Kara, what do you mean?”

“Justice.”

“Kara-”

“You should leave now.”

Olivia stared at her for a moment. “Kara, I know you’re upset-”
“You should leave now.”

“Kara—”

“Now,” Kara said.

“Okay,” Olivia said. She turned around and followed as the drone led her and her detail back to the elevator. The whole way down to the twenty-fifth floor, she felt ice creeping into her veins as she wondered what would constitute justice to a woman who’d just seen her entire species’ future murdered.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:
zhhygrhahs im shahrrehth

City of Hope
Chapter Summary

Eliza talks to Carter, Astra and Lena have a moment together, Diana meets with the Green Lanterns, Olivia and Miranda Crane both address the nation, Jeremiah makes a new friend, and J’onn comes to a decision with a little help from Eliza.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Tuesday, January 26, 2016

“Hey,” Sam said as she opened the door. “They’re in the dining room, doing their homework.”

“I don’t know if Cat or Kara got the chance to say thank you for picking them up from school before everything happened, so thank you. From all of us,” Eliza said.

Sam nodded. “I’ll go get Ruby so you can talk to Carter,” she said. She disappeared for a moment, and Eliza took the time to prepare herself. It had been a long time since she’d had to have a conversation like this, and the last time, Kara and Alex had been much older.

Sam led Ruby back out of the dining room, and Eliza stepped inside. She stopped just inside the door, taking a moment to watch Carter as he worked on his math homework. Taking a moment before she changed his world forever.

“Carter,” she said.

He looked up from the math book he was reading, and the relief on his face was like a knife in her heart.

“Hey!” he said, his voice happy and cheerful. She hated that she was about to take that away from him.

She walked over and sat down in the chair next to him.

“Carter, sweetheart, we need to talk about something,” she said.

He frowned. “Something’s wrong, isn’t it?”

She started to reach out for him but stopped herself. Her instinct was always to touch, to seek physical connection, but she remembered Kara talking about Carter having issues with people touching him unexpectedly.

“Could I… Do you think I could hold your hands?” she asked.

“Yeah,” he said. He reached out and took her hands, squeezing them tightly.

“Sweetheart, there’s not any way to say this, but your mom has been hurt.”

“What?” Carter asked. “How? Did she have an accident?”
“No,” Eliza said. “It wasn’t an accident.”

“Someone hurt her?”

“I’m afraid so.”

“But why wasn’t Kara or Jackson there to protect her?”

“Kara was still in the City of Hope fighting Cadmus when it happened. Jackson and Leslie were there. They did the best they could. But Cadmus… Carter, do you know what nanites are?”

“Little robots,” Carter said. “What does that have to do with mom?”

“Cadmus put nanites inside of a lot of people. We don’t know how they did it yet, but these nanites made them do whatever Cadmus wanted. Like a kind of remote control. They gave them to someone your mom trusted. Someone Jackson trusted. And around the same time as they attacked the City of Hope, Cadmus used the nanites to tell this person to attack your mom. Sweetie, this person didn’t have any choice. He hit your mom on the head, and he hit her really, really hard.”

“Is she going to be okay?”

“Yes. Yes, she will. I promise you she will. But she might not be okay right away.”

“What do you mean?”

“She got hit really, really hard, sweetheart,” Eliza said. “And the place where she got hit in the part of the brain that controls your muscles. When she wakes her, she’s going to have trouble remembering how to do certain things. She won’t be able to hold a pen, or type. She may need held feeding herself. Anything that involves her hands or fingers. If that happens, she’ll have to learn how to do those things all over again. Kara’s got some things that will help her learn faster, but it’s still going to take time.”

“Will she remember me?”

“Yes, sweetie.”

“Does this mean I have to go to my dad’s?”

Eliza frowned, a little confused. “Why would it mean that?”

“Mom always sends me to dad’s when she gets sick.”

“Oh. No. Carter, she does that because she’s afraid of making you sick. She loves you, and she hates sending you away.”

“Is she in the Medical Halls in /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/?”

“No. She’s downstairs,” Eliza said.

“Can I see her?”

“I’m afraid not,” Eliza said. “She’s in one of the healing machines. Her and Alex and Maggie.”

“Alex and Maggie got hurt too?”

“Yeah. Maggie will be up and around soon, but Alex… she’s kind of like your mom. Her brain got
hurt too, but in a different way.”

“Different how?”

“She might have to learn how to talk again.”

“It was a bad fight, huh?”

“Yeah, sweetheart. Most of them are.” Eliza took a deep breath, steadying herself. “There’s something else I need to tell you.”

“It’s bad, isn’t it?”

“I’m afraid so. It’s about your sister. The people who attacked the City of Hope got into the Genesis Chamber. Sweetie, I’m afraid your sister didn’t make it.”

“What? No! Kara wouldn’t have let that happen!” Carter said.

“I’m sorry, sweetie. I know Kara tried her hardest, but there were so many of them.”

“Where’s Kara?” Carter asked.

“I don’t know, sweetie,” Eliza said. “I know she wanted to be here, but a lot of people got hurt today, and a lot of very bad things happened, and Kara is trying to help people right now. She asked me to come be with you, because she didn’t want you to be alone.”

The sob echoed off the walls of the room, and the sound of it tore at Eliza, and she wanted more than anything to make everything better for him, but she couldn’t. Not really.

“Sweetheart, would it be okay if I hugged you?”

Carter nodded, and Eliza wrapped her arms around him, holding him tightly as his world unraveled. He held her back, just as tightly.

It was a long time before either of them let go.

“Miss Luthor, Lady Astra is here,” Vincent said.

“Thank you, Vincent,” Lena said as she stood up. She walked around her desk and headed for the door, arriving just as Astra appeared. Lena didn’t stop. She walked right into Astra’s arms and pulled her into a kiss.

“Thank God you’re home,” Lena said.

“It’s good to see you,” Astra said.

“You’re okay? You’re not hurt?” Lena asked, already running her hands over Astra, making her own inspection.

“I am uninjured,” Astra said.

“And Kara? Is she okay?” Lena asked.

“I honestly do not know. I went to her, but the President demanded her attention and she sent me away.”
“I’m sorry,” Lena said. “Is there anything we can do?”

“Can we sit? I am very tired,” Astra said.

“Of course,” Lena said. She led Astra back into the office and they took a seat on the sofa. She sat down, and Astra sat down next to her, and wrapped her arms around Lena. Lena looked up at Astra, and her eyes went wide in surprise as she saw Astra had her eyes closed, and tears were rolling down her cheeks.

“Love?” Lena asked.

“A woman died out there today. A Havanian. She ran the flower shop. Her name was Bliix.”

“You knew her?”

Astra shook her head. “No. Not really. Only that she was kind to me, and that she loved flowers.”

“She put together the arrangements you brought me?”

Astra nodded. “I wanted to take you to meet her. She would have been so happy that you liked her flowers. But we were always so busy, and now…”

Lena slipped her arms around Astra, hugging her tightly. “I’m sorry,” she said. “I am so, so sorry.”

Diana floated high above National City, watching the skies and waiting with her shield in one hand and her sword in the other. She hoped, truly, that she would not have need of them, but the Green Lanterns were an unpredictable lot. John was generally the most reasonable, matter-of-fact one of the bunch. Hal and Kyle were good natured, but as prone to stubbornness as Kal and Bruce. Simon and Jessica she was less familiar with. Both were new to their power, both were inexperienced, and both had a habit of deferring to Hal or John. Guy was just an asshole, any way you looked at it.

She did not wish to do them any harm, but she would not allow them to interfere in the events unfolding within the City of Hope. Too much was at stake, and too much of the blood that had been spilled was on the League’s hands. They should have dealt with Cadmus long ago. Would have, but for political expediency. She would not make the same mistake again.

She spotted them, coming in fast, returning from where Kara’s digital servant had deposited them, and Diana moved to intercept. She saw the moment when John spotted her. Hal and Kyle a moment later. They shifted their course, and the others followed, until all of them came to a stop in front of her.

“Diana,” Hal said. “We’re going to need you to move out of the way.”

“No,” Diana said.

“Diana, we can’t let Supergirl execute Luthor and Lane, no matter what they did,” Hal said.

“You were not listening. Not a one of you. She promised a trial under Kryptonian Law. Kryptonian Law does not allow for the death penalty,” Diana said.

“You really think Blondie is gonna stick to that?” Guy said. “Luthor and Lane murdered their kids. The Kryptonians are going to kill them.”

“Guy, for the love of God, shut the fuck up,” John said. He turned to Diana. “You believe she’ll keep her word?”
“I have no doubt,” Diana said. “She is the leader of her people, the Head of the House of El, and a hero in the truest sense of the word. She has done more for the people of Earth in the last three months than the rest of us have done in the last three decades. She is a woman of honor, and more than that, she has no reason to lie. If she had wanted them dead, she would have killed them in the Genesis Chamber, and you would not have been able to stop her.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Guy said.

“Shut up, Guy!” Hal, John, and Kyle all said at once.

“She’s a little girl with no powers,” Guy said. “You talk about her like she’s the second coming or some shit.”

“She defeated Kal in a Kryptonian duel while her powers were spent and she had a concussion so severe I had to carry her from her hospital bed to the dueling chamber because she could barely stand under her own power. She faced him wearing nothing but silk dueling robes, without a weapon in her hand, and she prevailed. She faced you while armed with the full might of a Kryptonian war suit, with sunblade and sunshield in hand. If she had wanted to, she would have killed you before you realized you were in danger.

“That said, there is something else to consider. We are to blame for what happened down there today. We knew about Cadmus, and we ignored it. We allowed evil to fester, to grow, to become what we saw today. Our inaction led to this, to the murder of a generation of Kryptonian children. We cannot demand they stand aside because of some promise that justice will come, when we have had years to take action, and refused to do so.

“Go home. Leave this be. Sam Lane and Lillian Luthor will be justly tried, and justly sentenced. If Supergirl’s word is not enough for you, accept mine, accept Clark’s, accept Bruce’s and Victor’s.”

The seven of them floated there in the sky for several long moments, and Diana hoped that they would listen to reason, and by some miracle, they did.

“Lanterns, stand down,” Hal said.

“Oh, thank God,” Jessica said. “I did not want to get my ass kicked today.”

CatCo Special Broadcast of President Marsdin’s Emergency Address to the Nation

6:00 PM Pacific Standard Time, Monday, January 25, 2016

The scene faded up on President Marsdin sitting behind a heavy wooden desk. Behind her was a blue drape to which the Presidential Seal was affixed. Three glass vials set on her desk. One was filled with a red powder that seemed to glow. The second was filled with a green liquid that definitely glowed, and the third was filled with an ash-gray substance.

“My fellow Americans, my fellow citizens of Earth. I come to you tonight with a heavy heart. Many of you are no doubt aware of the violent conflict which occurred just a short time ago in National City. Right now, there is a great deal of confusion surrounding those events, and thanks to those politicians who would use a tragedy to advance their personal bigotry, more than a few outright lies.

“I am here this evening to clear the air.

“Today morning, while en route to National City, I received intelligence that the hate group and domestic terrorist organization known as Project Cadmus was planning on attacking my address in
the City of Hope. While the exact nature of the attacks planned was unclear, the DEO believed this represented our best chance to bring the leaders of Cadmus to justice, and to shut down its operation once and for all. I agreed, and the decision was made to turn what should have been a fairly routine public address into an ambush for Cadmus.

“Our first concern when making this decision was to do everything to insure public safety. Towards that end, a number of members of the City of Hope community who have been working with Kryptonian leaders as a sort of informal neighborhood watch for the City of Hope were contacted and agreed to stand in for an actual crowd. In addition, the Kryptonians assured us that, given the durability of Kryptonian construction, there was nothing that Cadmus could bring to bear which could endanger the residents inside the towers in the City of Hope. Once we were assured that we could carry this out as safely as possible, I gave the tentative go ahead to Director J’onzz.

“We received the first indication of just how low Cadmus had sunk a short time later.”

Marsdin reached out and picked up the vial full of glowing red powder. “This is a synthetic substance is called ‘Red Kryptonite’, or more commonly, ‘Red K’. It was first produced by accident while trying to manufacture Kryptonite, which is a mineral which occurs on Krypton. When exposed to Red K, Kryptonians will quickly develop a chemical imbalance in the brain which will result in violent, impulsive behavior.

“This afternoon, Cadmus released large quantities of Red K into the atmosphere. We believe their intention was to use Red K poisoning to drive the Kryptonians to acts of violence, and then arrive on the scene and kill them, using the incident to paint themselves as heroes and stir up anti-alien sentiment, while legitimizing their murder of any number of innocent people who would get caught in the crossfire.

“Fortunately for all of us, the Kryptonians have encountered Red K before, and already had measures in place to alert them to the substance’s presence and protect themselves from exposure.

“When it became clear what Cadmus had planned, the decision was made to stage a fight between Superman and Supergirl. Because they were confined to environment suits to prevent them from succumbing to Red K exposure, the superheros Troia and Cyborg took the places of Supergirl and Superman. An alien who resides in the City of Hope posed as Flamebird, and similarly staged an altercation with the Martian Manhunter.

“This deception allowed us to lure Cadmus in. However, Cadmus attacked on a scale we could not have imagined, sending some two hundred and forty soldiers who had been modified in the same way as Hank Henshaw, into the fight. The battle which followed resulted in a number of deaths on both sides. All of the cybernetically-enhanced Cadmus agents died in the fighting. They took with them seventy-three DEO agents and fourteen of the City of Hope volunteers. In addition, they left a number of DEO agents and City of Hope volunteers wounded, including DEO Field Commander Alex Danvers and Agent Maggie Sawyer.

“However, Cadmus had a second, far more insidious avenue of attack.” Marsdin sat down the vial of Red K and picked up the vial filled with the ash like substance. “These are microscopic robots called nanites. They are capable of entering the brain and taking control of the infected individual. A sort of high-tech hypnosis. Cadmus infected over forty people with these nanites and used those infected individuals to attack both the DEO and CatCo World Wide Media. Fortunately, due to the quick actions of DEO Agent Susan Vasquez, the Metahuman agent publicly known as Livewire, and a Metahuman who works at CatCo, only one person was hurt.

“Which finally brings me to the biggest tragedy of the day.
“While Supergirl, Superman, Flamebird and the other Kryptonians fought to protect and defend human and alien lives, Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane gained access to the restricted building on the Kryptonian Embassy grounds. A building which is, as some have rightly speculated, a Genesis Chamber. A building which housed fifteen unborn Kryptonian children.”

Marsdin picked up the green liquid. “This is the alien mineral Kryptonite. Normally, it’s a green crystal, but here, it’s suspended in solution. The mineral is toxic to Kryptonians. Lillian Luthor injected this substance into fifteen unborn children, killing them all.

“I want to repeat that. Today, the leader of the hate group and terrorist organization known as Cadmus murdered fifteen unborn children.

“I do not know when, or if, Supergirl, Superman, Flamebird or any of the other Kryptonians will address what has happened publicly. For now, we can only send them our deepest sympathies, and our most heartfelt regrets that someone could commit so vile and hateful an act.

“To those who are grieving tonight because you had loved ones among the DEO agents or the alien volunteers who fell defending the City of Hope, I can only say that there are not words deep enough or profound enough to express the gratitude we as a people, as a nation and as a planet feel for the sacrifice they made. What they and all of those who stood in defense of the City of Hope did today showed those who would traffic in fear and hatred that we will fight to our last breath to champion the cause of love, liberty and equality. That we will build a future founded on the ideal of hope, help and compassion for all.

“I leave you now to attend to the aftermath of what has happened, but I do so in the hope that someday soon, the sun will rise on a new world. One in which no alien need walk in fear of being attacked by those who hate them because they are different, and no human will look on our neighbors from beyond the stars with fear simply because they look or sound different from us. A world where we can look at each other and understand that we are all simply people of Earth, no matter which world our ancestors called home.

“Until that happy day, good night, and God bless.”

KPJT Channel 3 News Special Report

Leyna Nguyen Reporting Live from the Whitmore Hotel

“This is Leyna Nguyen coming to you live from the Whitmore Hotel with vocal Anti-Alien Senator Miranda Crane.

“Senator Crane, you sat with us here as we watched President Marsdin address the nation. Her comments focused on the terrorist attack on the alien population of City of Hope. What would you like to say in response to President Marsdin’s address?

“Thank you, Leyna, for having me here, and giving me the opportunity to respond to President Marsdin’s comments. And I will get to that in a moment. However I think it’s important to begin by making a clarification.

“I am not anti-alien. I don’t see myself that way, and my supporters don’t see me that way. What I am, and what my supporters are, is pro-human. I am, or at least I try very hard to be, a champion for human rights, for human dignity and for human achievement.

“If I am against anything, it is the treatment of humans as second-class citizens on our own world. As a woman of mixed race, half Black on my father’s side, Native American on my mother’s side, I am
all too familiar with the legacy of oppression that follows colonization. And make no mistake, we are being colonized.

“This so-called City of Hope is a perfect example of that. Aliens took land which was intended for redevelopment. Land which should have become a monument to human achievement and industry. They paid a fraction of what it was worth, robbing the people of National City of billions of dollars in the value of the land alone. Then, instead of paying human companies and human workers to build their city, they used alien technology to rob those companies and people of the opportunity to put food on their tables. And they turned the land into a warren for their kind and an eyesore which mars the once beautiful skyline of National City.

“Of course, most people don’t call it by the fanciful and deceitful name Supergirl gave it. Instead, they call it what it is. Little Krypton. A slice of our world, stolen from us by aliens, ruled by aliens, and inhabited by aliens.

“Now, some will point out that there are humans living in Little Krypton, and that’s true. But look at the facts. Look at what Supergirl has done. She has given the most vulnerable among us gifts and bribes to win their truth and loyalty. Free food, free housing, free medicine.

“But the truth is, it’s not free. It’s not any freer than that first hit a drug dealer gives away to get you hooked. Oh, today it’s free, but tomorrow, when you come back needing another fix, you have to pay with loyalty, obedience and subservience to an alien who follows alien customs and alien beliefs and worships an alien god.

“Now, I’m here to respond to President Marsdin’s remarks, but those remarks are laughable. Magic dust that makes Kryptonians violent. Mind-control robots. A ‘staged’ fight between Supergirl and Superman.

“I have to wonder how gullible President Marsdin thinks we are. If this ‘Red K’ really exists, aren’t we lucky that the Kryptonians just happen to have a cure for it? Isn’t that a little convenient?

“The President spent a lot of time lot time talking about sacrifice, but really, ask yourself who sacrificed? Fourteen aliens are dead, but seventy-three human DEO agents died out there today. Seventy-three. Let that sink in. Seventy-three men and women, sworn law enforcement officers, won’t be going home to their friends and families tonight because they died defending aliens from an attack the aliens provoked.

“And they did provoke it. Either deliberately, by faking a fight between Supergirl and Superman, or, and I think this is far more likely, because Supergirl and Superman were literally fighting in the streets like common criminals. Which, let’s face it, they are. They came here illegally. They engage in acts of vigilante justice. They destroy property without repercussion or recompense. They hide under assumed names, most likely using forged documents.

“And it’s easy to believe that the fight was genuine, because it wouldn’t be the first time Supergirl and Superman have gotten into a fight. Of course, it’s not common knowledge, because President Marsdin went out of her way to cover it up, but the day after Supergirl fought and killed Hank Henshaw, she wasn’t resting because she overtaxed her powers. She was resting because the night before, Superman beat her so badly she nearly died.

“So, maybe the fight was staged, and maybe it wasn’t, but we’ll never be sure. Not as long as President Marsdin is in the White House to cover for the aliens she’s hitched her star to. Any more than we’ll ever know if these supposed Kryptonian children, which we’ve never heard so much as a whisper about before, ever actually existed.
“There’s also the matter of what wasn’t said. We know that seventy-three brave men and women died ‘defending’ Little Krypton. But what we haven’t heard is how many people, how many humans, were lured into a trap and summarily executed by Supergirl and her alien friends.

“President Marsdin seems eager to forget that Project Cadmus was a government program. A program her administration supported, funded and allowed to thrive in its very heart. That she is the one who exiled Cadmus, who forced good men and women who had dedicated their lives to protecting humanity from these invaders, these colonizers, to step outside of the law to ensure the safety of their homes and their loved ones.

“The men and women who died today were soldiers who followed General Lane into exile. Men and women who took an oath, who wore *our* uniform, and who up until a few weeks ago, up until an alien called Supergirl came along, we hailed as heroes.

“Do these men and women deserve to have their deaths at the hands of an alien criminal go uncounted and unmourned? Do they deserve to be branded bigots, traitors and terrorists because they refused to abandon their sworn duty to protect and defend this nation and its people just because the person sitting in the White House decided to kowtow to alien colonizers?

“I say no. I say this farce has gone on long enough. I say that this President who wastes the lives of our law enforcement officers to protect aliens from the consequences of their own actions has been in the White House long enough, and if Congress won’t do its duty and remove her, then I will take action.

“That is why, today, I am announcing my candidacy for the President of the United States.

“It is time that we take back our country. It is time we take back our planet. Earth is for humans, not aliens.”

Jeremiah sat at the bar in Hub City, staring at the TV in front of him, not quite aware of what was happening around him, because Alex was hurt. The very thing he had been afraid of ever since Clark first asked them to take Kara in. His baby girl was hurt because she was too close to Kara. That little Kryptonian bitch had gotten his baby girl hurt, and he didn’t even get a phone call. He had to find out from the news, like a total stranger.

“You okay there, friend?” someone asked.

Jeremiah turned towards the voice, and found himself looking at a tall, well-built man with curly hair. “Yeah,” he said. “Just a little worried. My daughter lives in National City.”

“Oh, man. I feel for you,” the man said. “My sister and I used to live in Metropolis. Moved because of all the aliens that idiot in the cape attracted. Too many people we knew got hurt because of his little boxing matches. Don’t figure his cousin is likely to be any safer to be around.”

“She’s not,” Jeremiah said. “If anything, she’s even more reckless.”

“Figures,” the man said. “Women, right?”

“I can’t disagree,” Jeremiah said. “I love my little girl, but she definitely runs with the wrong crowd.”

“I bet her mom is a real piece of work, too,” the man said.

“You’re not wrong.”
“It’s a shame that our cities aren’t safe for regular people anymore. Not bad enough all the stuff you normally got to worry about with a daughter. Now you’ve got to worry about alien grudge matches knocking over buildings and shit.”

“Yeah,” Jeremiah said. “I wish there was something I could do about it.”

“You know, if you really mean that, if you’re really interested in protecting your daughter from all of this, you should come have dinner with me and my sister.”

Jeremiah looked at the man for a moment, feeling a little suspicious. Wondering if he was a member of PHAN.

“Look, pal-”

“Hey, no. Dude, we’re not like those Cadmus nut jobs. We’re not out there blowing up buildings and shooting reporters. We’re just working for change. Real change. Change the laws. Stop these freaks from putting on capes and prancing around like gods. Make them answer for the people they hurt, you know.

“That sounds like a good idea… I’m sorry, I didn’t catch your name.”

“Oh, sorry. I haven’t introduced myself. I’m Otis. Otis Graves.”

“Jeremiah Dawson.”

“Nice to meet you, Jeremiah,” Otis said.

“Likewise.”

Eliza had just gotten Carter to bed when the doorbell sounded. She had to bite her lip to keep from swearing as she rushed to the door, hoping to keep whoever it was from ringing the bell again. A lot of the annoyance disappeared when she saw J’onn on the monitor. She opened the door.

“Sorry,” J’onn said sheepishly. “I didn’t realize he’d be asleep.”

“Are you reading my mind, J’onn?” Eliza asked.

“Not intentionally, but you were broadcasting a bit,” he said. “Can I come in?”

“Of course,” Eliza said, stepping back to make room for him.

“I hope wings are okay,” J’onn said. “It’s really the only take out Darla’s makes that’s edible, and I was too tired to go anywhere else.”

“Wings are fine. Just please tell me you brought Garlic Parmesan,” Eliza said.

“Of course,” J’onn said.

“You are an angel,” Eliza said. “Come on. Let’s go to the dining room. If we get anything on Cat’s furniture, I think she’ll get up out of the Regeneration Matrix to yell at us.”

“I would not put it past her.”

Eliza led them into the dining room, and asked Kleenex to fetch them beers, napkins and plates. She sat down, and as soon as Kleenex had set the table, J’onn began plating up the food.
“I admit, I’m a little surprised to see you. I figured with everything going on, you’d be living at the DEO for the next few days,” Eliza said.

“I probably would be, but the command center’s been repaired, I’ve written seventy-three condolence letters, made arrangements for a memorial ceremony for the dead agents on Friday, filed my incident report, and signed off on adding nanites to the things the security scanner looks for. I can’t think of a single other thing I can do right now that will do anyone a damn bit of good.”

Eliza reached over and took his hand in hers. “It’s okay to need a few moments away. Especially after a day like today.”

“I’m sorry,” he said with a shake of his head. “I didn’t come here to saddle you with my problems.”

“You came because you needed a friend,” Eliza said. “I imagine that’s something a lot of us are going to need over the next few months.”

“I’m afraid you’re more right than any of us realize,” J’onn said. “With everything that’s happened over the last few months, I hardly know which way is up anymore.”

“It’s definitely been exciting,” Eliza said. “I’m trying to figure out where it all fell apart, and I just can’t pin it down.”

“I don’t know,” J’onn said. “Part of me wants to say the wheels came off the day Kara walked into that studio and yelled at Leslie, and part of me thinks it’s the day she put on that suit. But I know it goes back further than that. I can’t help but think everything would be different if I’d just double-checked to make sure Jeremiah and Henshaw were actually dead.”

“J’onn, none of this is on you,” Eliza said. “Just like none of this is on Kara. All either of you have done is try to make the world a better place. The problem is, there are a lot of really evil people out there who like the world the way it is.”

“I just can’t help but feel like I’ve failed. I hurt Kara, and I wasn’t able to protect her, I wasn’t able to protect my agents, I wasn’t able to protect Alex or Maggie or the children.”

“God, you’re as bad as Kara,” Eliza said. “I swear, neither of you have ever seen a problem you didn’t feel personally responsible for. But you have got to let this go, or it will destroy you.”

“I don’t know how to do that,” J’onn said. “On my world, I was a Manhunter. The closest thing you have to that would be something like a Texas Ranger or a US Marshal. There wasn’t a lot of crime. When you can feel each other’s pain, the world works differently. It has to. Most crime was the result of mental illness of some sort. An inability to feel empathy and community with those around you. That was why my father was so angry with me. He believed the solution to crime was to heal the individual before they broke the law. To ensure that they were a part of the community, that they were loved and cared for, and received the care they needed. I look at what happened out there today, and I think maybe he was right. Maybe, if we had been more concerned with building a community with humans and aliens instead of just locking away troublemakers, then people like Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane might not have found so many people willing to follow them into a war of hatred and fear.”

“Isn’t that what Kara’s been trying to do?” Eliza asked.

“Yes, but Kara’s only been out there a few months. Some of us have been out there for a decade, some of us longer than that. And what have we done? Kara was right. The Justice League or the Titans get together and beat up Menagerie Man and pat themselves on the back, but we haven’t
made the world better. We’ve just made our enemies smarter.”

“So, what are you going to do about it?” Eliza asked. “If you really believe what you’ve been doing isn’t making things better, what are you going to do differently?”

“I don’t know,” J’onn said. “But I don’t think I can stay at the DEO. I think I need to find a way to do what my father would have wanted. To build a community that includes humans and aliens. That unites us, instead of tearing us apart.”

“Okay.”

“That’s it? Just okay? You’re not going to try to talk me out of it?”

“No, I’m not,” Eliza said. “Because I think you’re right. I think we have to find a way to show people they don’t have to be afraid of aliens, or this is just going to happen all over again. I don’t know if Kara is going to be able to do that for a while, and I honestly can’t think of anyone better to take her place. You are a good man, J’onzz, and I think you can make a real difference in the world.

“But that’s for tomorrow. Right now, I think we should eat. Then, I think we should get some sleep. The world, and all of its problems, will still be there in the morning.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehhth

City of Hope
“Kara?”

She turned around, a little surprised that she hadn’t heard Carter approaching.

“Hey, kiddo,” she said, trying to put feeling into her voice. It didn’t work at. Her words came out hollow and flat.

“When did you get home?” he asked.

She patted the chaise lounge next to her and lifted the weighted blanket, so he could crawl under it with her.

“I’ve been out here since about 1:00 AM,” she said she said as he sat down next to her. “Okay if I put my arm around you?”

“Yeah,” he said. “Why didn’t you come inside?”

“I can’t right now,” she said as she covered him with the blanket. She wrapped her arm around him and held him close. “I’m afraid.”

“Of what?” Carter asked.

“Of what’s going to happened when I stop being like this,” she said.

“What do you mean?”

“You know how, sometimes, you just feel too much. How it overwhelms you, and you just want to stop feeling anything at all?”

“Yeah,” Carter said. “I feel like that a lot when I’m at my dad’s.”

“I used to feel like that a lot too,” she said. “I can hear everything. See everything. Smell everything. Sometimes, it was like I could feel everything too. Every emotion I was feeling, and everything everyone else was feeling. Like it was just all pressing down on me.”

“Is that what’s happening now?”

She shook her head. “No. I learned a trick a long time ago. You ever had your arm or your leg go numb?”
“Yeah.”

“I figured out how to make my emotions do that,” she said.

“Really?” Carter asked. “How?”

“It’s kind of hard to explain,” she said. “But you just take everything and you put it into a box, and you close the lid as tight as you can.”

“Can you teach me?”

“You don’t want to know this.”

“I do,” he said. “I don’t want to feel like this. Mom is hurt, and you’re not here, and Kiera…”

“I know, kiddo,” she said. “I know it hurts.”

“Then teach me how to turn it off,” Carter said.

“No,” she said.

“Why not?”

“You remember what happened when your leg fell asleep, and you finally got up and moved around?”

“It hurt. Like pins and needles.”

“How do you think it’s going to feel when I have to open the box?” she asked.

“Bad,” Carter said.

“Really bad,” she said. “I’m sorry I wasn’t the one to tell you about your mom.”

“Why didn’t you?”

“Because if I did, I wouldn’t be able to keep the lid on the box. And if I take the lid off, it’s going to hurt too much to be Supergirl, and right now, everyone needs me to be Supergirl.”

“But won’t it hurt more, the longer you leave it?”

“Yeah. It will.”

He put his arms around her and squeezed her as hard as he could.

“I don’t want you to hurt,” he said.

“I know, Carter,” she said. “Can you make me a promise?”

“Okay,” he said.

“Whatever happens, I want you to remember that I love you and your mother. That being here with you has been one of the happiest times of my life. Can you do that for me?”

“You sound like you’re going away,” Carter said.

“The next couple of days are going to be a very bad days,” Kara said. “I’m not sure what is going to
happen, but I promise, I’ll do whatever I have to do to keep you and your mom safe.”

“Do you have to fight more people?”

“I wish it were that easy,” she said. “You should go back inside. Get some sleep. Your mom is going to need you when she wakes up.”

“Will you be there?” Carter asked.

“I’ll try. I can’t make any promises, but I will try.”

“Okay. Kara?”

“Yes?”

“I love you.”

“I love you too, kiddo.”

Lucy stood in front of the blacked-out window, taking a moment to steady herself for what was about to happen.

“You okay?” Lois asked.

Lucy looked over at her. “Our father just murdered fourteen aliens, seventy-three of my co-workers, and fifteen children, including the daughter of a woman I’m pretty sure I’m in love with. I’m thinking no.”

Lois nodded her head. “You make a good point,” she said. “I know you’re not okay. Nobody is okay right now. I just… I don’t know how to ask you if you really want to talk to him.”

“I definitely don’t want to talk to him,” Lucy said, “but I feel like I should, because I don’t think we’ll ever get another chance.”

“You think Kara will kill him?” Lois asked.

“Would you blame her if she did?”

“No,” Lois said. “After what he did, I’m surprised she didn’t kill him on the spot.”

“I’m not sure why she didn’t,” Lucy said.

“You ready to do this?” Lois asked.

“No,” Lucy said as she reached up and touched the button next to the window. It shifted from solid black to crystal clear instantly. On the other side of the window, her dad was sitting on the bed, staring at the wall opposite him. He turned to look at them.

“Hey, General,” Lois said.

“What are you two doing here?” he asked.

“We wanted to ask if we could borrow the car,” Lois said. “There’s a Megadeth concert in Gotham this weekend.”

Sam glared. “Same old Lois. You can’t ever take anything seriously.”
“Well, the Pulitzers on my mantel might disagree with you,” Lois said, “but then, as I recall, you don’t think anything other than ordering drone strikes against innocent people attending a wedding is important.”

“I was trying to protect people,” he said. “Sometimes, innocent people get hurt when you’re fighting a war.”

“Is that the excuse you’re going to use at your trial to justify murdering fifteen children?” Lucy asked. “Because I’m pretty sure that isn’t going to fly.”

“Like it matters why I did it,” he said. “This trial is nothing but a way for them to put a pretty face on it when they kill me.”

“You cannot seriously think you’re the victim here,” Lucy said, not quite believing the words coming out of his mouth. “You poisoned their children. Can you even admit that what you did was wrong?”

“What I did was protect this planet,” he said. “Neither of you seem to realize that these Kryptonians are a threat to us.”

“They’re a threat?” Lucy asked. “They didn’t try to murder my friends. They didn’t kidnap people off the street and experiment on them. They didn’t put a bomb in the building I work in. They didn’t drop a concrete slab on me. They didn’t break every bone in my body multiple times.”

“Tycho was responsible for the DEO bombing,” he said. “I didn’t have anything to do with that.”

“No,” Lucy said. “Not a thing. Because you weren’t working with Tycho. And you didn’t recruit the woman who planted the bomb.”

“I never wanted you to get hurt,” he said.

“Yeah, well, we all know how that turned out,” Lucy said.

“I was trying to make the world safe for you. For both of you. Supergirl—”

“DON’T!” Lucy said, reaching up and smacking the window. “Don’t you fucking dare say a word against her. She has been nothing but honest and kind to me. She saved my life. She made me a part of her family. And *you* murdered her daughter. You tried to murder her, her friends, her family, and the woman she loves. Whatever happens to you, whatever she does to you, you deserve it. You are a fucking monster, and I am ashamed that your blood runs in my veins.”

She reached up and pressed the button to black out the window and cut the audio feed.

“Were you done?” Lucy asked Lois.

“You said it better than I ever could,” Lois said. “Come on. Let’s get out of here.”

“Do you wish for me to stay here with you while you speak to her?” Astra asked.

“No,” Lena said. “I think it’s best if I do this alone.”

“As you wish,” Astra said. “I will be at the end of the cell block if you have need of me.” She reached up, cradled Lena’s check in her hand, and kissed her softly. “Remember that I love you.”

“I love you too,” Lena said.
Astra turned and headed towards the end of the cell block to give Lena some privacy. Lena reached up and touched the button beside the window, and it became transparent. Lillian was sitting on the bed in the cell, her legs crossed, her back against the wall, and her eyes closed.

“Hello, Mother.”

Lillian opened her and turned to look at Lena. “Well, I wish I could say this was a surprise, but honestly, I expected you sooner.”

“I wasn’t sure if I should come at all.”

“What? Don’t want to gloat before they put the noose around my neck?” Lillian tilted her head, her face taking on a thoughtful expression. “You know, I wonder how they’ll do it. I suppose they might just rip my head off, or punch through my chest, but those both seem so messy. I think heat vision would be the easiest to clean up afterwards. Just sweep up the ashes.”

“I haven’t given it much thought, honestly.”

“No? You should. Sooner or later, they’ll get whatever it is they’re after, and then you’ll be the next one on the chopping block.”

“You know, the sad part is, I think you actually believe that,” Lena said.

“Why wouldn’t I? They destroyed my son’s life. Took my daughter from me. Destroyed my life. Ruined my reputation. Now they’re going to execute me.”

“It’s funny, but I seem to recall Lex doing a pretty good job of destroying his own life, and you doing the same.”

“Oh, Lena. Surely you’re not that naïve.”

“Are you going to sit there and tell me you didn’t have anything to do with shooting that missile at Supergirl, or ordering the hit on Maggie Sawyer, or the RPG attack on Darla’s, that you weren’t plotting with the Mayor to frame the Kryptonians for murder, that you weren’t behind the shooting at CatCo, or the aliens being kidnapped off the street, or the bombing of the DEO, or the torture of Non, or the delivery van bombing? Are you going to tell me you had nothing to do with kidnapping the girls Maxwell Lord was experimenting on? That you had nothing to do with the attack on Little Krypton, and you didn’t kill fifteen children?”

“No. I did all of that. Except the DEO bombing. That was all Simon.”

“Oh, well, if the DEO bombing was all Simon, that makes all the difference.”

“Sarcasm is beneath you, dear,” Lillian said.

“Apparently not,” Lena said. “But the family insanity is.”

“It’s not paranoia if they really are out to get you,” Lillian said. “And the Kryptonians are. They will take this planet, and strip it of everything of value, and leave it a scorched cloud of rubble, just like they did to their own world.”

“You really have no connection to reality at all, do you?” Lena asked. “I have spent every day for months working to save this world from ecological disaster. Two months, and we’re already well on the way to turning the tide on global warming. Give it another year or two, and we’ll have completely halted the ecological damage humanity has been doing for centuries. In a decade, we’ll
have reversed every major man-made ecological disaster in history. They’re giving us easy, safe access to space. They’re building a fast, safe transportation network. They’ve cured cancer, they’re testing cures for almost every major genetic disease known to man. They’re providing people with free food, free housing. What more could they possibly do to prove that they mean us no harm?”

“They could leave,” Lillian said.

Lena shook her head. “You’re insane,” she said. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “I thought you should know, I’m getting married. You’ll have to excuse me if I don’t invite you to the wedding, but you murdered a member of my fiancée’s family yesterday, so having you there would make things a little awkward.”

“You’re actually going to marry one of them?” Lillian asked.

“I am,” Lena said. “And I want you to face whatever sentence they hand down at your trial knowing that everything you care about, everything you love, will eventually belong to a Kryptonian. Because I have found the love and the family you never gave me.

“Goodbye, mother.”

“.rao, sokaofidh nahn w khuhp i ehrosh ni :divi .rao, sokaokypzrhiges w khuhp i raogrhsf”

She drifted in the sky some thirty-five thousand feet or so above National City right in the middle of a sub-tropical jet stream, letting the near-freezing wind buffet her as she repeated the mantra over and over again. Seeing Carter had the exact effect she feared. She could feel her control start to slip. Could feel the first taste of the pain that was waiting for her the moment she let the walls down. The moment she allowed herself to feel it.

The moment she stopped being the Survivor.

“You picked a hell of a place for a meeting,” Hal said.

She opened her eyes to see the Green Lantern floating in front of her.

“I wanted to be sure we wouldn’t be interrupted,” she said. “It will be hard for even my people to hear us here.”

“I was surprised to get your call after that stunt yesterday,” Hal said. “How did you pull that off, anyway? I thought transmats devices were generally limited to five light seconds or less unless you had an anchor at both ends.”

“Most transmat devices aren’t built with the kind of tech I have access to,” Kara said. “I need a favor.”

“A favor. Really?”

“Yes.”

“Last time you asked for a favor, it ended with me and the other Green Lanterns taking a swim in the photosphere of the sun.”

“Which for you is a minor inconvenience at worst,” she said. “I’ve worn a ring. I know what they’re capable of.”

“You’ve worn a ring?”
“Yes.”

“I’m pretty sure I would have heard about a Kryptonian being inducted into the Green Lantern Corps.”

“I never said it was a Green Ring,” she said.

“The Blue Ring that someone was using yesterday?” Hal asked.

“I need to send a message,” Kara said. “I don’t have time to do it any other way.”

“Can’t your friend with the Blue Ring do it for you?”

“If they could, I wouldn’t be asking you.”

“Who’s the message to?” Hal asked.

“Indigo-1.”

“Are you shitting me?”

“No.”

“Look… It’s Kara, right?”

“You can call me Supergirl,” she said.

“Right… Bruce mentioned you didn’t care much for the Corps.”

“It’s not that I dislike you. It’s that I don’t trust you.”

“Right. Okay. I don’t get that, but I guess it doesn’t really matter right now. But girl, take my advice. You do not want to get mixed up with Indigo-1. She is bad fucking news, and nine kinds of creepy.”

“Never the less, I will speak with her.”

“You don’t know what you’re getting yourself into, kid.”

“I’ve dealt with Indigo-1 before. I know exactly what I am getting myself into.”

“Fine,” Hal said. “But if this goes to shit, it’s on you.”

“Just open the portal. I’ll deal with the rest.”

Olivia watched as Kara entered the DEO command center and had to fight to keep from frowning. The girl still had the same flat expression on her face, and it worried her even more now than it had the day before. She wondered if it might be time to bring up the mental health issue again. Especially with Cat on the disabled list. Unfortunately, right now, there were other topics that needed attention.

“Hello, Supergirl,” Olivia said.

“President Marsdin,” Kara said, her voice sounding just as flat and detached as it had yesterday. “Thank you for agreeing to meet with me.”

“It’s a pleasure, as always,” Olivia said. “In fact, I was glad to get your message. It will give us a chance to discuss a couple of things I wanted to talk about.”
“I’m pressed for time at the moment, but if we keep in short, that shouldn’t be a problem,” Kara said. “Agent Vasquez, is conference room two free?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Vasquez said.

Kara gave Vasquez a small nod and gestured towards the stairs.

Olivia and her detail headed up the stairs, two of them in front of her and two behind. When they arrived at the conference room, the two leading agents did a quick sweep of the interior, then stepped back outside, letting Olivia and Kara enter before one of the agents closed the door.

“I’m glad to see your powers have returned,” Olivia said.

“Thank you,” Kara said. “I’m afraid this isn’t a social visit. I’m here in my capacity as the Head of the Kryptonian High Council.”

“I see,” Olivia said, and honestly, she had expected as much, both from the way the invitation had been worded to the formality with which Kara had greeted her. “What can I do for the Kryptonian government?”

“Nothing,” Kara said. “I am here as a courtesy to ask if your government would like to appoint an advocate for Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane.”

“I’m sorry. I don’t understand. An advocate for what?”

“Their trial,” Kara said. “As the Kryptonian Government does not currently have any sitting adjudicators, I will stand in that capacity. Lucy will stand as prosecutor.”

“Kara-”

“Since you have seized all of Lane and Luthor’s assets, they are unable to pay for their own defense, assuming they were able to find a lawyer who would take the case on such short notice. Kryptonian law makes no provision for a court-appointed advocate if the accused cannot afford one, but I know your people value legal representation and believe it is a necessary part of the judicial system. To that end, I am offering you the chance to appoint an advocate. I will provide whoever you appoint with a detailed primer on Kryptonian Law.”

“Kara, what trial?” Olivia asked.

“Sam Lane and Lillian Luthor will be tried for fifteen counts of murder this afternoon,” Kara said.

“This afternoon?” Olivia asked. “Kara, are you insane?”

“That would depend on what you mean by insane,” Kara said. “I don’t think it’s any secret at this point that my mental health is impaired. However, I thought the question of my mental fitness might come up, so I checked the legal definition, and by that standard, I am perfectly sane. I am very clearly able to distinguish between fantasy and reality, I am not subject to uncontrollable impulsive behavior, and I am perfectly capable of conducting my own affairs. So, with that settled, does your government wish to appoint an advocate or not?”

“Kara, the Kryptonian Government *barely* exists on paper. Most people don’t know it exists at all. Are you seriously standing there talking about holding a trial for people the day after they are arrested?”

“Yes,” Kara said with that same maddening detachment she’d had through the entire conversation.
“Whether most people know the Kryptonian Government exists or not is irrelevant. It does exist, and it has been formally recognized by the United States. You yourself granted us an Embassy, with all the rights and privileges thereof. And as I mentioned, I am pressed for time. I would appreciate an answer.”

Olivia stared at her for a moment before finally shaking her head.

“Wait here,” she said. She walked out of the conference room and to the balcony which overlooked the command center.

“Director, Agent Vasquez, up here. Now,” she said. She waited as both of them climbed the stairs. Once they reached her, she turned and walked back into the conference room. J’onn closed the door behind them.

“I’m not quite sure how this ‘adult supervision’ business works, but Supergirl just informed me of her intention to hold a trial for Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane this afternoon.”

Vasquez looked at Kara. “That true, ma’am?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

Vasquez turned back to Olivia. “Good.”

“Good? That’s all you have to say?”

“No,” Vasquez said. “I’d also like to add, ‘It’s about damn time,’ and ‘hang the bastards’.”

Olivia turned to J’onn. “Please talk some sense into her.”

“Madam President, Sam Lane and Lillian Luthor murdered seventy-three of my agents, fifteen Kryptonian children, God only knows how many aliens, and attempted to murder the entire alien population of National City, which would effectively qualify as a genocide of several species. If you expect me to speak in in their defense, I question your intelligence.”

“I’m not asking you to defend them, but they have to be arrested, charged and tried in a court of law.”

“Then there is no problem,” J’onn said. “Because they were arrested by Kryptonians on Kryptonian Embassy grounds. They have been charged by Kryptonians with violation of Kryptonian law, they will be tried by Kryptonians, in a Kryptonian court, and if they are convicted, they will be sentenced in accordance with Kryptonian law.”

“J’onn, think about how this will look. We cannot allow Supergirl to become judge, jury and executioner.”

“Kryptonian law does not allow for the death penalty,” Kara said.

“Well, thank God for small favors,” Olivia said. “Kara, I understand that you and your people are hurting, but you have to turn them over to the DEO.”

“I believe you will find that I don’t,” Kara said. “They murdered fifteen Kryptonian children while standing on Embassy grounds. Grounds governed by Kryptonian law. Under international law, and by the terms of the Embassy agreement which you personally signed, we have every right to prosecute them under our laws.”
“I’m not arguing about the letter of the law, Kara. I’m asking you to consider public perception and public opinion. You are playing into their hands. Giving them exactly what they want. You’re going to turn them into martyrs for the anti-alien groups cause.”

“I suspect you’re right,” Kara said. “However, I no longer care.”

“Kara, please, do not do this. If you turn them over, I can promise you a chance to speak at their trial. A chance to make a sentencing recommendation.”

“President Marsdin, I told you when I arrived, I am pressed for time. You have wasted what little I have under the mistaken impression that this is a negotiation. It is not. I came here as a courtesy, to both inform you of the trial, and to offer you the opportunity to appoint an advocate. You have declined to do so, and that is your choice. The trial will begin at 4:00 PM Pacific Standard Time today. You may send observers if you wish, or attend yourself, but neither you nor your guards will be allowed weapons within the City of Hope, or on Embassy grounds. Nimda can provide you with a copy of the rules for official observers. Any attempt to interfere with the trial will be met with force. Any attempt to remove Lillian Luthor or Sam Lane from Embassy grounds will be considered an act of war, and we will respond accordingly. Is that clear?”

“Very,” Olivia said.

“Good day, President Marsdin. Hopefully, the next time we meet, it will be under more cordial circumstances,” Kara said before walking out of the conference room. Olivia watched her go through the window of the room, following her until she disappeared through the flight deck doors.

“Well, this is a complete fucking disaster,” Olivia said. She turned around to face J’onn and Vasquez. “I can’t believe that you two didn’t try to talk her down.”

“With respect, ma’am, get fucked,” Susan said, then she turned and walked out of the room.

“Has everyone here lost their mind?” Olivia asked.

“No, but Kara lost her daughter, and damn near lost her sister, her two best friends, and the woman she loves yesterday, so if I were you, I would tread very, very carefully,” J’onn said before he followed Susan from the room.

Maggie slowly drifted up towards consciousness. The more awake she got, the more unhappy about it she felt. The bed felt too hard, the sheets felt too slick, the room was too bright, and worst of all, she was in bed alone. All of which sucked.

After a few minutes, she heard someone moving around, which only made her more cranky. She couldn’t figure it out either. Alex was even less of a morning person than she was. Why the fuck was she up and around when she could be in bed, so Maggie could have something nice and warm to snuggle?

“Danvers, the alarm hasn’t gone off yet. Get back in this bed and turn the damn lights off.”

“I don’t think I’m the Danvers you want,” someone said.

Maggie opened her eyes and saw Eliza standing over her.

“Eliza?” she asked, suddenly very confused. She started to sit up, only to have a firm hand push her back down.
“You don’t want to do that,” Lucy said. “At least not until you’re wearing something other than a sheet.”

“What?” Maggie asked. She looked down and realized that she *was* only wearing a sheet. She looked around and didn’t recognize where she was, but she recognized what the room was. “Is this a hospital?”

“No, sweetie,” Eliza said. “You’re in the Medical Hall on the fifty-ninth floor of the Solarium.”

“How did I get here? And where is Alex?” Maggie asked.

“Alex is close by,” Eliza said. “She got a bit more banged up than you did, so she’s going to be in the Regeneration Matrix for a while longer.”

“What happened?” Maggie asked.

“What do you remember?” Lucy asked.

Maggie stopped and thought about it for a minute, and things quickly started coming back to her.

“There was a fight. A bad fight. Cadmus attacked Little Krypton and… I think… yeah. I got stabbed.”

“Yeah,” Lucy said. “Bastard got you in the back.”

“Shit,” Maggie said. “What happened after that?”

“Kara happened,” Lucy said. “She killed all of them.”


“That’s a damn good question, and one no one has an answer to,” Lucy said. “She had the Lanterns put up some kind of bubble with her and the Hero Killers inside. When it opened, her powers were blown, but there wasn’t anything left of the Hero Killers but half-melted metal skeletons.”

“Jesus Christ,” Maggie said. “What about Alex? What happened to her?”

“There’s a lot you need to know,” Eliza said. “Why don’t you get dressed first, and then we’ll talk.”

She looked up at the sound of the door opening to see Kal walk into the Embassy office she’d been using to prepare for the trial.

“Hey Kara,” Kal said as he sat down across from her.

“Kal,” she said. “What can I do for you?”

“I just finished speaking with President Marsdin,” he said.

She looked at him for a moment, bracing herself for the argument she expected to come. “What did she have to say?”

“She tried to convince me that turning Sam Lane and Lillian Luthor over to the DEO would be the right thing to do.”

“And what did you say?” she asked.
“I told her that you are the Head of my House and the leader of the Kryptonian people, and that gave you the right to make the decision. I also told her that I think you are making the right one.”

“Do you?”

“Yes,” Kal said.

“I’m honestly a little surprised to hear you say that.”

“They killed our children,” Kal said. “You’re right, you know. I don’t remember Krypton. I never lived that place and that culture. I don’t have the bone-deep understanding of what it means to be a Kryptonian the way you do. But you are my family. Kiera was my family. And those children were the future of our people. Sam and Lillian took that away from all of us.

“I know there will be other children. I know that we will rebuild our culture and our society. But the future that those children would have made, the Earth and the Krypton they would have created, is lost to us forever. We can never replace what we lost yesterday. We deserve justice for that. Our children deserve justice. I don’t think we’ll get it if we hand them over.”

“That’s a little more cynical than I expected from you,” she said.

“It’s experience,” Kal said. “I’ve seen it, time and again. Criminal after criminal walking away from the courts scot-free. I hate it every time it happens. I try to work with the system, and as best I can, work within the system, but sometimes I understand why Bruce does it the way he does. When you’ve watched people cheat the system for so long, the temptation to take the law into your own hands can be enormous.

“The thing is, this time, the rules are on our side. They committed crimes on Embassy grounds. International law dictates that the guest country has the right to prosecute anyone who commits crimes on Embassy grounds under the guest country’s laws. If they hadn’t committed murder on Embassy grounds, I would be arguing that we should turn them over. But they did, and we have every right to try them ourselves. Legally and morally, we’re in the right here.

“But more than that, I trust you,” Kal said.

“You do?”

“Yes,” he said. “I know it’s a little late coming, but you could have killed them in the Genesis Chamber. Once you transmatted the Lanterns away, there was no one in the chamber who would have stopped you.”

“Bruce might have tried,” she said.

“No,” Kal said. “Bruce would never kill someone, but there are circumstances under which he is more than willing to look the other way. And he really does not like people who hurt children. So, you could have killed them. I suspect if you wanted to, you could have killed them before you got rid of the Lanterns. But you didn’t. You even stopped one of our own people from attacking them. So, I trust you to do what’s right.”

“Thank you, Kal,” she said. “I have to get back to work. I’ll see you at the trial.”

“Okay,” he said. “See you then.”

She watched him go, waiting until the door closed before him before she shook her head. It was almost funny how everyone kept assuming that killing them was the worst thing she could do to Sam
Maggie sat in the Medical Hall, staring at the Regeneration Matrix that was busy rebuilding the speech centers of Alex’s brain and trying to process everything that Eliza and Lucy had just told her, and get her head around just how radically her life had changed in the course of an afternoon.

She wasn’t human anymore, which felt like it should be a big deal, but the biggest surprise of all was just how much she didn’t care. Part of that was the fact that she’d been living with the powers of a Kryptonian for weeks. Part of that was the fact that she’d always felt more at home with the aliens she’d interacted with than the humans. At least until Alex had come along. And well, that was the final part of the reason she didn’t care. Alex wasn’t human anymore either, and if this was the only way for Alex to get better, then she would take it and call herself lucky. Like she’d said to Alex, she was ride or die.

What did scare her though was what Eliza had told her about Alex’s condition. The words ‘traumatic brain injury’ had been used. Maggie didn’t pretend to be an expert, but she’d seen the strain a debilitating injury could put on even the most solid of relationships.

She loved Alex, she really did. She was all in. But their relationship was still new, and they hadn’t had much of a chance to figure it out. Alex was still trying to figure out what it meant to be a lesbian, and to be in a relationship that actually mattered to her, and Maggie was trying to figure out how to be in a relationship with Alex. They hadn’t had time to start building a life together, they’d been too busy fighting a war, and Maggie was terrified that this was going to destroy them.

The practical, day-to-day details were easy enough. Alex had been injured in the line of duty, so she’d get as much medical leave as she needed. Maggie was listed as Alex’s domestic partner, so she should be able to take a Family Medical Leave of Absence, but if that was a bust, she could just straight up quit the DEO. It’s not like she would be hurting for money. Kara had made it perfectly clear that she considered her fortune family money, and that Maggie was part of the family. Maggie hated the idea of taking it, of not paying her own way, but for Alex, she could swallow her pride and live on Kara’s dime for as long as it took for Alex to get well again.

Of course, that was going to be the first source of tension. Alex not being able to work. Not being able to go out in the field. Not being able to help Kara. Alex did not do helpless well at all, and she was even worse at sitting idle.

This was going to be hard. This was going to be so, so hard. There was no doubt in her mind that Alex was worth it. She just hoped Alex felt the same way about her.

“Thank you for coming, Mr. Stewart,” Olivia said.

“Call me John, please,” John said.

“If you’ll call me Olivia.”

“It would be an honor. How can I help?”

“I take it you are familiar with the situation developing in the City of Hope?”

“You mean the trial of Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane?” John asked.

“I mean the political shitstorm that is going to follow the trial.”
“How bad do you expect it to be?”

“Bad,” Olivia said. “The public perception of the situation in National City is already that the whole city is a war zone. If it gets out that the Kryptonians have started holding trials for humans, it could turn public opinion against the Alien Amnesty act. If that happens, a year from now, Miranda Crane could be in the Oval Office.”

“Which would be a complete disaster for everyone involved,” John said.

“That’s an understatement on a level you cannot begin to understand.”

“How do I feel like I’m missing something important?”

“Because there are details of the situation with Supergirl of which you are unaware. Details I can’t disclose.”

“I see. Maybe you could tell me what you want me to do?”

“Talk to Supergirl. Please. I’ve tried talking to the other members of the Justice League, but Superman is the only one that would agree to meet with me, and he took his cousin’s side. Which, given his proximity to the situation, is hardly surprising.”

“We tried talking to her at the time we captured them,” John said. “It did not go well.”

“What happened?”

“She transmatted us into the photosphere of the sun.”

“She tried to kill you?”

“No,” he said. “It was obvious from the battle she was well versed in the rings’ capabilities. I suspect it was more of a calculated ‘fuck you’ directed at Gardner’s attempt to claim jurisdiction in the matter.”

“Having met Gardner, I can’t say I blame her, but if Gardner was the one who pissed her off, maybe she’d be more willing to listen to reason if you went alone.”

“She spoke with Hal Jordan this morning. Among other things, she agreed to let one of the Lanterns speak to the court. Jordan and Rayner both agree that I should be the one who speaks, so I’ll be petitioning the court to turn Luthor and Lane over to the Green Lantern Corps so that we can surrender them to federal authorities. I’ll be honest, I don’t expect to get anywhere with it.”

“There must be something we can do,” Olivia said.

“Were it anyone else, I would recommend the direct approach, but after what I saw her do yesterday, I’m not convinced we could take her with the six Lanterns we have on Earth, and since you granted the Kryptonians legal residence, the Corps would consider this an internal matter. Which means the only option I really see is to rescind the Embassy agreement and declare the Kryptonians personae non grata. It would be a political blow to you, but it might distance you enough from the Kryptonians to prevent you from getting hit by too much blowback and preserve the amnesty and your administration.”

“That’s not an option,” Olivia said.

“Why not?”
“That’s one of the things I can’t disclose. Just take it on faith that preserving our ability to work with the Kryptonians, and especially Supergirl, is vital to the safety of everyone.”

“Does the public know that the Kryptonians have Luthor and Lane?” John asked.

“Not yet,” Olivia said. “Honestly, this would all be a lot easier if she’d just killed them yesterday. Died resisting arrest would be a lot less messy.”

“I’ll pretend I didn’t hear you say that,” John said. “Will you be sending an observer to the trial?”

“I can’t. If I send an observer, it would be taken as an endorsement of the trial.”

“I think that’s a mistake,” John said. “If the public reaction is different then what you expect, and you don’t have an observer there, it could bite you in the ass.”

“And if it is what I expect, having one there could bite me in the ass.”

“Don’t you have someone whose presence would be deniable?”

“No one I can….” Olivia stopped as realized that she had someone who fit that description perfectly.

“Lady El,” Ursa said.

“Is it time?” she asked.

“Yes,” Ursa said. “Everyone is waiting.”

“Ursa, can I ask you a question?”

“Of course, my lady.”

“I don’t know our people nearly as well as I should. A mistake of my own making and one it’s too late to correct before the trial, but I need to know. Is justice going to be enough for them?”

“Would you blame them if it wasn’t?”

“No,” she said. “Given the horrible things I’ve done out of anger and grief and rage, no. I wouldn’t blame them at all.”

“It will be enough, my lady,” Ursa said. “Before you told us what Fendra had done, I think they might have tried to slaughter you along with the humans, but there is not a one of them who doesn’t know how much you loved that child. We saw you going in and out of the Genesis Chamber. We saw the pride and the joy you took when you showed the child to your family and to your intended, and we know what you were prepared to sacrifice for her when you thought it was the only way to protect her. We know the price your House paid yesterday. Your lover and your sisters are hurt. Your daughter dead. We know that you rebuffed the human leader’s demands to surrender Lane and Luthor. You have earned their trust, and they will accept the sentence you lay down.”

“Thank you,” she said as she stood up. “Let’s be done with this war, so we can begin to prepare for the next one.”

Nia walked into the court room, feeling more than a little nervous. It was probably a little ridiculous, since she spoke to the President on a regular basis, but being in the same room with Lena Luthor, Flamebird, The Martian Manhunter, two Green Lanterns, Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman,
Cyborg, Aquaman and Livewire was more than a little intimidating.

She headed over to the gallery and took the only open seat, which was between a woman in a suit that cost more than Nia’s car, and a tall, willowy alien with bluish skin, long black cornrows, and three identical tattoos of an odd symbol, one on her forehead, and one on each thigh. She also wore a chest piece and a ring, both of which bore the same symbol, and held a staff in her right hand. She glanced over at Nia as Nia took her seat and their eyes met.

The whole room vanished, and she saw the alien woman in a cage, a massive collar around her neck, screaming.

The vision faded almost as quickly as it had begun, and as Nia returned to the courtroom, she realized that the woman’s eyes were closed.

“Forget me,” she said. “I did not mean to cause you distress.”

“It’s okay,” Nia said.

The woman held up her hand. “It is the past. Many years ago. Do not let it concern you.”

“Okay,” Nia said. “I’m Nia Nal.”

“You may call me Indigo-1.”

Before Nia could respond one, of the doors opened. Nia looked over to see Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane being brought into the court room with their arms locked in shackles that covered up to the elbow and linked to a belt around their waists. Each was led to a small platform, and when they stepped up on it, a forcefield snapped on around the platform. The guards stepped back but remained close at hand.

Lucy Lane walked into the room. She wore a blue dress with a gold belt and Supergirl’s symbol on the chest. She stepped up to a podium and looked at her father with an expression of complete contempt. Her father returned the glare.

The door opened again, and a tall woman with short hair and cheeks Nia would kill for walked in dressed in a simple black suit with a Kryptonian Glyph on the upper right part of her chest. She was followed by Supergirl, who wore the same dress as Lucy Lane, but had an open-front brownish-gray robe over the top of it. The woman with the gorgeous cheeks took a position off to the side, while Supergirl stepped up to another podium.

“I am Kara of the House of El. I stand as Adjudicator for this trial,” Supergirl said, and Nia couldn’t help but notice how much flatter her voice sounded than yesterday. It was almost robotic.

“I am Lucy of the House of El. I stand as Prosecutor for this trial,” Lucy said.

“I am Ursa. I stand as Warden of the Court,” the woman with the cheekbones said.

“Warden, the Advocate’s stand is vacant. Were the accused given the chance to secure an advocate?” Supergirl asked in the same lifeless tone.

“They were, Adjudicator. They refused,” Ursa said.

Supergirl turned to the two prisoners. “Lillian Luthor. Samuel Lane. You stand accused of fifteen counts of murder, but you have not requested an Advocate. In the interests of continued harmony with the people of this world, and good relations with the American government, an offer was made
to allow them to appoint an Advocate for you. They declined. Because we still wish for that harmony, I have secured an Advocate for you. Kate Spencer, please stand.”

The woman in the expensive suit stood up.

“Ms. Spencer spent several years as a Prosecutor in the Starling City District Attorney’s Office and has been a Federal Prosecutor for the last five years. She has agreed to stand as your Advocate if you wish.”

“We do not recognize this court’s authority,” Lillian said.

“Recognize it or not, this is the court in which you stand accused,” Supergirl said. “Will you accept the Advocate?”

Lillian and Sam both stared at Supergirl without answering.

“This is your last chance. Will you accept the Advocate I have offered you?”

The two of them stood there in total silence.

“Let the record show that the accused refused to accept the Advocate provided by the House of El.”

“It is so noted,” Ursa said.

“Ms. Spencer, your service is not required. You may remain and observe, or you may leave.”

Spencer sat back down.

“At this time, the court will hear from John Stewart of the Green Lantern Corps.”

John stood up and stepped out of the gallery and onto a platform similar to the one the prisoners stood on.

“John Stewart of Earth and the Green Lantern Corps, you have asked for a chance to petition the court,” Supergirl said.

“I have,” John said.

“Speak freely and without fear,” Supergirl said.

“Your Honor, I have come to ask the court to surrender the accused to the Green Lantern Corps.”

“To what end?” Supergirl asked.

“So that we may remand them to the custody of the proper authorities so that they can face charges for their numerous crimes including murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, assault, terrorism and theft.”

“The accused stand for crimes against the Kryptonian people here today. Should we allow those to go unanswered?”

“They would face charges for those same crimes if you allow us to turn them over to the DEO,” John said.

“When?” Supergirl asked.
“What?” John asked.

“What would they answer for their crimes? When would their trial be? How soon would our murdered children have justice? Can you tell me that, John Stewart?”

“No,” he said.

“There is a recording which has been widely circulated of Lillian Luthor and a member of the government of National City plotting against the alien inhabitants of this city. Can you promise me that they have no other allies in your government?”

“No, I can’t,” John said.

“Then your petition is denied. We will keep them here, where we know they will face trial for the crimes of which they stand accused, and where their power and influence will not buy their way to freedom.”

“Your Honor-

“You are dismissed,” Supergirl said in the same flat, lifeless tone she’d used the entire time.

John stared at her for a moment, and Nia could see the debate going on behind his eyes, but when Ursa took a step towards him, he stepped down and returned to the gallery.

“Lucy of the House of El, tell us why the accused stand before us today,” Supergirl said.

“We are here because yesterday the accused entered the Genesis Chamber in the Kryptonian Embassy in /zrhgrhrahsmshahrrehth/ and injected a toxic solution containing the radioactive mineral commonly known as Kryptonite into the nutrient feed lines of fifteen active birthing matrixes, resulting in the deaths of the occupants.”

“What evidence do you have of these crimes?” Supergirl asked.

“We have the security video from the Genesis Chamber,” Lucy said. “We ask to play it at this time.”

“Proceed.”

The lights in the courtroom dimmed, and the far wall filled with the feed from a security camera. Nia watched as two figures in green armor and a woman with blue skin and three red crystals in her forehead appeared in frame. From there, events went quickly. The three of them broke into the Genesis Chamber. There wasn’t any doubt it was Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane in the suits either. They opened their helmets inside the Chamber, and Nia could hear Lillian give the order to kill the children. She glanced over at Supergirl for a moment when she realized that one of the children was her daughter, but Supergirl just stood there, a disinterested look on her face. Nia turned back to watch the rest of the video. It ended with Lane and Luthor being dragged out of the chamber and the lights came back up.

“As you can see, the evidence is clear,” Lucy said.

“The evidence shows three intruders in the Genesis Chamber, and three hands carrying out the murders, but only two stand before the court. Why is the Coluan not here to answer for her actions?” Supergirl asked, but Nia had a feeling the question was one she already knew the answer to.

“When the Coluan known as Brainiac-8 and as Indigo was examined, it was found that malicious code had been introduced into her nanotech matrix which forced her to obey any command given to
her by Lillian Luthor, Sam Lane or Maxwell Lord. As a result, under law, she is not responsible for her actions. The code has been purged from her matrix, and she has been imprisoned in a stasis cell for her prior crimes,” Lucy said.

“Very well,” Supergirl said before turning to the prisoners. “Do either of you wish to speak in your own defense?”

“We don’t need a defense,” Lillian said. “You came here uninvited, unwanted and unwelcome. You seduced and destroyed our children, corrupted our leaders, stole everything we worked for. You’re invaders. You’re a plague. We acted to defend ourselves, our children, and our world from you.”

Supergirl stood there, staring at Lillian with as much interest as you would expect from someone watching paint dry. She turned to the other prisoner when Lillian didn’t say anything else.

“Sam Lane, do you wish to speak?”

“I do not recognize the authority of this court,” he said.

Supergirl turned to Lucy. “Do you wish to respond?”

“I would like to submit the agreement which gives the Kryptonian government an Embassy here in National City and granting the Kryptonian government authority to prosecute crimes committed within the Embassy. A map showing the location of the Genesis Chamber as clearly being within the bounds of the Embassy. A copy of the Fourth Geneva Convention with protects civilians and non-combatants in times of war and armed conflict. A copy of the Third Geneva Convention with defines who is and is not a lawful combatant in an armed conflict. A copy of the Chemical Weapons Convention which prohibits the use of chemical weapons against non-combatants. And copies of arrest warrants for both Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane for acts of violence and terrorism.

“These documents will establish clearly that this court does have the authority and jurisdiction to prosecute the accused, that they are not legal combatants in a recognized armed conflict, that the nature and target of the specific acts for which they are charged constitute war crimes under international law, and that the accused are wanted criminals and terrorists, so are not protected from prosecution as prisoners of war,” Lucy said.

“Anything further?” Supergirl asked.

“No,” Lucy said.

Supergirl turned back to the prisoners. “Anything further?”

Both of them just stared back in stony silence.

“Very well. After consideration of all evidence, this court finds the accused guilty on all charges,” Supergirl said. “Do the accused have anything to say before sentence is pronounced?”

“You think you’ve won, but you’re wrong,” Lillian said. “When you kill us, you’ll turn us into martyrs. The people will finally see you for the threat you are, and they will fight back.”

For the first time since she entered the courtroom, Supergirl’s face showed emotion. Nia really wished it hadn’t. The look she gave Lillian sent a chill down Nia’s spine, and for a moment, she was actually afraid Supergirl was going to kill Lillian on the spot, but then it faded away, replaced by the same neutral expression.

“That’s always been your problem, Lillian,” Supergirl said. “You lack imagination. You and
everyone else keep assuming that killing you is the worst thing I can do to you, but you keep forgetting I have seen every horrible thing that fifty-three universes and thirteen billion years could conjure up, so even if Kryptonian law allowed for the death penalty, I wouldn’t kill you. I don’t have enough mercy left in me for that.”

Supergirl turned towards the gallery. “Indigo-1.”

Indigo-1 stood up and stepped out of the gallery. She walked over to the prisoners as her staff began to glow, and she shone a beam of indigo light on both of their faces. Lillian screamed and dropped to her knees, tears welling up and spilling down her face. Lane stumbled back against the forcefield surrounding him, shaking his head until he pitched forward and vomited.

The blue light faded and Indigo-1 turned to Supergirl. “It is as you said. The terms of the bargain are met. The tribe will take them.”

“The government of Krypton thanks you,” Supergirl said to Indigo-1 before looking at the prisoners.

“Lillian Luthor. Sam Lane. You are hereby sentenced to permanent exile from this star system. You will be remanded to the custody of the Indigo tribe, where you will spend the rest of your lives in service. You have thus far lived lives free of compassion, mercy, empathy or guilt, but from this day forward, you will know nothing but those things. You will be prisoners of your ring, which will strip you of all other emotions. You will be slaves to the needs of those you encounter. You will help everyone you meet and be champions of the helpless and the downtrodden across the universe. You will give your time, your sweat, your pain and your lives for the very aliens you so deeply despise, and if you ever so much as set a toe back in this star system, your rings will instantly strike you dead.

“So it is spoken. So it is done.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

..rao, sokaofidh nahn w khuhp i ehrsh ni :divi
Rao, make my journey light.

..rao, sokaokypzrhiges w khuhp i raogrhys
Rao, build my strength.

zhrhygrahs im shahrrehth
City of Hope
Falling Slowly

Chapter Summary

Kara makes a few contingency plans. John Stewart and Nia tell Olivia what happened at the trial. Kara and Maggie talk. Nia tells Kara about the dream. Cat and Alex wake up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tuesday, January 26, 2016

She walked into the armory trailed by Kolex, who carried a two-meter-long cylinder of black metal. She walked past the shelves filled with sunblades and sunshields, the racks of rifles and pistols and the crates of other weapons until she reached a table at the back where a large featureless white case was sitting. She pressed her hand to the top, and the surface glowed briefly where she touched it, then the top split lengthwise down the case, and the upper half of the case folded down, half on each side of the bottom, revealing three small hexagonal caskets. One of them was the deep, angry red of fresh-spilled blood, the second was the bright, brilliant blue of the sky on a new day, and the last was a soft, warm violet that felt like safety and home.

She touched one finger to the inside of one of the lids, and traced a design into it, a glyph in a language almost as old as the universe itself, and the case began to expand, revealing other caskets. One the iron-willed green of pine needles breaking through midwinter snow, one was a sickly yellow that felt like the moment you realized someone you love was in mortal danger, one was the orange of a fruit hanging just out of reach as you starved to death, one as black as the grave, one as white as the sheets in a newborn’s crib, one a color on the edge of perception, like some hidden shame, and one a gentle, comforting indigo that felt like your sister’s arms around you as you cried for the world you’d lost.

She selected the indigo casket, and opened the top, then turned back to Kolex and the metal cylinder. She twisted open one end, and reached inside, removing the indigo ring and placing it in the casket. Then she took the staff out of the cylinder and whispered a language no one outside of the tribe was supposed to know. The staff shimmered and slowly transformed into a power battery, taking on the standard shape. She added it to the indigo casket as well, then closed it. She retraced the same glyph on the inside of the case lid, and in shrunk again, until only the red, the blue and the violet caskets were showing.

She closed the case.

“Kolex, recycle the cylinder,” she said.

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

“Nimda,” she said.

“Yes, Lady Kara?” Nimda asked.

“Do we have sufficient resources for project shadow knife?” she asked.
“We lack sufficient Nth metal,” Nimda said.

“How short are we?” she asked.

“Five hundred and thirty kilograms,” Nimda said.

“Is there a supply on Earth that large that we could acquire easily?” she asked.

“There is a crashed Xudarian destroyer four hundred miles southwest of Atlantis,” Nimda said. “I located it during the oceanic survey for the aquatic reclamation project. Schematics on record for that class indicate nineteen thousand tons of Nth metal used in the construction. Allowing for in class fitting variance, we could be assured of sufficient material for thirteen Shadow Knife units.”

“How long to complete the first unit if we salvage that vessel?”

“At Priority Level 1, the first unit would be ready to launch within ten days,” Nimda said.

“Call Diana, ask her to ask Arthur for permission to salvage it. If he gives us permission, get started on it, and then begin work on three Shadow Knife units as soon as the salvage is complete. If he doesn’t give permission, call me,” she said.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

“Spin up the sensors on the Dragon’s Teeth platforms. I want every molecule of Kryptonite on the planet located and targeted for transmat recovery. Include all Kryptonite diodes. Also create a scrubber worm to crawl through all the databases worldwide and remove any and all data on Kryptonite, Kryptonite radiation, the manufacture of Synthetic Kryptonite, and the manufacture of solid-state Kryptonite radiation emitters. Call it the Homeland Protocol. Also, tag every piece of technology we’ve provided to the DEO or the US government for transmat retrieval under the name Repo Protocol.”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

“Fire up the seed stock platforms. Initiate Project Lifeboat. Initial run, thirty units.”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

“And Nimda, send me home,” she said.

“You’re telling me she destroyed three decades of my hard work to sentence them to community service?” Olivia asked.

“I wouldn’t put it quite that way,” John said.

“How would you put it, then?” Olivia asked.

“Olivia, I don’t think you quite understand just how… horrific the Indigo rings are. Abin Sur created the Indigo Latern rings for a lot of reasons, but the main one was to punish Iroque. The woman known as Indigo-1. She murdered his daughter. Brutally. She was one of the most violent killers in the universe. And that ring, it forced her to feel compassion, empathy, mercy and guilt. It will not let her feel anything else, and it will not let those emotions fade. Imagine that. Guilt that never fades, that never lessens, event for a moment. Then imagine the kind of things Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane have done. Imagine if they felt the guilt a good and decent person will feel for those sorts of things. And that’s just the beginning. Compassion, empathy, mercy. We consider them virtues, but they can
be horrors. Imagine walking across a dying world when you are unable to help, but not being able to shield yourself from your compassion and empathy. What she did to them, I wouldn’t wish on anyone.”

“It’s really that bad?” Olivia asked.

“It is,” John said. “The worst part was how cold she was about it.”

Nia nodded. “He’s right. It was terrifying. Supergirl never raised her voice, never showed any emotion except for one moment when I thought she was going to kill Lillian right there, but it was gone so quickly I almost wonder if I imagined it, just to take away from how scary it was that she was so blank. She didn’t even flinch when she watched the video of her daughter being murdered.”

“Ms. Nal is right,” John said. “I didn’t meet Supergirl until yesterday, so I’m not really sure what her baseline is. Before the battle, she was intense, focused. After the battle, when we were in the Genesis Chamber, she was different. Cold, detached. I saw a few guys like that in the Marines, and it was never, ever a good sign.”

“I’ve noticed the same,” Olivia said. “But I can’t imagine what she must be going through right now. Especially given how close she is to people who were hurt in the battle, on top of the death of her daughter.”

“I doubt she was in the best of mental health to begin with. Watching a planet die is hard enough when it isn’t your own. I couldn’t imagine what it would be like to watch your home world die,” John said.

“You’re right. She’s been exhibiting signs of PTSD pretty much since the day I met her. God knows how much worse all of this has made it.”

“That is not a comforting thought,” John said.

“It’s a terrifying though,” Olivia said. “Emotional instability in someone who can do the things she can do. She seemed to be in control before, but when I tried to talk to her about the consequences if she went through with the trial, she said she thought I was right about what might happen, she just didn’t care anymore.”

“That’s definitely a bad sign,” John said. “It might be time to call in the Corp.”

“I thought you said they wouldn’t help,” Olivia said.

“They wouldn’t help with an internal political matter,” John said. “A crazy woman who’s powerful enough to do what I saw her do yesterday is another matter entirely.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Olivia said, “but let’s hold that option in reserve.”

“Is there someone who can rein her in? Someone she would listen to?”

“There are several people. Two of them are currently in a coma having their brains rebuilt by a Kryptonian Regeneration Matrix, and the rest of them are just as unconcerned about consequences as she is,” Olivia said.

“Then I’m out of ideas as to how to address the situation,” John said.

Olivia looked over at Nia who was sitting on the hotel suite’s sofa watching the. “I don’t suppose you can give us any more insight into how this will play out?”
“Not really,” Nia said. “I can’t really do it at will. My mom says that I’ll learn with time.”

“Anything would be helpful,” Olivia said.

“I… um…”

“What is it?” Olivia asked.

“I’ve been having a dream. The same one, over and over again. It started a few days after the CatCo shooting.

“Tell us about it,” Olivia said.

“It’s always the same. I’m walking through an empty apartment. I hear crying coming from a room. I go into the room and there’s a crib there, but it’s empty. There’s a blanket in the crib. I think it’s gray, but when I pick it up, a layer of dust falls off and it’s a deep red color and feels like leather. I hear a dog barking and children laughing. I follow the sound out onto a rooftop. A boy and a girl are there playing with a white dog. The sky is a deep orangish red, and a woman is floating above the roof. She has long, dark hair, she’s wearing a mask, a black suit, and a black cape. The suit has a symbol on the chest. It’s the same diamond shape as Supergirl and Flamebird’s symbols, but this one just has a skull inside with its mouth open like it’s screaming. I walk towards her, but smoke starts to sting my eyes. I glance over the side of the roof and see the city burning around us.”

“You didn’t think to tell me about this yesterday?” Olivia asked.

“It didn’t seem urgent,” Nia said.

“A city on fire didn’t seem urgent?” Olivia asked.

“It’s hard to explain. The dreams about the CatCo shooting, the DEO bombing and the attack on the City of Hope felt urgent. They felt like they were about to happen. Like that moment when you see something bad about to happen but it’s too late to stop it. This dream feels different. It’s more like seeing dark clouds blowing in and knowing it’s going to rain later.”

“How much later?” Olivia asked.

“I don’t know,” Nia said. “I’ve only been having the dreams a couple of months. Before the CatCo shooting, the only thing my dreams had ever predicted was that my date was going to be a disaster, which is about as hard as predicting the sun will rise in the east, or that I’ll order onion rings with dinner.”

“Do you think the woman in the mask could be Supergirl?” John asked.

“No,” Nia said, and Olivia was a little surprised by the certainty in her voice.

“You sound awfully sure of that,” Olivia said.

“This woman didn’t look like any of the Kryptonians I’ve met,” Nia said.

“You said she was wearing a mask,” Olivia said.

“It was only covering the upper half of her face,” Nia said. “The hair, the build, the skin tone. Whoever it was in my dream, it’s not anyone I’ve seen.”

“Maybe we should talk to Superman. See if there are any Kryptonians we’re not aware of,” John said.
“Supergirl would be more likely to know of any stray Kryptonians,” Olivia said.

John frowned. “You know, there is something I don’t understand about all of this.”

“What’s that?” Olivia asked.

“According to the interview she gave, Supergirl has been on earth about twelve years. She was about thirteen years old, physically, when she arrived. Aside from a bit of low-key superheroing, she spent most of that time growing up and having a normal life. But she’s an amazing tactician at a level that can’t be learned from books or exercises. She moves around the battlefield like a force of nature. She seems to have better command of her powers than her cousin who’s had decades longer to learn. And in the two days I’ve known her, I’ve seen a battle-hardened General, three Amazon warriors, an alien princess, two of the most powerful sorcerers on the planet, a literal goddess, and all of Batman’s team defer to her leadership. Hal says she claims to have worn a Lantern ring, and you have hinted that she’s somehow critical to the safety of this world.”

“Don’t forget what she said to Lillian,” Nia said.

“What did she say?” Olivia asked.

John raised his hand, and an image of Kara appeared.

“That’s always been your problem Lillian,” Kara said. “You lack imagination. You and everyone else keeps assuming that killing you is the worst thing I can do to you, but you keep forgetting I have seen every horrible thing that fifty-three universes and thirteen billion years could conjure up, so even if Kryptonian law allowed for the death penalty, I wouldn’t kill you. I don’t have enough mercy left in me for that.”

The image faded, and John lowered his hand.

“That girl really is terrible at keeping secrets,” Olivia said. “The story she told the public leaves out a *lot*. She is probably the most experienced battlefield commander on the planet.”

“Time Travel?” John asked.

“Yes,” Olivia said.

“That’s why you don’t want to cut ties,” John said. “She knows about some threat coming down the pipe.”

“Something like that,” Olivia said.

“I don’t suppose you’ll share the nature of that threat?” John asked.

“Not at this time,” Olivia said.

“But you do know the nature of the threat?”

“I do.”

“And it’s not this Kryptonian?”

“It’s not,” Olivia said.

“Are you certain she’s on the level about what she’s telling you?” John asked.
“Her supporting evidence is compelling,” Olivia said.

“I see. Should we ask her about this mystery Kryptonian?”

“I honestly don’t know,” Olivia said. “I’m not sure she’d come if I called or be willing to see me if I went to her.”

“I could go,” Nia said.

“What?” Olivia asked.

“I’m probably the only one of us who hasn’t gotten on her bad side,” Nia said. “No offense. But I still have Nimda’s phone number. Nimda called and moved my appointment at the Medical Hall to tomorrow, but I kept the number in case I needed to reschedule. I could call Nimda and ask her to let Supergirl know that I’ve had another dream and ask if she could meet with me to discuss it.”

“That could work,” Olivia said.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” John asked. “It could put Ms. Nal at risk.”

“No, it won’t!” Nia said.

“I agree with Nia in this case,” Olivia said. “Supergirl may be unpredictable, volatile even, but her hostility has always been directed at deserving targets.”

“What if, after a human murdered her child, she has decided that the entire human race is a deserving target?” John asked.

“Then I don’t have anything to worry about,” Nia said. “I’m not human.”

Maggie looked up at the sound of the door opening, expecting to see Eliza, but Kara walked into the room. She was wearing a blue dress with a gold belt and the House of El Coat of Arms embossed on the front, but what really drew Maggie’s attention was her face and the blank expression she wore. Maggie stood up, took two steps forward, and pulled Kara into a hug, squeezing her as tightly as her new strength would let her.

“You look like hell,” Maggie said. She pulled back, gripping Kara’s shoulders, and waited for Kara to focus on her. “Are you okay?”

Kara gave a small shake of her head. “No,” she said.

Maggie let go of her and took her hand, leading Kara over to the seats. They both sat down.

“You don’t have to be,” Maggie said, taking Kara’s hand in her own. “It’s okay if you need to fall apart.”

“Not yet,” Kara said.

“Why not?” Maggie asked.

“Tomorrow. We have to send them into Rao’s light, tomorrow at sunrise.”

Maggie squeezed her hand. “You need to hold it together until then?” she asked.

“Yes,” Kara said, her face as hollow at the look in her eyes.
“Okay,” Maggie said. “I’ll be there with you. And after, I’ll stay with you while you let it out, okay?”

“Okay,” Kara said. “How are they?”

“Winn’s up,” Maggie said. “Nimda cleared all the people infected by the nanites. We traced it back to Noonan’s. Harper infected one of the waitresses there and gave her instructions to dose anyone wearing a DEO or CatCo badge. Kaldur’ahm took Winn up to his apartment.”

“Does he remember?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Maggie said.

“You should see if he wants M’gann to take the memory away,” she said.

“I’ll let him know it’s an option,” Maggie said.

“Good,” Kara said. “What about Cat and Alex?”

“Still in the Regeneration Matrixes,” Maggie said. “Another five hours, maybe.”

“Carter?”

“Sam has him right now,” Maggie said. “Eliza was with him most of the afternoon.”

Kara nodded.

“Thank you,” Maggie said.

“For what?” Kara asked.

“For not separating me and Alex.”

“Never,” Kara said.

Maggie wrapped an arm around Kara.

“I’m so tired,” Kara said.

“Why don’t you get some sleep?” Maggie asked.

“I-”

“Lady Kara,” Nimda said.

Kara closed her eyes, and for a moment Maggie was sure she was about to burst into tears.

“What do you need?” Kara asked, and the exhaustion in her voice broke Maggie’s heart.

“I have a message for you from Ms. Nal.”

“Can’t you handle it?” Kara asked.

“I’m sorry, but I believe you will want to hear this. Ms. Nal has had another dream.”

Nia followed the drone through the halls of the Kryptonian Embassy, feeling more than a little
nervous. It was getting late, almost 9:00 PM California time, so it felt closer to midnight to her, and the massive embassy was deserted. She wondered why Supergirl hadn’t been able to transmat her directly to where they were meeting, but a small part of her wondered if this was a little bit of political theater. A reminder of the Kryptonians’ power. That didn’t feel like a generous thought, but then, making her walk through a creepy abandoned building wasn’t the nicest thing to do.

The drone finally came to a stop at an ornate door which slid aside. Nia took a deep breath to steady herself and wondered what had possessed her to volunteer for this. This was a bad idea. Really bad. She should turn around and run away. Supergirl wasn’t someone to trifle with. Nia had seen all too clearly how the woman dealt with her enemies only a few hours earlier and doing something that might tick her off was pretty high on Nia’s list of things to avoid at all costs.

Except for some reason she couldn’t quite place, she didn’t believe Supergirl would ever hurt her. She had no idea where that surety came from, but she had it, so she stepped through the door into a huge office. The space was warm, full of earth tones, tan and terracotta and sand. Off to one side, there was a seating area composed of four curved couches which formed a circle. Supergirl sat on one of them, and to Nia’s surprise, she wasn’t alone. Maggie Sawyer sat next to her, and when Supergirl turned to look at her, it wasn’t hard to see why. She didn’t have that blank look on her face anymore. She looked fragile, like even a light breeze would shatter her into pieces.

Supergirl took a deep breath, and let it out slowly, and the fragile look faded. Nia really wished it hadn’t, because the blank look from earlier replaced it. It was as if Supergirl was exhaling all the life in her.

“Nia,” Supergirl said, gesturing to the sofa across from her. “Please come in.”

Nia walked over to the seating area where Supergirl and Sawyer sat and took a seat across from them.

“Thank you for seeing me,” she said.

“You saved thousands, if not tens of thousands of lives yesterday,” Supergirl said. “If anyone has earned the right to ask for a bit of my time, it’s you. And if you’ve had another dream, it would be foolish not to hear what you have to say.”

“I… um… I’ve actually been having this dream for a while. Over and over again. It’s always the same. But it started right after the CatCo shooting. I didn’t say anything yesterday because… Well, it’s hard to explain, but the dreams have a sense of time. The dream I told you about yesterday I only had the night before, but it felt urgent. The same way the dreams I had about CatCo shooting and the DEO bombing did.”

“Wait, you knew about those?” Sawyer asked.

Nia could hear anger in her tone and didn’t blame her one bit. She looked away, not able to bare the accusation in Sawyer’s eyes. “I wasn’t sure if the CatCo dream was a prophecy or not. I’d never had a dream predict the future before. At least, not anything that wasn’t predictable enough that I could have guessed what would happen anyway. And the dreams deal a lot in symbols. I didn’t know National City or CatCo Plaza well enough to make the connection to what I saw in my dream. I knew something bad was going to happen but didn’t know where or to whom. With the DEO bombing, I was afraid. I didn’t know how to warn anyone, or if anyone would believe me when I said I could see the future. I was afraid they’d think I was crazy, or that I was tied to Cadmus and I’d be arrested, and people like me don’t tend to do well in the legal system.”

“People like you?” Sawyer asked in a tone that made Nia hear the ‘rich little white girl’ that Sawyer
didn’t say out loud.

Nia looked up, ready to snap at her before she stopped herself. Sawyer didn’t know her. As far as Sawyer knew, she was exactly that, just a rich white girl sitting here in an expensive suit, carrying a designer handbag, and having lunch with the President a few days a week. She thought about how she must look, and how Sawyer would view her statement, and thought about what it would be like for Sawyer as an out lesbian Latina in law enforcement and could understand the bitterness she heard there.

Nia wasn’t really in the closet, but she knew she passed. She’d been lucky enough to start her transition before she’d started puberty, so she hadn’t been clocked in a long time, but that didn’t mean she didn’t have to put up with a ration of shit because of who she was. Normally, she’d just tell Sawyer what the deal was, and move on, but things were already tense, and just because she knew Supergirl was fine with her, didn’t mean Sawyer would be, and she really didn’t want to get into a pissing match if Sawyer *wasn’t* good with it.

Supergirl settled the debate though.

“She means people like your brother,” Supergirl said.

“Oh,” Sawyer said, and the anger seemed vanish. “Shit. Sorry. I get why you’d be scared. I just… A lot of people died that night, and I got a front row seat for watching my friend get crushed.”

“I’m sorry,” Nia said. “I felt terrible after it happened, but I just didn’t know what to do. But that’s why I had to say something yesterday. I couldn’t let something like that happen again.”

“Tell us about the dream,” Supergirl said.

Nia nodded, and started describing the dream. She went through it, going over every detail. She described the paintings on the wall, the color of the furniture, the sounds she heard, the color of the walls of the room, the mural above the crib, and color and feel of the blanket, the color of the sheets under the blanket, the color of the dog’s collar, even the coconut trees lining the edge of the roof.

When she was finished, Supergirl just sat there and stared at her with that same blank expression. It went on for so long, Sawyer reached over and touched Supergirl on the shoulder.

“Supergirl?” Sawyer asked. That seemed to shake Supergirl out of whatever was going on in her head.

“Nimda, have Konex bring me a sketchbook and the small, clear art kit,” Supergirl said.

They waited for a few minutes in silence before a robot appeared in a flash of light, carrying a translucent toolbox-style art kit and a wire bound sketchbook. Supergirl took both. She opened the kit and took out a pencil, then opened the sketchbook, and blurred into super-speed. A few seconds later, she held up the sketchbook, showing Nia four fantastically-rendered sketches.

“That’s them,” Nia said. “The boy, the girl, the dog and the symbol.”

Supergirl handed the sketchbook over to Sawyer.

“Fuck,” Sawyer said as she looked at the sketches.

“You know who they are? What the symbol means?” Nia asked.

“The woman… Was it me?” Supergirl asked.
“No,” Nia said. “Definitely not.”

“Have you had the dream since the battle in /zrhygrahs im shahrrehth/?” Supergirl asked as she put the pencil back in the art case and closed it.

“No,” Nia said. “But I don’t have it every night.”

“Thank you for your time, Nia,” Supergirl said without answering Nia’s questions. “Please inform President Marsdin that we’ll be holding a funeral for our dead tomorrow morning at sunrise. If she would like to attend, I’ll allow it, but she should arrive at the Embassy by no later than 6:00 AM. Tell her she should make arrangements to bring you and her son to the Solarium tomorrow at 8:00 AM. Your medical needs and his will be taken care of in my private hospital. I’ll meet with Olivia at that time.”

Nia knew when she was being dismissed. She’d spent long enough in the White House to understand that much. But she wasn’t going to take it. Not this time.

“You know what the dream means,” Nia said, and this time, it wasn’t a question.

“Yes,” Supergirl said. “Thank you for your time, Miss Nal.”

“Now just a minute,” Nia said. “I came here looking for answers.”

“You came to me because Olivia wanted information about the dream,” Supergirl said in the same flat tone she’d said everything else that night. “I appreciate your assistance yesterday, but my gratitude has limits. In a few hours, I have to tell the woman I love that our daughter was murdered because I wasn’t good enough, or fast enough to win the battle before Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane could breach the defenses of the Genesis Chamber, then I’m going to have to tell my sister than she’s going to have to learn how to talk again because her brain was starved for oxygen for so long that part of it died and had to be regrown, then I’m going to have to go to a funeral for my daughter and an entire generation of my people’s children who were murdered before they ever felt the light of the sun on their faces, and nine residents of /zrhygrahs im shahrrehth/ that I also was not good enough, or fast enough to save. So honestly, Miss Nal, I don’t care if you want answers or not. It’s time for you to leave.”

Nia stood up and headed for the door.

“You were a little hard on her,” Maggie said.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“You do know what the dream means, though?” Maggie asked.

“Nothing,” Kara said.

“It doesn’t seem like nothing.”

“The symbol is the Worldkiller coat of arms,” Kara said.

“Shit,” Maggie said.

“The dream means my daughter was never going to have a chance. My father saw to that.”

“Kara-”
“Let’s go home,” Kara said, and for just a second, the blank mask Kara was wearing slipped, and there was a note of pleading in her voice. “Please.”

“Okay.”

Cat opened her eyes slowly and wondered if she had gotten into Kara’s period chocolate by mistake, because she was pretty sure she was seeing colors that didn’t actually exist.

“Easy,” Kara said.

Cat smiled as she turned towards the sound of the voice, but the moment she saw Kara’s face, she knew something was wrong. None of the happiness or the warmth she usually saw when Kara looked at her was there. Instead, there was just a hollow look. The kind she’d seen the morning after Kara had come back from Krypton.

“What’s wrong, love?” she asked.

“You were hurt,” Kara said, her voice flat.

“What happened?”

“What’s the last thing you remember?” Kara asked.

Cat smiled as a wonderful memory came to her.

“We were taking a bath,” she said with a grin. “Only someone couldn’t keep her hands to herself.”

“That was Saturday night,” Kara said without any of the amusement or the pretty blush Cat’s comment should have prompted. She started to worry.

“What day is it?” Cat asked.

“It’s Wednesday morning,” Kara said. “It’s about 2:00 AM.”

“I lost four days?” Cat asked. No wonder Kara looked rough around the edges. Carter would be worried sick. She sat up, or at least, she tried to, but her body didn’t want to cooperate.

“Easy,” Kara said, reaching down and pressing a hand gently to her shoulder. “Don’t try to move.”

“Kara, what’s wrong?” Cat said, hearing the fear in her own voice and hating it. “Why can’t I move?”

“Cat,” Kara said, “please calm down. You’re going to be okay.”

“What do you mean, ‘going to be’?” Cat asked.

“I…” Kara started, but the words seemed to get stuck in her throat. She closed her eyes, and Cat could hear her whispering in Kryptonian.

She felt a hand touch her left shoulder and turned her head to see Eliza standing on that side of the bed.

“It’s okay, sweetheart. Just hold Cat’s hand, and I’ll explain,” Eliza said.

Cat looked at Kara and saw her nod. She felt Kara take her hand and squeeze it tightly.
“Cat, look at me.”

Cat turned back to Eliza.

“You’re feeling anxious right now because you’re off your Lexapro. We’ve substituted with a Kryptonian bioactive, but we only just administered it, and it will take about seven days to be fully effective. During that time, you may be prone to anxiety attacks.”

“Why can’t I move?” Cat asked.

“You were attacked. You took a blow to the back of the head. The physical damage has been repaired, and with time, you’ll regain full function, but the damage destroyed the V1 region of the brain, and part of the cerebellum. Repairing the V1 region resolved the visual impairment you would have otherwise experienced, but the cerebellum will have to be retrained,” Eliza said.

“How bad is it?” Cat asked.

“You’re going to be clumsy for a while. You’ll basically have to learn to use your hands again, and any fine motor tasks will have to be completely retrained. Writing, typing, playing a musical instrument. The fact that you’re able to talk is something of a minor miracle. But there’s a catch to all of this.”

“You had to put me in the Chrysalis Chamber, didn’t you?” Cat asked.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

Cat looked over at Kara. “It’s okay, love. I wasn’t expecting it to happen quite like this, but I knew it was part of the deal.”

“You’re okay with it?” Kara asked.

“I am,” Cat said. “I made the decision a long time ago.”

“We’re currently blocking voluntary motor control to prevent you from hurting yourself,” Eliza said. “But if you promise to be very, very careful, I’ll turn the neural paralysis field off, and you can sit up.”

“Do it,” Cat said.

Eliza stepped back and picked up a tablet. She tapped the screen. “Go ahead.”

Cat sat up. She didn’t feel any different, though she was still seeing colors that didn’t exist. She looked down at her free hand and tried to move her index finger. All of the fingers on that hand jerked into a fist.

“Well, I guess that answers that question,” Cat said. Kara squeezed her other hand, and Cat looked up at her, seeing the same hollow look on her face as before.

“It’s okay, love,” Cat said. “I’ve had a few hard recoveries before.”

“It’s not that,” Kara said. “…She closed her eyes, and started taking deep breaths, and Cat wondered if she was about to have another panic attack, but it was something different. Each time she breathed out, a little of the emotion seemed to drain out of her, until her expression was completely blank.

“What is it, love?” Cat asked, the fear creeping back in.
“There was a battle in shahrrehth,” Kara said. “Lillian Luthor and Sam Lane got into the Genesis Chamber.”

Understanding filled Cat, along with fear and grief. “Kiera?” she asked, already knowing the answer.

“All of them,” Kara said. “We’re sending them to Rao at sunrise.”

She felt the tears welling up in her eyes, felt the grief pressing on her chest like a lead weight, trying to crush the life out of her. She reached out, clumsily, for Kara, and Kara pulled her into a hug so tight she wondered if Kara would ever let go.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

“It’s not your fault,” Cat said.

Kara didn’t answer.

“Winn, open the fuck up,” Maggie shouted as she banged on the door. “I know you’re in there!”

The door jerked open and Winn stood there, eyes red, face streaked with tears. The tears weren’t surprising, but the angry red raised, branched burn lines running up his neck and over his face were.

“Go away,” he said.

“Fuck that,” Maggie said, shoving down her surprise at the way Winn looked. “Are you going to let me in, or are we going to yell at each other in the hallway?”

Winn closed his eyes. “Please don’t make me do this right now.”

Maggie stared at him for a minute and decided to do this a different way.

“I won’t make you do anything, Winn. But I want to make sure you know that the funeral is at sunrise.”

“I can’t go,” Winn said.

“Why not?” Maggie asked.

“Because there wouldn’t be a funeral if it weren’t for me,” Winn said.

“Winn-”

“Kaldur never would have let anyone else in that office.”

“No. He wouldn’t have. But that doesn’t mean this is your fault.”

“Whose fault is it, then? I hear this strange voice telling me I have to go and kill Ms. Grant, and I just hop right up and bash her skull in. What kind of person does that?”

“Innocent people,” Maggie said. “A lot of good people who had something sick and twisted done to them.”

“They weren’t trying to murder their friend,” Winn said. “Their best friend’s daughter isn’t dead because of them.”

“You don’t know what would have happened, Winn.”
“Yes, I do!” Winn said. “I watched the security feeds. If I’d just fought a little harder… If I’d hesitated, even for just a few seconds, Cat would have torn them apart, and those kids would still be alive.”

Maggie reached out and rested her hands on Winn’s shoulders.

“Winn, this is not like Red Kryptonite. The nanites didn’t make you do something you secretly wanted to do.”

“Are you sure about that? I mean, really sure about that? Because I’m not. Do you know who my father is?”

“No,” Maggie said.

“He’s the Toyman. He’s the psycho that killed six people with a bomb in a teddy bear. He just fucking snapped one day. Maybe that’s me. Maybe I’ve got that in me. Maybe I’m just a fucking time bomb. Maybe I didn’t fight it because deep down, I’m just an evil fuck like my father. After all, I was the first one there.”

“Winn, that is not you,” Maggie said. “If you were like him, you would be sitting here, thinking of every reason in the world this wasn’t your fault. The fact that you feel guilty, the fact that you’re horrified by this, it means you are nothing like him.”

“I just… I was going to kill her, Maggie.”

“I know,” Maggie said. “But it wasn’t your fault.”

“It feels like it is. It felt…”

“Where’s Kaldur’ahm?” Maggie asked.

“He’s talking to Aquaman,” Winn said.

“At two in the morning?”

“I got the feeling there was going to be a lot of yelling before they got to the talking,” Winn said. “He went to the hotel where Aquaman and his wife are staying right after the trial.”

“Come downstairs with me,” Maggie said. “Alex will be waking up soon.”

“I can’t,” Winn said. “I can’t look Kara and Cat in the face.”


“What message?”

“She wants you to sing at the funeral. She said you would know the song.”

“Come on, Danvers. I know you’re awake,” Maggie said.

Alex scrunched her face up and let out a small groan.

“You’re going to be late for work,” Maggie said.

Alex scrunched up her face again, and opened her mouth, but nothing came out. She opened her
eyes, and Maggie could see the confusion there. She reached down and rested a hand on Alex’s forearm.

“Babe, nod if you can understand me, okay?”

Alex nodded.

“I need you to know, you’re going to be fine. We’re going to be fine. But you got hurt pretty bad. You’ve not able to talk right now, okay?”

Alex nodded. She lifted her hands and made a motion like she was writing on her hand with a pen. Maggie reached over and grabbed the pen and steno pad off the bedside table and handed them to Alex.

“What happened?” Alex wrote.

“There was a fight in Little Krypton, do you remember?”

Alex shook her head.

“We both got hurt, but you got tossed in the bay. It was a while before we got you out. You were without oxygen for a few minutes.”

“How bad?” Alex wrote.

“Pretty bad. What’s the last thing you remember?”

“Coming back from Kara’s beach house,” Alex wrote.

“That was Sunday night,” Maggie said. “The fight was Monday. It’s about three AM Wednesday morning.”

“What did we fight?”

“Cadmus. We won, Cadmus is gone, but it was a bad fight. Seventy-three agents died and fourteen civilians. A bunch are going to be on the DL list for a while. You included.”

Alex scrunched up her face and shook her head as she scribbled on the notepad.

“Oh, you’ll be fine?” Maggie asked. “Alex, you have head trauma. The Regeneration Matrix had to regrow part of your brain because it was dead. You are literally going to have to learn to speak again. You are not going back to work anytime soon.”

Alex wrote hastily on the pad and held it up.

“Kara’s… She’s not doing well. Cat got hurt, and you got hurt, and…” Maggie sat down on the bed next to Alex. “There’s not an easy way to say this, so I’m going to just say it. Lane and Luthor got into the Genesis Chamber. They had liquid Kryptonite with them. They killed all the kids.”

Alex shook her head.

“I’m sorry,” Maggie said.

Alex shook her head again. She started to write something, but scratched it out, then started to write something else, only to scratch that out, until finally, she just screamed and threw the steno pad.
Maggie reached out and pulled her into a hug, holding her as she started to sob.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian.

zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth

City of Hope
Ceremony of Innocence

Chapter Summary

Cat and Kara attend the funeral.

Chapter Notes

So, this is the last Chapter of Devils in the Dark. I never imagined, when I started writing this story that it would grow into the monster that it's become. In total, the story is currently over six hundred thousand words, and that's not counting the 100,000+ I've got written on A Plague of Righteousness. A lot of work has gone into creating Future Shock, and as I have mentioned before, I need a break. It's not because I don't love the story, it's just because real life has this habit of getting in the way sometimes. I'm taking the next ten weeks off from posting Future Shock. The current plan is to resume posting on November 30th with Chapter 1 of A Plague of Righteousness, and post straight through to the end of that story.

As of right now, I have enough of A Plague of Righteousness written to carry through to March 17th of next year if I start posting one chapter a week on November 30th, and I'm not planning on taking any time off writing, so hopefully I'll have the story finished by then, and be well into writing the last story, In The Shadow of Rao. However, for personal reasons, there may be another hiatus around March, April or May of next year. I'm not sure one way or the other. I'll do my best to avoid it, but I may not be able to avoid missing a few weeks. I honestly have no idea if there will be a hiatus between A Plague of Righteousness and In The Shadow of Rao.

If you want to talk about Future Shock with me, or any of my stories, feel free to join my Discord Server. You can follow me on Tumblr. My user name is argyle-s.

For everyone who has come this far, I hope you've enjoyed the ride. And now, on to the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

It was a cold morning, and when Cat looked up with her new Kryptonian eyes she saw not the dark sky she expected, but nearly indescribable beauty. Light dancing down into the infrared and up into the ultraviolet, in a spectacular kaleidoscope of colors she’s never seen before. There were fat clouds heavy with rain rolling in off the ocean, and she could see the different masses of air colliding into a squall line. She understood, now, why a society with fifteen thousand years of culture and technology would still worship a sun god, why they would hold light to be something sacred and divine.

The knowledge only made the day that much more bitter. To know that she would never get to hold her daughter under such a tapestry of life and color. That she would never get to share anything
beautiful with her. It made the pain so much harder to bear.

She felt something touch her, and looked down so see Carter next to her, his hand around her forearm. He was taking the caution against touching her hands seriously, being careful around her, lest an errant twitch of her finger shatter his bones. Clumsy, Eliza had called it, but a clumsy god in a world of cardboard was a dangerous thing.

She gave Carter a small nod before looking back up at the gathered crowd. Everyone who’d fought in the battle and was able to stand was there. The entire Bat Clan from Gotham. Superman, Miss Martian, Starfire, Raven, Zatanna, Beast Boy, Aquaman, Mera, two dozen Atlantians, dozens of aliens she didn’t know, hundreds of agents from the DEO. Lois, James, Lena, Sam, Ruby, Kaldur’ahm. Winn, with angry red burn marks covering his neck and face. Maggie’s brother and his girlfriend. Susan and Leslie. The Green Lanterns. Harley, Ivy and Reggie. Her and Carter. Nine of the Kryptonians.

Olivia was there too, along with her security detail, her son, and a dark-haired woman Cat didn’t recognize.

Cat, Lois, and James were the only members of the press allowed inside the Embassy wall. Non’s funeral had been open to the public, but this, somehow, felt private. It wasn’t something to be shared.

It was just a few moments before dawn when the doors of the Genesis chamber and the Embassy opened, and two processions began. Aethyr, Ran-Nu, Jan Al-Ak, Tan, Zora Vi-Lar, Nox, Shayla Kor-Onn, Val-Ty, Lesla Ban-Lor, Hatu, Raya, Jes-Mo, Alia, Rud, and Kara made up the procession from the Genesis Chamber, each walking beside the funeral pod which carried their dead child. Astra, Fendra, Byara, Div, Cir Ursa, Lucy, Maggie and Alex made up the second procession, each of the women walking beside one of the nine coffins that belonged to members of the /zrhygrhahs im shahrrehth/ militia that either didn’t have family, or whose family had chosen to send them off with the Kryptonian children. Clark walked beside an empty coffin, a symbol of all the souls who’d fallen in battle but wouldn’t be laid to rest there today. Twenty-five coffins in all. Far, far too many.

The processions met and merged, moving out into the area in front of the gathered crowd and coming to a stop in an arrangement five coffins wide and five deep. Once they came to a halt, Kara caught Cat’s eye, and Cat walked forward, joining Kara next to the coffin which held their daughter. Kara took Cat’s hand and guided it up, setting it on the coffin, then she stepped away, moving to stand between the coffins and the gathered crowd.

She turned back to face the dead, and her voice rang out, loud and clear, and it almost sounded like the Kara Cat knew.

“/non rraop w tiv ehl i ehrsho im

.nim i enaiehdo w tiv ehl :divili iovis w i giehrehd tiv ehrosh zehdh ath

.paii kryp w rraop :zehtiahzrhimuju gem

.skulir bim w tiv zil serni kryp w rraop tiv ehsh gem

.nahzhgehni ,rao, i rregrhahs w shokh/”

It was the Kryptonian prayer for the dead in /kryptahnuuo/, and Cat knew that normally, that when Kara finished, that would have been when the coffins would be sent into the sky, but not today. Today, the prayer would be repeated.

“You have been the sun of our lives.
Our prayers will be the sun that lights your way on the journey home.

We will remember you in every dawn.

And await the night we join you in the sky.

Rao's will be done.”

Still, the Kryptonians waited, while Kara walked back over to the coffin where their daughter was. She stepped up behind Cat and covered Cat’s hand with her own as Winn’s voice filled the air.

“You are my sunshine, my only sunshine,”

Kara lifted both their hands and made a soft sweeping motion.

“You make me happy when skies are gray,”

The coffins drifted forward and started to lift into the sky.

“You'll never know dear, how much I love you”

The coffins picked up speed as they shot into the sky.

“Please don’t take my sunshine away”

The coffins disappeared into the sky, and just like that, the daughter that Cat had so quickly come to love, but had never gotten to know, was gone forever.

Olivia stepped into the apartment she’d first visited two days earlier and was somehow surprised by how nothing seemed to have changed. It was a little stupid to feel that way, but so much had happened in the last two days, it felt like there should be a change. Instead, she was following the same robot through the same apartment she had been in less than forty-eight hours ago, being led to the same office she’d stood in, and about to come face to face with the same incredibly damaged woman she’d talked to.

She finally did find the change she was looking for when she stepped into the office. Kara was dressed in a dark green dress with an elbow-length mantle embossed with her House Coat of Arms.

“President Marsdin,” Kara said. “Please, have a seat.”

Olivia had to work not to frown at Kara’s return to the same flat tone she’d used during their last two conversations. She’d hoped that the life she’d seen in Kara at the funeral would still be there, but apparently not. She walked over and took a seat opposite Kara, wondering how this would play out.

“I’m sorry we didn’t get a chance to speak at the ceremony.”

“I wouldn’t have had a lot to say,” Kara said.

“Well, let me say I’m sorry. I can’t even imagine what you must be going through right now,” Olivia said.

“Did Oscar and Nia get settled in with the medical drones?” Kara asked, changing the subject without acknowledging Olivia’s statement.

“Yes,” Olivia said. “I’m not sure which one is more nervous. Both of them were acting like they
expected a doctor to tell them they need a shot any second.”

“They’ll be fine,” Kara said, her voice nearly devoid of inflection.

“I know,” Olivia said. “But this is a big thing for both of them.”

“We should make this quick,” Kara said. “I’m sure you want to get back to Oscar.”

“Of course,” Olivia said. “I’m sure you’d like some time with your family.”

“We’ll start with Nia’s dream,” Kara said. “You don’t have anything to worry about.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“I recognized the symbol,” Kara said. “I know what the dream means. When we changed the course of events Monday, what she saw became an impossibility.”

“You’re not giving me a lot to go on,” Olivia said.

“Before Monday, there were two beings in the entire universe that could lay claim to that particular Coat of Arms,” Kara said. “Now there’s only one. Nia said the woman in the dream wasn’t me, so you have nothing to worry about.”

“You think the woman was your daughter?” Olivia asked.

“I think the woman in the dream is what my daughter might have become, if the Cadmus attack had succeeded,” Kara said. “If Cadmus has killed us and taken our children to turn them into weapons.”

The explanation made a certain kind of sense, though there were some gaps in it.

“You said you recognized the symbol. Called it a Coat of Arms.”

“It belonged to a distant ancestor. Not someone we Kryptonians speak kindly of. Not a family connection I want to advertise, but one my daughter would have inherited.”

“I see,” Olivia said. “I guess we can leave it at that unless Nia has the dream again.”

“She won’t,” Kara said.

“We’ll see,” Olivia said. “What else did you want to discuss.”

“The Kryptonian mourning period is eighteen Earth days,” Kara said. “You have that long to figure out how to present it to the public, but all debts are paid. The period of public service ends now.”

“Excuse me?”

“The public service period you wrote into the pardons. We consider it finished.”

“Kara, the term was five years,” Olivia said.

“That was before your government gave aid and comfort to people the people who murdered our children,” Kara said. “We’re done. If any of them want to continue as first responders, they’ll be more than welcome do to so, and I’ll personally see to it that they are well paid, but if they want to get a job serving ice cream to penguins on the Galapagos Islands, they’ll be free to do that as well. If you chose to pursue the matter in court, I have a very good lawyer who assures me she can get the case tossed out in under five minutes, because none of the Fort Rozz prisoners have *ever* been
charged with a crime on this planet.”

“Kara, you and I both know that the first responder program was more about public relations than anything else.”

“Yes, it was,” Kara said. “We tried it your way. We tried it the nice way. We tried to live among them, to offer our hands and our hearts and our minds in friendship, and they murdered our children. They tried to destroy our city. They tried to frame us for murder and kill the people we love. And you paid for it. You sat in office for three years and could have ended Cadmus with the stroke of a pen. You could have demanded Sam Lane’s resignation. You could have stopped giving Simon Tycho and Maxwell Lord defense contracts. You could have done anything. But you didn’t, because it was politically inconvenient. Because it wasn’t your people dying.”

“Kara, it wasn’t like that. If I had gone after Cadmus right out of the gate, my administration would have collapsed,” Olivia said.

“Then you picked the wrong people to help you run the country,” Kara said. “The blood of every alien who died by Cadmus hands since you took office is on your hands.”

“That’s not fair,” Olivia said. “It’s the truth, and I’m just as much to blame as you are. I knew what Cadmus was. I knew who the players were. I should have murdered them in their sleep the night I came back. But I tried to do it the right way. I tried to pretend I could get out of this with my soul intact.”

“Kara, you cannot go off the rails. You of all people know what’s at stake,” Olivia said. “Miranda Crane—”

“Isn’t the most pressing problem you have,” Kara said. “Deal with Baker, or I will.”

“Baker’s stepping down,” Olivia said. “He’ll be gone by Monday.”

“Good,” Kara said. “Once he’s gone, deal with Miranda Crane.”

“And how am I supposed to do that?”

“Figure it out. Or don’t. I told you yesterday, I no longer care.” She stood up. “Konex will show you out. I have to go tend to what’s left of my family.”

Cat sat on the chaise lounge, the weighted blanket across her lap, staring up at the multicolored sky, listening to Kara’s footsteps as she approached the balcony door, and preparing herself for what was coming. The door opened, and Kara stepped out onto the balcony. She gave her a moment, waiting silently, feeling Kara’s gaze on her.

“Come sit with me,” Cat said when she couldn’t stand the waiting anymore.

Kara closed the door and came over, lifting the blanket and slipping under it. Cat wrapped an arm around her, and if the motion wasn’t as graceful as it might once have been, she didn’t really care. Not when Kara rested her head on Cat’s shoulder.

“That was a dramatic little speech you gave,” Cat said.

“You heard?”
“I can’t help it. I always hear your voice. I can’t turn it off.”

“I’ll get Lucy to teach you,” Kara said. “She picked up the Torquasm Vo techniques faster than I did when I was first learning, and Nimda can convert a few floors into a rehab center and training area.”

Cat made a small, non-committal sound, more interested in picking apart what Kara had said that agreeing to something which was never going to happen.

“Where’s Carter?” Kara asked.

“He’s sleeping,” Cat said. “He was up most of the night. I thought we could just keep him out of school until Monday. See if he’s ready to go back then.”

“I’d like that,” Kara said.

“I figured you would,” Cat said. “Unless you’re planning on leaving before then.”

She felt Kara go stiff. “How did you know?”

“I know you. I know your blaming yourself for what happened to me, and Alex and Maggie, and Kiera. Blaming yourself for everyone who died.”

“I should,” Kara said. “I’m the one who’s responsible.”

“No, love. You’re not. And if you think you’re going anywhere without me, you’re mistaken. You promised me forever, if I want it, and I do. Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you.”

“Where’s that from?” Kara asked.

“The book of Ruth,” Cat said. “You’d like it. It’s about a girl who falls in love with an older woman.”

Kara didn’t smile, but Cat could feel her relax again, feel her press herself a little more firmly against Cat.

“I thought it would be easier. I’m better than I was. I have more training. Better resources. I thought it would be enough,” Kara said, and Cat could hear her voice starting to break. Hear it losing the lifelessness that had been there since she woke up.

“I know, darling. But you did do better. You did so much better. Astra and your people are still here. Cadmus is defeated a year and a half ahead of schedule. We have time, my love.”

Kara reached up and gripped the front of Cat’s shirt. Cat glanced down at her, and saw the tears starting to flow.

“So many people died. So many people… My little girl… It hurts… It just hurts so much, and I want it to stop. Please, Cat, make it stop hurting.”

The plea dragged the first sob out of both of them, and Cat pulled Kara closer, wrapping her other arm around her as well, hugging her tightly.

“I’m here, my love. I have you. And I am not letting go.”

The words, spoken so softly, broke whatever barrier Kara had been using to hold back her emotions,
and finally, Kara began to cry.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

zhhygrhahs im shahrrehth
*City of Hope*

.non rraop w tiv ehl i ehrosho im
*You have been the sun of our lives.*

.nim i enaichdo w tiv ehl :divili iovis w i giehrehd tiv ehrosh zehdh ath
*Our prayers will be the sun that lights your way on the journey home.*

.paii kryp w rraop :zehtiahzrhimuju gem
*We will remember you in every dawn.*

.skulir bim w tiv zil semi kryp w rraop tiv ehsh gem
*And await the night we join you in the sky.*

.nahzhgehni ,rao, i rregrhahs w shokh
*Rao’s will be done.*

kryptahniuo
*Kryptonian (language)*

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