Summary

After her brother's arrest, Lena moves across the country with her niece in the hopes that a new city, and being close to an old friend, will offer them a fresh start. However, their first night is soon interrupted by three men who break in, forcing them to seek refuge in the panic room that came with their new house.

AKA the Panic Room AU that I decided to write instead of doing my assignments.
Chapter One

Chapter Notes

Hello folks!

So, I'm doing a 'Panic Room' AU both because I think it's a great and grossly underrated film, and because I have an unparalleled love for Jodie Foster films. As always, I'd just like to preface this by saying that I do not intend to plagiarise the original work; it is a movie that uses camera angles, sound, characters, dialogue, actions, tension, and setting exceedingly well, and because of this, I want to put my own little spin on it.

If you're not familiar with the film and you want to read this, that's very cool, and I am very appreciative of that; however, I implore you to watch the film. In my humble opinion, it's underrated and is very worthy of your viewership. If you'd rather just read this and not watch it, that's obviously fine too.

Anyway, that's enough from me, and I do hope you like what I've done here. If you have any questions about something, feel free to ask, or if you want, you can come find me on Tumblr @just-some-girlll. One last thing: this story takes place in 2001/2002. That fact may seem irrelevant now, but I do hope it will help explain some things that happen in later chapters.

Happy reading :)

It’s late afternoon in National City when two women and a girl on a scooter rush through the street, going against the heavy crowd of people. Water pools on the road and along the edge of the footpath from last night’s downpour, and a breeze that smells distinctly of rain whistles through the street, suggesting that they’ll be in for more rain tonight.

“It’s seventeen feet wide, fifty-five feet deep,” Cat Grant says as she leads the small group through the street. She walks with such authority and confidence that the other people on the street step out of her way, creating a clear-cut path for her to walk. “Forty-two hundred square feet, four floors with a rentable basement, so five altogether, courtyard in back—”

“Could you slow down a little,” the other woman, Lena, says as she rushes to keep up with Cat while glancing back every so often to keep an eye on her niece. “Or we could just wait for the car.”

“No cars,” Cat says, her voice firm. “Feet are faster.”

“How many more do we have after this one then?” Lena says.

“None. There’s nothing else, you know how tight the market is.”
“This is it?” Lena speeds up and keeps pace with Cat, her voice rushed and slightly panicked. “I told you over the phone I have to be moved in by the end of next week. Lauren, please don’t ride that here,” she says back to her niece who’s riding her scooter.

“It’s a sidewalk,” Lauren says, rolling her eyes and riding past Lena and Cat.

“Oh, that miserable little prick is already leaving,” Cat mutters under her breath when they approach a four-story brownstone that’s at least a hundred years old.

A middle-aged man in a tan overcoat and three-piece suit is just about to lock the front door when Cat marches up the stairs. “One day you will learn to respect other people’s time, Cat, one day you —”

“Morgan,” Cat says, ignoring the man, “I am so sorry we’re late, you’re such a saint to wait for us!” She brushes past him and enters the home.

Lena adjusts her handbag on her shoulder and offers Morgan a polite smile and nod before following Cat in, Lauren picks up her scooter and rushes in after her Aunt. Morgan mumbles something that doesn’t really warrant repeating before he follows after the group.

The house is dark and empty. Curtains are drawn across windows and dust particles float around in the air. Cat is first to step through the threshold and into the empty home, but Morgan steps in front of her and leads the way through the floor.

“This is the middle of the house,” Morgan quickly says, gesturing to the empty space around them. “This is the entry floor, living room’s over there. The kitchen floor is below us and there are two bedroom floors above us.”

Lena wanders around the empty living room, looking up at the high ceilings when her attention is drawn to her niece. She watches as Lauren rides her scooter around the space and tries to get her attention to stop.

“Lauren!” Lena whisper-yells in an attempt to get her attention. Lauren ignores her and continues to scoot around, the wheels of her scooter lighting up and reflecting against the newly polished floors in the dark space.

“It’s an enormous amount of space for the money and I’ll be perfectly honest, the family is in no hurry to sell,” Morgan says with an air of condescension. “I don’t have to tell you there is an acute shortage of living spaces in the city right now and this is a highly unique property.”

“Kid!” Cat calls out to Lauren. “No scooter.” Lauren immediately stops and picks up her scooter, she wanders over to the French doors that look out over the courtyard.

She looks out into the courtyard and notes the other brownstones that form a square around it, creating an oasis of sorts in the city. Lauren leans against the doors and sighs, her breath fogging up the glass panels. Lena watches this from a distance and feels a pang of guilt wash through her at her niece’s unhappiness.

Morgan moves on through the house and Lena follows, still keeping some of her attention on Lauren who is now moving through the living room and running her hand over the dusty surfaces.
Morgan opens a door and reveals an old-fashioned cage-style elevator. “Working elevator. The previous owner was disabled for the last ten years of his life. The elevator is highly unusual; you will not find this in ninety percent of brownstones.” He starts walking up the stairs.

“You don’t think this is too much space for two people?” Lena says quietly so only Cat can hear.

“Maybe, but when you’re ready to sell this place, you’ll make a small fortune!” She walks off and follows Morgan up the stairs.

Lauren disappears into the elevator and rides it up and down the house, leaving Lena alone. Lena looks up and around at the empty space, her hands a little shaky. She reaches into her handbag and grabs a bottle of water and takes a sip.

She debates calling Kara, knowing this would all be so much easier with a friend by her side. She even goes as far as pulling her phone out and opening up Kara’s contact on her phone. Her thumb hovers over the call button and just as she’s about to that small little green button, Morgan shouts down from the floor above.

“It would be so lovely if I could show the property before I leave!” Morgan calls from upstairs, breaking Lena from her thoughts and causing her to jump a little at the sudden noise.

Lena exhales sharply, returns her phone to her bag, and follows the others up to the next level, gripping the banister as she ascends.

Morgan quickly ushers the group through the various rooms and spaces in the home. “There’s another floor above us,” he says, “two bedrooms and one bathroom which they share.” He leads the trio along the hall and into another empty room. “Third floor, spare bedroom, den, what have you. The previous owner used it as an office.”

“He’s talking about Robert Gardner,” Cat says to Lena as they follow Morgan into another empty room – presumably some kind of living space.

“The hotel guy?” Lena asks.

“The one and only. It’s been in the papers lately; his kids are all suing each other over his estate,” Cat says. “Was a total recluse, paranoid even, but rich as all hell. Worth something like thirty million, now it turns out they can’t find half of it. Somebody took something that didn’t belong to them,” she says in an almost singsong voice with a smirk.

“I hardly see how family gossip is relevant to showing the property,” Morgan says.

“Oh, stop calling it The Property will you!” Cat rolls her eyes. “You sound ridiculous.”

Morgan glares but Cat stands her ground.

“Master bathroom,” Morgan says, moving on from their previous remarks and leading the group through a bathroom then closet. “And this,” he stops in a bedroom, “is the master bedroom.”

The groaning metallic sound of the elevator resonates through the house and into the bedroom the three are currently standing in, the sound of Lauren laughing following it. Morgan winces and speaks as though he’s in physical pain.

“Could the child please stop that?”

“Kid! No elevator!” Cat shouts.
Lena flinches at Cat’s loud tone but regains her composure and looks around the room, walking up to the windows and looking out over the courtyard. She then walks to one of the walls, inspects it and ignores Cat and Morgan talking behind her. She takes two steps back from the wall and looks at it again, inspecting the dimensions of the room.

“Something’s off,” Lena says.

“What?” Cat says, walking to Lena’s side and looking at the wall too.

“I don’t know. Doesn’t that corner just seem… funny to you?” She points to the corner of the wall where a mirror is hanging. The angle at which the mirror reflects the room is slightly off, giving the impression that the wall isn’t perpendicular.

“I was waiting to see if you would notice,” Morgan says. “No one from our office had the slightest idea.” He walks to the wall and pushes on the mirror; it makes a faint click and swings open a few inches. He pulls it toward him and opens it all the way and a heavy metal door opens shortly after. “It’s called a panic room.” He hits a series of switches and a row of bulbs flicker on.

“Oh, I’ve seen these,” Cat says, taking a few steps in to have a look.

“It’s quite in vogue in high end construction right now. One really can’t be too careful about home invasion,” Morgan explains stepping in a gesturing to various pieces of equipment.

Lena lingers near the door as Cat and Morgan walk into the panic room. She looks around the room, studying the neat piles of survival supplies – water, food, batteries, flashlights, fire blankets, clothes, tools.

“This is perfect for you,” Cat says to Lena, pulling her from her thoughts.

Lena scoffs and takes a hesitant step forward so she’s now just standing inside the small space.

“Absolutely! You’re new to the city, living with a child. Your alarm goes off, or you hear glass break, or for whatever reason, you think someone’s broken in. What are you going to do? Call the police and wait until they get here on Tuesday? Wander downstairs in your underthings to check it out? I don’t think so.”

Lena sends her a glare but quickly brings her focus back to the room.

“Reinforced steel core walls,” Morgan says. “Buried phone line, completely separate, not connected to the house’s main line and never exposed throughout the house’s infrastructure or outside the house. You can call the police, and nobody can cut you off.

“Your own ventilation system, complete with an oxygen scrubber, so you’ve got plenty of fresh air for as long as you like. And a bank of video monitors.” He hits a switch and a dozen small video monitors illuminate, showing an entire view of the house. “Covers almost every corner of the house.”

Lena nods absently, still looking around at the small space. “Makes me nervous.”

“Why?” Cat says.

“I don’t know, it’s just… cramped,” Lena says. “What’s to keep someone from prying the door open?” She turns to address Morgan now.

Without warning, Morgan reaches around her and hits a red button on the wall. A heavy metal door
leaps out of a slot in the wall and slams shut, and a series of metal latches click into place, securing it into place. They are now enclosed in the room.

“Steel, four inches thick,” Morgan says, proud, and bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Lena takes a step back from the door, her breathing becomes slightly heavier, but no one else seems to take note.

“Everything is spring-loaded,” Morgan explains. “Even if the power’s out it’s still fully functional.”

“Open it,” Lena says, her voice quiet and shaky. Her request goes unnoticed though.

“Old Robbie didn’t miss a trick with this room, did he?” Cat says.

“Open the door,” Lena says again, still, it goes unnoticed and she’s starting to find it harder to breathe.

“And with kids and grandkids like his, no wonder he wanted a place to hide,” Cat says and laughs at her own joke.

“That is highly inappropriate,” Morgan says but Cat just waves off his concerns.

“I said, open the door,” Lena repeats for the third time. Her voice is firm this time and finally goes noticed by the others.

Morgan hits another button and the door slowly opens revealing Lauren who looks around with awe and a wide grin.

“My room. Definitely my room,” Lauren says as she walks in, looking around the space like a child in a toy aisle or candy store.

Lena quickly steps out and her breathing begins to return to its normal pace, and feeling the cool air on her face is helping her heart slow back down. “The door is a safety hazard,” she says after a moment.

“Not at all,” Morgan says, pointing to a red beam that runs horizontally across the doorway. “There’s one at shoulder height and shin height. Won’t let the door close if something’s blocking it. Watch.” He places his hand in front of the beam and hits the button to close the door.

Lena cringes when she hears the button depress; closes her eyes on instinct, knowing what will happen if the door does in fact close on his hand. Nothing happens though. The door doesn’t close, and Morgan’s hand is still attached to his arm.

Morgan retracts his hand and hits the button again. This time the door springs shut with an audible, metallic clang that reverberates through the room. The door with the mirror on it, swings closed a few seconds later with a soft click. With Lauren, Cat and Morgan all in the panic room, Lena stands alone in the room. She stares at her reflection, thinking that maybe this house may actually be a good fit. That her and Lauren could have a fresh start here.

Without warning, the door swings open again, revealing Cat and Morgan, and Lauren standing in front of them, a grin on her face.

“What do you think?” Morgan says and Lauren bounces excitedly on her feet. Lena sees this and for her, that’s all the confirmation she needs.
“We’ll take it,” Lena says, and Lauren’s smile seems to grow at that.
Hello folks!

Apologies this took so long to get out. University has just been kicking my butt recently. Anyway, I won't keep you for long. Just want to say sorry that this chapter isn't quite as long as the last one, and that not a lot really happens, but it was necessary for the sake of character development and all that other totally awesome writer stuff. The next few chapters will be more... intense. So stick around for that if you want.

If you want, you can come say hi on Tumblr @just-some-girlll. I'm a pretty friendly gal, so don't be shy.

Also, just a quick warning. There's a very brief mention of implied abuse, so if that's something you're not comfortable reading, that's totally fine and please don't feel obliged to continue reading.

Happy reading :)

“You know, you don’t have to help us. I’m sure you have far better things you could be doing,” Lena says as her and Kara load a few of the heavier boxes on the elevator to take up to the top floor.

Kara waves Lena’s concerns away and pushes her glasses up her nose when she stands up straight again. “You’re my best friend, of course, I’m gonna help you.” She smiles and Lena feels a familiar flutter in her heart. Something she used to feel all the time when they were back at university and Kara and said or done something ridiculously sweet.

“Well, at least stay for dinner then. Lauren asked for pizza so it’d be no problem at all,” Lena says, hopeful that Kara will stay.

“Are you sure? This is your first night, I wouldn’t want to intrude on whatever you two have planned.”

It’s Lena’s turn to wave Kara’s concerns away. “It’s not a problem, really,” she says. Kara nods and Lena closes the cage and the elevator begins its ascent. Kara disappears outside to grab the few remaining boxes from the truck and bring them to inside.
As the hours of the afternoon pass and the sun disappears below the horizon, heavy clouds roll in, blanketing the city in shades of grey. It doesn’t take long for the rain to begin falling, and as the final traces of light eventually fade away, the rain only gets heavier and heavier. Sheets of water now fall to the ground.

Kara and Lena sit side-by-side on the ground in the kitchen, their backs against the cabinets and feet sprawled out in front of them.

“What kind of pizza do you want?” Lena says.

“Surprise me,” Kara says.

Lena glance to her right and smirks at Kara.

“Okay, no, actually, don’t surprise me,” Kara quickly says, realizing what that smirk could mean for her. “You’ll probably get me some— I dunno—” she throws her hands up in mock exasperation, “healthy alternative type pizza.”

Lena laughs. “Alright then, what do you want?”

Kara thinks, then grins. “Something with bacon.”

Lena laughs and shakes her head as she stands and walks to the landline hanging from the wall. “Lauren!” she calls out into the void, her voice travelling up to the top level. “What kind of pizza do you want?!”

“Margherita!” Lauren shouts down before returning to her room to unpack her boxes.

“What's the number?” Lena says as she punches in a few digits. “478…”

“0150,” Kara says from her position on the floor.

Lena brings the receiver to her ear and smiles over at Kara as it rings. It’s an automated machine that answers, asking for Lena to hold.

The pizza arrives and Kara, Lena and Lauren sit at the kitchen island and munch away on their food in silence.

Lauren glances at the watch around her left wrist as she reaches over to grab another slice of the Margherita pizza.

“How’re you feeling?” Lena asks Lauren.

“Fine?” Lauren says, confusion in her voice. Lena glances to the watch around Lauren’s wrist and Lauren rolls her eyes. “I’m fifteen, you don’t need to hover over me every waking hour of the day. I can take care of myself,” Lauren says, her voice short.

“I’m not saying you can’t. I just wanted to know,” Lena says, channelling a calm voice that she hopes will put Lauren at ease.

Lauren pauses and huffs before checking her watch again. “93.”
Lena offers her a smile, which, to her surprise, Lauren returns with genuine intent before returning to her food. Lena glances over at Kara with a hopeful smile. Kara gives her a discreet thumbs-up, happy for Lena that Lauren is finally starting to accept her.

Lena had called her after everything involving Lex had happened and told her about how Lauren had no other living relatives that were fit to care for her. Despite living on opposite ends of the country, Lena and Kara had spoken every day after that, so Kara was well aware of the trouble that Lauren was going through.

“Lauren, when I was taking some things upstairs earlier, I saw a few of your books up on the shelves in your room,” Kara says.

“I like to read,” Lauren says flatly. Lena gives her a look and Lauren flashes Kara a sorry expression.

“What’d you read?” Kara asks.

“Anything, really,” Lauren shrugs sheepishly. “I just like books; they help you escape from… things.”

“Well, I happen to know of this really great festival the city hosts every year. Readers and writers meet up and basically just talk about books and new writers talk about their new releases. You might like it.”

“Sounds cool.” Lauren nods and smiles at Kara before returning to her pizza.

Kara glances over to Lena and sees a smile she can’t quite place on her face. She cocks her head to the side in slight confusion and furrows her brows together. Lena snaps out of her thoughts and a heat crawls up her neck; she busies herself by taking a sip of the wine in front of her. Kara returns to her food and dinner passes by.

Lauren’s quick to excuse herself once they’re finished eating and disappears upstairs, leaving Kara and Lena alone in the kitchen.

“How’s she doing?” Kara asks.

“Better, I think,” Lena says, tearing her eyes away from the flight of stairs.

“Have you told her about…”

“Lex’s trial?” Lena questions and Kara nods. “No.” She takes a sip from her wineglass. “I know I have to, and I will, it’s just… she was furious when I told her that we were moving, you know? And after her mother died, she went into denial about everything Lex did – just refused to believe that any of it was true. She’s only just starting to be okay with everything, and I just—” she sighs—“I don’t want to make it any more difficult for her.”

Kara looks at Lena with an unreadable expression, and it’s this that causes worry to bubble up inside her.

You think I’m horrible for not telling her,” Lena says, hoping that her one friend in the city won’t leave her now.

“No, Lena! Gosh, of course not!” Kara reaches across the counter and takes Lena’s hands in her own. “You’re Lauren’s guardian now. It’s your job to look after her. Everything you do for her – whatever the outcome might be – you do it because you only want what’s best for her. And for the
record, I think you’re doing an amazing job.”

“Thank you,” Lena says after a beat of silence.

“Always.”

A beat of silence passes, and Lena retracts her hands, suddenly aware that she’d been clinging to Kara’s like a lifeline. She occupies herself by staring out the window, watching as the rain falls against the windows.

“It’s getting late,” Kara says suddenly, her voice so loud in the silence that settled around them. “I should go.”

“It’s pouring outside.”

“I know, but you’re probably tired and I don’t want to keep you up.”

“Stay over,” Lena says, the words tumbling out of her mouth before she has a chance to think it through.

“Are you sure?” Kara asks after a brief pause. “It’s your first night.”

“Honestly, I don’t mind,” Lena says after her mind processes the meaning of the words she said before. “And besides, you live on the other side of the city, it’s raining, and I doubt there are many cabs running right now.”

Kara studies Lena for a moment before a grin breaks across her face. “Alright, I’ll stay, but this is still your first night in your new place, so we have to celebrate appropriately,” she says, moving over to the freezer and pulling out a tub of ice-cream.

“I don’t recall buying ice-cream,” Lena says, trying to mask a grin.

“I knew you wouldn’t have any,” Kara says, bringing the tub to the counter and pulling two spoons from a drawer. “So, I got some on my way over so you would. Honestly, it’s a home necessity and a crime that you didn’t have any.”

Lena rolls her eyes but the smile on her face does nothing to hide her happiness. She takes one of the offered spoons and takes the first spoonful of ice-cream.

Some hours pass and Lauren sleeps peacefully in her bed on the fourth floor while Kara and Lena sit in the master bedroom on the third floor. They sit on the floor against the wall that conceals the panic room, their legs out and ice-cream tub between them.

“I wonder why the last owner installed the panic room,” Kara says before bringing a spoonful of melting ice-cream to her mouth.

Lena shrugs. “No idea, but Cat, my realtor, seems to think it was because of how greedy his kids are.”

“Really?” Kara laughs a little.
Lena shrugs. “That’s just what she thinks. Who knows if it’s true.”

“Do you think you’ll keep it?” Kara asks after a beat of silence.

Lena thinks. “Maybe. I’m sure it’ll help for resale if I decide to sell anytime, but it just seems a bit… excessive?” She takes a sip of her wine. “I’m sure it’ll cost a fortune to remove anyway, and the room is big enough as is.”

“True. Nothing you need to worry about now anyway.”

Lena hums her agreement and sinks back against the wall as she lets her eyes close.

“How ‘bout you?” Kara says. “How are you doing?”

“Better, too, I think,” Lena says. She opens her eyes and sits upright. “I think it was just the adjustment period that was hard, mostly because Lauren just had such a hard time accepting what had happened because Lex was all she had after her mother died. It was just getting her to feel safe and comfortable that was hard – and I certainly don’t blame her for that. What she went through…” Lena trails off.

“Well, you’re not alone in this. I’m here for you, both of you.” Kara scoots over a bit and wraps an arm around Lena’s shoulders.

Lena looks up at Kara and rests her hand on Kara’s forearm, giving it a gentle squeeze. “I know.” She smiles. “And thank you.”

Some time passes and Kara disappears downstairs to put the ice-cream away before it melts anymore and Lena punches in the six-digit code to activate the security system. Lena pulls two sets of comfortable clothes out of one of the boxes in the hallway, handing one set to Kara and keeping the other for herself.

They each get ready in relative silence and it isn’t until they’re climbing into bed that Lena realizes why this might not have been such a good idea. Sure, Kara is always welcomed in her home, but sleeping next to her, in a bed? That’s different. It’s personal. Intimate.

Lena pushes all that away though. Kara is her friend. Her best friend. And right now, she’s one of the only people she has in National City, so to risk losing that on some fleeting crush would be insane. She’s an adult who can box up her feelings and sleep in a bed beside Kara and have it mean nothing more than two friends sharing a bed.

Besides, it’s just a crush, a crush that she’s had since university, but a crush all the same.

The lights go off and rain continues to fall, somehow heavier than before, but it’s relaxing. It gives Lena something to focus on, distracts her from the very warm and safe presence of Kara to her left. She closes her eyes and lets the rain, and maybe Kara’s steady breathing, pull her to sleep.
Chapter Three

Chapter Notes

Hello folks!

I'm loving all the comments you lot are leaving, so keep 'em coming if you're so inclined! You can also come say on Tumblr @just-some-girl11. I'm a pretty friendly gal, so please don't be shy.

Happy reading :)

Through the heavy rain that falls to the ground, a set of headlights break through. A van slowly crawls down the street and comes to a stop out front the recently purchased brownstone. The driver’s side door swings open and a man in dark clothes steps out into the street. The back-door slides open with a whoosh and another man in dark clothes steps out, holding a duffle bag firmly in his hand.

Together, they walk up to the brownstone and one of the men slide a key into the lock, but the lock doesn’t turn. He tries a few more times, jiggling the lock in to try open the door, but it doesn’t budge.

The men separate, one staying by the door and the other going around the brownstone to find another way in. He goes to a window and peers in between the security bars. He reaches his hands up and pulls down a ladder with a harsh metallic scrape. He climbs up the fire escape and tries to unlock a few windows along the way. With no luck at opening a window, he continues to climb until he’s standing on the roof.

The man looks around for the hatch that will lead him in, and when his eyes fall to the square panel, he smiles and quickly walks over. He pulls the latch open and climbs down into a closet on the fourth floor.

A quiet rustling from the man’s right catches his attention. He walks towards the sound and gently pushes against the slightly ajar door. He sees a girl fast asleep and quickly grows concerned. Silently, he creeps down the stairs, stopping on the third floor and peering into the master bedroom on a hunch. He sees two women asleep and quickly moves all the way to the bottom floor.

He disables the security system with the master code and then opens the door and the other man walks in, trekking water into the house.

“Took ya’ long enough,” the man says, shaking the water out of his hair. “What kept ya’?”

“There’s a girl on the top floor and two women on the third,” he quickly says.

“Fuck!”
“Keep your voice down.”

“No one’s s’posed to be here!”

“That was your department, Otis.”

“Well, no one is meant to be here!”

“That’s why your key didn’t work. They changed the locks.”

“Fuck!” Otis says as he walks around the empty room, punching the air in annoyance and running his hands through his hair.

Another man walks in then, a ski mask on his face.

“Who the hell are you!”

“Relax, Lockwood. Manchester, Ben; Ben, Manchester,” Otis says, gesturing between the two as a means of introduction.

“This was supposed to just be you and me!” Ben says. “The more people involved, the more likely we are to get caught!”

“Relax would you,” Otis says.

Ben stares sceptically at the man for a moment but knows he won’t win. “Fine.” He sighs. “But we still have to worry about the homeowners asleep upstairs.”

“They shouldn’t be here for another week!” Otis says. “Seven-day escrow man, that’s almost two weeks! They don’t own this house yet!”

Ben pauses for a moment. “How exactly is seven days almost two weeks?”

“Seven business days. Escrow is always in business days!”

Ben sighs and walks away.

“I mean, right? Isn’t it?” Otis says, looking to Manchester now.

“You’re an idiot,” Manchester says.

“This is insane,” Ben says, coming back to the group. “I’m outta here.” He moves to grab his duffle bag.

“Wait a minute. Just wait a minute! We can still handle this!” Otis says quickly, trying to stop Ben from leaving. “Can we still handle this?” he says to Manchester.

“Two women and a kid?” Manchester scoffs.

“Two women?” Otis says in genuine surprise. “It’s only meant to be a woman and a kid.”

“Would you like to go count instead?” Ben says.

“Alright! Fine! Two women and a kid. Can we still handle this?”

Manchester nods.
“Not with me. I told you I would only do it if the house was empty,” Ben says.

“Forty-five minutes! That’s all you said you need. That’s like, nothing!” Otis says.

“They’ll call the cops before I even have a chance to get unpacked.”

“So, we keep an eye on them. Manchester can totally handle that part!”

“No problem,” Manchester says as he steps forward.

“I don’t want Manchester to handle that part,” Ben says.

“They won’t get hurt,” Otis says.

“What about us, huh? What if they have a gun?”

Manchester opens his jacket and reveals a bulletproof vest with the union jack across his chest. He then pulls a gun that was tucked into his belt.

“Where did you find this clown?” Ben says, gesturing to Manchester.

“A guy shows you a gun, and you insult him?” Manchester says, approaching Ben and staring him down. “Surely you yanks are smarter than that.”

Otis separates the two and answers Ben’s question. “Met him at the tables, same as you. And frankly, I’m grateful we have a little muscle right now.”

“What tables? I’ve never seen him before.”

“Different tables.”

“The fuck did you bring a gun for?” Ben says to Manchester. “We didn’t know there would be people here.”

“Never be too prepared, mate.”

“I’m out.” Ben grabs his bag and moves quickly to the door.

Otis, desperate to stop Ben from leaving, blocks the door. “We can’t do this without you. It’s still a good plan. It’s just… got a twist.”

“Yeah. Kidnapping,” Ben says.

“Not if we keep ‘em here. You can’t kidnap someone in their own house… I’m pretty sure.”

“Pure idiot,” Ben says.

“I am. I’m an idiot’s son. An idiot’s grandson. But for once in my life, I got a good idea and I’m not giving up so easy. Are you going to? Are you actually giving up? Gonna throw your cards on the table and go home early? Whatta ‘bout your family, huh? What are you gonna do ‘bout them? How are you gonna support them? Three million dollars. That’s a million each. It’s just upstairs. All you gotta do is stay. Come on, buddy. One more hand.”

Ben huffs and moves away from the door.

Otis claps once and punches the air in joy.
Something wakes Kara. She isn’t sure what it is, but something does.

She looks around at the room she’s currently in, the moving boxes along the wall reminding her of where she is. Something on top of her shifts, and she realizes that it’s not the blanket across her body that’s keeping her warm, it’s Lena who’s laying on top of her, head buried in the space between her neck and shoulder, and hand against her midriff.

Lena’s breath against her neck tickles, and it distracts Kara from whatever it was that interrupted her sleep. She wants to sink into this feeling, fully appreciate how nice this all is, but there’s another sound.

Kara tightens the hold she has around Lena instinctively and it causes Lena to stir slightly. Not enough to wake her though.

*Sounds like thunder*, Kara thinks, but there’s this feeling in her stomach. She knows it’s not thunder. There was no flash of bright light before the sound. She waits a few moments, and all Kara can hear is the rain against the house. She wants to just close her eyes and return to sleep, but it’s not right. Something isn’t right.

She carefully untangles herself from Lena, much to the displeasure of Lena if her sleepy huffs of annoyance are any indication. She tip-toes to the open bedroom door and listens out into the house.

A bright flash of light illuminates the room in white light for a brief second, and a low but very loud rumble quickly follows. The sudden intrusion of it causes Kara to jump and it wakes Lena who quickly sits up right.

Kara knows then that the sound that woke her earlier was not thunder.

“Kara?” Lena says, her voice croaky with sleep.

Kara raises a hand and continues to listen out into the house. She can’t hear anything but knows that something is wrong. She creeps back to Lena.

“There are security cameras in this house, right?” Kara says. Lena nods, confused. “Did you turn them on yet?” Lena nods again and Kara creeps over to the panic room and stares at the little screens. Her heart sinks when she sees three men climbing the stairs to the second floor. She watches one of the men slip and can the sound travels through the house and to her ears.

She quickly, but quietly runs back to Lena who’s now out of bed.

“There are three people in the house,” Kara says quickly but quietly.

“Lauren,” is all Lena says.

They both run out of the room and up the carpeted stairs to the fourth floor, making sure their footsteps are as silent as possible.

They both push through the door to Lauren’s room and all but throw themselves across the room and to Lauren’s bed.

“Lauren,” Lena whisper-yells. She shakes Lauren who wakes up groggy and confused.
“Wha—” Lauren tries, but the words fall from her tongue when Lena tugs her up.

“Come on!” Lena says, pulling Lauren with her.

Lauren, still in a sleepy state, slips on the floor and a loud thud travels through the house. Kara and Lena exchange a frightened look when heavy footsteps start running up the stairs, quickly getting closer to them.

“Elevator,” Kara says.

Lena nods and pulls Lauren by the arm as she follows Kara to the elevator. They throw themselves in and close the doors. Kara hits the button for the first floor and the elevator roars to life.

“What’s happening?” Lauren asks, her sleepy demeanour fading when she sees the fear across Kara and Lena’s faces.

“People. In the house,” Lena quickly says.

As they slowly descend a masked face appears through the window in the door. He pulls at the door and kicks it in an attempt to pry it open. “They’re coming down!” he shouts, before running off himself. “In the elevator, heading to you!”

Kara, Lena and Lauren can hear heavy sets of footsteps travel down the stairs towards the bottom floor.

“That room!” Lauren shouts.

“What?” Lena looks at her.

“The panic room!”

Kara hits the button for the third floor, but the elevator continues to descend.

“No, like this,” Lauren says, pushing her way to the panel of buttons. She hits the emergency stop button, and the elevator comes to a grinding halt. Then, just as suddenly, roars to life as they begin to climb to the third floor.

As soon as the elevator stops, they fling the cage door open, push through the door, and bolt down the hall. Lena’s in front, pulling Lauren by the arm, with Kara behind. The men run up the stairs and just as they’re about to be in the clear, the masked man from earlier grabs Kara’s ankle and she falls to the ground.

Lena looks back and pushes Lauren into the room. She runs back to Kara and pulls at her arm. The man tries to pull her down the stairs, but Kara kicks at the man’s face and when she lands a blow to his nose, the man releases her foot. Lena pulls Kara up and drags her down the hall.

They throw themselves into the room and just as one of the men are about to follow them in, Lauren hits the button and the door flies closed.

Audible thumps against the door quickly follow, but they’re inside. They’re safe… for now.
Chapter Four

Chapter Notes

Hello folks!

Thank you heaps for all the lovely comments; they make me smile. I love seeing your reactions and thoughts on where the story is going, so keep 'em coming if you want. If you have a question, feel free to ask. You can also come say hi on Tumblr @just-some-girlll if you want. Anyway, that's enough from me.

Quick warning: there are mentions of anxiety throughout and a not very graphic mention of a head injury at the end. If that's not something you want to read, that is more than okay.

Happy reading :)

Thump-thump. Thump-thump.

Lena can hear her heart beating loud and clear in her head, drowning out any other sound. She feels dizzy. Her heart continues to beat erratically against her chest, like it might just burst through her ribcage. She wants nothing more than to just curl up and wait for it all to stop. She can’t though, so instead, she closes her eyes and takes a few deep and steadying breaths.

Her pulse slows, and the thumping subsides.

Opening her eyes, Lena comes face-to-face with Kara and Lauren watching her. Fear is written across Lauren’s face and Kara has a similar look on her face but it’s different somehow.

“You okay?” Kara asks.


There’s a sudden clang that comes from the door. It bounces off the steel walls and around the small room, causing the three to jump. Lena instantly reaches for Kara’s hand.

Lauren looks up to the collection of small screens along one of the walls. “Look,” she says, standing and moving closer to the screens. Her eyes remain fixed on the blurry images. “What do you think they want?”

The question draws Lena from her thoughts and she shyly pulls her hand away from Kara’s. “I don’t know… rob us… I don’t know.”

“What’re they doing?” Kara stands and moves to kneel beside Lauren, watching the screens.
“They’re just… pacing.” Lauren tears her eyes away from the screens and looks to Lena who’s moved to lean against a wall. “What if they get in here?”

“They can’t,” Kara says quickly. She nods firmly and looks at Lena. “They can’t.”

A beat of silence passes.

“How do you feel?” Lena suddenly asks. She moves from the wall and shuffles so she’s sitting opposite Lauren. “Shaky? Chills?”

“I’m fine.” Lauren checks her watch. “Don’t worry about me.”

Lena nods, but still glance down at Lauren’s watch, wanting to make sure that she’s telling the truth. And when she sees 91 on the small screen, she relaxes a bit.

“Didn’t this room come with a phone or something?” Lauren stands and looks around.

“Yeah, but it’s a different line and I never hooked it up,” Lena says. She drops back to the wall beside Kara.

“Oh. What now then?”

“We wait,” Lena says.

Some time passes by, it’s not much, but sitting in that steel box makes just fifteen minutes feel like fifteen hours. Kara begins to search through the three boxes in the room, shuffling through first aid supplies, blankets, food, and other safety equipment. She finds three bottles of water and hands one to Lauren and Lena and keeps one for herself.

Lauren, growing bored of sitting on the floor and waiting, moves to the security camera feed. She studies the screens and Lena crawls over to join her, together they scan the feed until they find the men on the first floor in the kitchen.

“What are they doing?” Kara asks, crawling over to join the others.

“Looks like they’re fighting,” Lena says, pointing to the screen that shows the three men standing in a tight circle. They’re gesturing wildly and jabbing fingers at each other. Though the they can’t hear a word of their argument through the screens.

Lauren’s eyes drift over the various screens and buttons until she sees on labelled ‘ALL PAGE’. She points to the button and then looks to Lena and Kara, her question silent but understood.

Lena looks to Kara, who shrugs and says, “Go for it.”

Lena is reluctant to press the button and speak, but Lauren offers her encouragement, for the first time.

“You can do it.”

Lena leans forward and clears her throat before holding the button down. “Hello?” she says, and Lauren and Kara laugh lightly when they see the three men practically jump out of their shoes.
“The police are on their way,” she continues, “I suggest you leave.” She leans away from the intercom and watches the security feed.

The three of them watch as one of the men, who looks surprisingly calm given the situation, steps forward and looks up at the camera. He makes a phone with this hand and shakes his head. The message he’s trying to send clear: you don’t have a phone.

“How’d he know that?” Lauren looks to Lena and Kara for some kind of answer, but they look just as confused.

Lena leans back into the speaker and holds the button down again. “Take what you want and leave,” she says, her voice firm this time.

On the monitors, they watch as the three men have an urgent, whispered conversation, before patting their pockets and turning in circles for some reason. The same man from before steps back up the camera and holds up a finger, his message once again clear: wait a second.

One of the other men disappear for a moment and return with a pad of paper. He holds it up to the camera so they can read it. He flips through three pages until their message is conveyed clearly.

‘WHAT WE WANT IS IN THAT ROOM,’ is their message.

Lena takes a sharp inhale of breath and leans back away from the monitors. “What we want is in that room’,,” she mutters to herself.

“They’re coming in here, aren’t they?” Lauren says.

Lena doesn’t answer.

“Are they?” Lauren looks to Kara now.

No, they can’t. It’s not possible,” Kara says.

Angry, Lena sits forward and jabs the talk button. “What do you know about this room?”

A moment passes and another message is written across the pad of paper.

‘MORE THAN YOU.’

Lena’s confidence is starting to waver, and Kara can see this, but she can also see that she’s angry, so she doesn’t interfere yet.

“We’re not coming out. We’re not letting you in. Get out of my house,” Lena says into the speaker.

They watch as yet another message is written across the pad of paper.

‘WE WILL LET YOU GO.’

Lena scoffs. “Conversation’s over,” she says into the speaker before leaning away.

An audible click sounds through the house, telling the three men that the PA system has been
turned off. Ben, Manchester and Otis all stare up at the camera, dumbfounded.

“Right where you wanted her, Otis?” Ben says, his tone is sarcastic.

“Shut up!” Otis snaps.

“I mean, I’m surprised they didn’t go for it. I thought she’d come right out when you said you’d let ’em go.”

“Shut up and let me think,” Otis says. He pulls a pack of cigarettes from his jacket and lights one.

“I’m afraid to let you think,” Ben says, “things seem to get worse the more you think.”

“Okay then, you think. What are we gonna do?”

“What if she called the cops?” Manchester asks, his tone flat.

“She didn’t.” Ben waves his concern away.

“She said she did,” Otis says.

“She lied. Cops would be here by now if she called them. And besides, Otis cut the phones.”

A beat of silence passes and then Ben laughs to himself.

“What’s so funny, huh?” Manchester says, moving over to him in an attempt at intimidation.

“There is not one funny thing here.”

“It’s just ironic. I spend ten years buildings those fucking rooms to keep people out, now I gotta figure out how to get in.

“Yes, yes, it’s all terribly ironic.” Otis drops his cigarette and stomps it out. “Now how are you gonna get us in there?”

“Can’t,” Ben says with a simple shrug of his shoulders. “That’s the whole point. Can’t get into that room.”

“So, what the fuck are we supposed to do!” Manchester says through his teeth.

“Make her come out. And when she does, that’s when we gotta be careful. We can’t let her leave this house; she can’t even think about it. We just keep them here and keep them quiet for forty-five minutes. And I don’t want,” Ben looks to Manchester, “you standing over them with your finger on the trigger. We’ll wind up with three dead bodies.

“So, we’re gonna seal this place up. They want to stay in here. Fine. We make it so they can’t leave. Once they come out of that room, it is impossible for them to leave.”

“And why exactly would they want to come out, smarty pants?”

Ben glances out the French doors and sees a large outdoor grill on the balcony. Thinking, he takes a step closer and sees a white five-gallon tank underneath the grill.

“I’ve got an idea,” Ben says before he goes outside to retrieve the tank.

“Where are you going!” Otis shouts after him. When he gets no response, Otis looks to Manchester. “Where’s he going?”
Manchester shrugs and walks off to begin locking down the house.

In the panic room, Lena begins shuffling through the boxes of gear as a way to busy her hands and keep her mind occupied. There’s everything a person would need to survive in the boxes. Waterproof matches and lighters, flashlights, batteries, water, canned food, flares, pillows, fireproof blankets, a complete toolkit. Everything they would need to survive a fallout is in here with them.

Kara, who was sitting beside Lauren, notices Lena’s frantic search. She knows Lena’s anxious and that the searching is likely a result of that. She glances to Lauren, who seems unaware, instead focusing on the security cameras to her left.

Kara moves over to Lena and carefully places a hand on her shoulder, trying to pull her away. “Hey,” she says.

Lena turns to face her, and Kara can see the anxiety written across her face.

“It’ll be okay,” Kara says. She studies Lena’s face. “Small space?”

Lena nods.

“That’s okay.” Kara offers her a smile. “Why don’t you just sit down for a minute? Might make you feel better.”

Lena returns Kara’s smile, albeit weaker. She goes to sit against the wall beside Lauren who’s still staring up at the security camera feed.

There’s a brief moment of silence in the room before Lauren speaks.

“What the hell are they doing?” Lauren doesn’t look away from the screens, and Kara and Lena move to get a better look.

The three of them watch on as the three men move around the four levels of the house in a seemingly rehearsed manner. They drill screws into the tops and bottoms of the French doors, pull curtains closed, and barricade the main doors.

“They’re locking us in,” Lena says, barely audible. She exchanges a quick look with Kara and knows that the fear written across Kara’s face is most likely mirrored on her own.

Lena backs away from the screens and into the far corner. Sweat has broken out on her forehead, and her whole body seems to shake.

“Lena?” Kara says, but to Lena, her voice is far away.

Lauren and Kara’s calls beginning to fade from Lena’s hearing, and she can feel her eyes closing.

“Lena!” Kara and Lauren shout.

Lena can feel her eyes close and is aware of the ground becoming much closer to her, but she doesn’t stop. Just as she’s about to collapse, Kara catches her and gently sets her on the ground. Lauren grabs one of the pillows from the boxes and places it under Lena’s head.
Lena takes a sharp inhalation and bolts up. She’s still in the panic room, but she’s alone. It’s completely silent. She looks from her left to her right, her head pounds at the movement. Lena moves to stand on shaky legs, using the wall to support herself.

She moves to the door and presses her ear to the cool surface; it sends a shiver down her spine. She can’t hear anything. Glancing at the security camera feed, Lena only sees black. She tries to turn the screens on, but nothing happens.

She needs to find Lauren and Kara.

Lena hits the button and the door slides open. There’s nothing though. It’s dark out, and the room is exactly as she left it before darting into the panic room.

She takes a careful step out and another and another. She’s out of the panic room and almost out of the master bedroom when she hears a faint tapping. Lena continues on and makes her way to the first floor. The front door is wide open, but there’s no rain. There’s absolutely nothing. It’s still.

The tapping is louder here, still quiet, but slightly louder. She moves around a corner and into the kitchen, and when she does, her stomach sinks and all colour from her fade.

There, on the ground is Kara, a bloody gash on her head, staining her usually blonde hair with an awful red. Kara taps the ground with a knuckle and Lena can hear an almost silent whisper of “help.”

She sees Lauren no more than six feet behind Kara, unmoving through. She tries to run to them, but her feet won’t move. She’s stuck.

Something starts to pull her back and she’s screaming, trying to get to the two people who matter to her most. But she can’t. She claws at the banister, trying desperately to stay, to help. Something pulls her out of the door and out onto the street.

The front door closes and suddenly, everything goes black.
Chapter Five

Chapter Notes

Hello, again folks!

I hope you're all well. Thank you all for your lovely comments and feedback; I'm having a great time reading and responding to them, and I'm very happy to see that you all seem to be enjoying the story thus far. If you want, you're more than welcomed to come say hi on Tumblr @just-some-girlll. I'm a pretty friendly gal, so please don't be shy!

Anyway, I won't keep you.

Happy reading :)

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Everything is dark and everything is silent.

Faintly, Lena can hear something. It sounds far away. Muffled, almost.

Crying? Pleading? No, it’s shouting. As she focuses in on the sound, Lena starts to make out the words that are being yelled. It’s two voices. The more she focuses in on the shouting, to more she remembers.


The darkness fades and she snaps her eyes open, met instantly with a harsh white light. Lena gasps for air and blots up. She’s not alone this time and it’s for this reason that she surges forward and pulls Kara and Lauren into a hug. “You’re okay.” She breathes a sigh of relief. “You’re both okay.” She holds them both tight.

“You can’t do that, okay!” Lauren pushes away. “You can’t— you can’t just leave! You have to stay! You have to stay here!” Her face is red, eyes glassy, and hands shaky.

“I am. I’m here,” Lena says, trying to calm her niece.

“You have to be!” Lauren shouts.

“I am,” Lena repeats, hoping that her firm voice will help ease some of Lauren’s fear. Lena squeezes Lauren’s shoulders and looks her firmly in the eyes. “I didn’t mean to scare you, and I’m sorry that I did. But you need to know that I will not leave you. Ever.”

Lauren nods, though her eyes are still gleaming with unshed tears. Lena pulls her into a hug then and rubs her hand along her back.
“I will never leave you,” Lena says.

Lauren returns the hug, clings to her even. She sniffs before pulling away and wipes her nose with her sleeve.

Lena watches Lauren for another moment, but after, she throws her arms around Kara, pulling her close. Kara returns the hug without hesitation, burrowing her head into the space between her neck and shoulder.

“You okay?” Kara whispers.

Lena nods. “I’m sorry.”

“For what?” Kara pulls away, puzzled.

“Scaring you.” Lena looks down, desperate to avoid Kara’s gaze.

“Hey,” Kara says, nudging at Lena’s chin. She offers her a smile when Lena looks up. “You don’t have to be sorry about that. These things happen, and sure, I was scared – we both were – but you’re okay now and that’s what matters.”

Lena nods again. “I’m okay.” She glances down at Lauren’s watch which reads 84. She nods again, reassuring herself. “We’re all okay.”

After a moment, she turns her attention to the security monitors to see what the three intruders are doing. Lena crawls closer to the screens and kneels on her knees in front of them, when she sees that they’re standing around in the master bedroom. Kara and Lauren crawl over too and watch on.

The rain continues to fall outside, just as heavy and showing no signs of letting up anytime soon. A flash of lightning seeps in between the blinds, closely followed by a crack of thunder.

With a claw hammer in one hand, and his other covering his nose and mouth, Ben breaks a hole into the sheetrock on the outer wall of the panic room. Dust and pieces of wall dancing and eventually fall to the ground. The harsh sound resonates around the room, but he shows no signs of stopping. Like a man possessed, he tears into the wall with the claw end of the tool.

Otis stands off to the side slightly, shining a flashlight into the ever-growing hole. He watches on in curiosity, not yet knowing Ben’s plan. Manchester looks on, almost impressed.

Abruptly, the sound stops, and Ben drops the hammer to the ground and spins around to rifle through the toolbox at his feet. He pulls out a sophisticated drill and selects one of the drill bits, before he proceeds to drill into one of the now exposed ducts. A horrendous screech now fills the room.

He stops again, a hole now more than the size of a quarter left in the duct. Ben snaps his fingers and Manchester hands him the garden hose that he’d brought upstairs moments prior. Quickly, Ben shoves one end of the hose into the hole and fastens it to the duct with a roll of duct tape. Manchester takes the other end and attaches it to the tank.

“Oh!” Otis says, marvelling at the sight unfolding before him. “Oh! This is awesome! Great idea
everyone.”

Ben and Manchester ignore him and continue to work.

Once they’re done, Ben steps back and looks at the group and Manchester kneels down beside the tank.

“The propane should be enough to flood ‘em out, eh?” Manchester says, grinning. He moves his hand to the knob and is about to turn it, but Ben pushes him away and takes his place.

Ben’s hand hovers over the knob, he doesn’t want to do this but doesn’t stop himself either. He spins the small knob, opening it halfway.

“Open it!” Otis says, snapping his finger in Ben’s direction while his eyes remain fixed on the door to the panic room.

“I did,” Ben says.

”He said open it,” Manchester says, his voice firm and unwavering.

“We’re just sending a message. They’ll get the point,” Ben says.

Otis seems to accept this, but after two minutes with no movement, he snaps. “Open it, will you!”

Manchester shoves Ben out of the way and grabs the tank. “We ain’t playin’ here, mate.” Without any hesitation, he opens the valve all the way and the gas pours into the house with an audible whoosh.

In the panic room, Kara, Lena and Lauren sit side-by-side against the wall, waiting. In the silence around them, three red streamers tethered to the air vent, flap to life as gas pours into the room. Lauren looks up at the sound.

“Do you hear that?” Lauren asks as she looks around the small room for the source of the noise.

Lena and Kara listen for a brief second and look around the room too from the position on the floor when they hear the flapping.

“There,” Lena says, pointing up to one of the air vents.

Kara stands and stares up at the streamers. She sniffs and makes a face at the smell. She pushes one of the boxes so it’s underneath the air vent and stands on it. As soon as she’s face-to-face with the vent, she coughs and ducks her head.

“What’s wrong?” Lena stands and grabs hold of Kara’s arm when it looks like she might fall.

Kara coughs again. “Get on the floor.”

Lauren and Lena now cough.

“What is it?” Lauren asks from the floor.
“Gas,” Lena says flatly. She grabs two rolls of tape, and hands one to Kara, before climbing up onto the box.

Together, they begin covering the vents with tape but it’s a futile fight. The gas breaks through the tape and continues to pour into the room.

“This isn’t working.” Kara stops covering the vents and looks to Lena, desperate for some kind of solution.

Lena looks around the room, searching for some kind of solution. She finds it in the form of several fire blankets and the waterproof lighter. She thinks for a second but knows there’s no other solution. Lena jumps down and grabs the fire blankets and lighter.

“Cover yourself with these.” Lena covers Lauren in several of the fireproof blankets.

Lauren looks at her and her face registers a vague understanding of her plan, but she can’t quite believe it. She shakes her head, but still covers herself with the blankets.

Kara pulls the vent off and jumps down off the box, grabbing the remaining blankets and draping several over herself and Lena.

“My arms are longer. I’ll do it,” Kara says.

“It’s fine, I can do it,” Lena says.

“I know you can.” Kara squeezes her shoulder. “But I’m saying that my arms are longer, so it’ll be easier for me.”

Lena hesitates but hands the lighter to Kara.

With the lighter in hand, Kara jumps back up on the box. “You ready?” She looks to the floor where Lauren and Lena are huddled. Lena nods and pulls the blankets over her head. Kara does the same and reaches into the ducting with her hand, her finger on the lighter’s trigger.

Outside, in the master bedroom, Manchester stands guard over the gas tank to stop anyone from adjusting it.

“Don’t be stupid,” Ben says, taking a step to the tank but stopping when Manchester takes a dominant stance. “We’re trying to scare them, not kill them!”

“Be quiet!” Otis says. He moves to the door and presses his ear to the cool surface. “They’re coughing.”

“They’re going to die in there!” Ben says.

“Nobody is gonna die, will you just have the guts to follow through with this? It’s a good idea. Think about it, what would you do if you were them, stay in there and choke to death or come out? It’s a no brainer.” Otis presses his ear back to the door. “We just gotta get them out for forty-five minutes. The worst that’s gonna happen is they pass out and we drag ’em out into the fresh air. They’ll be fine.”
“Otis, you idiot,” Ben says, moving closer. “How are we supposed to get into the room if they pass out!”

Otis seems to realize the fault in his plan. He takes a step back and thinks. “Cut it back a little,” he says to Manchester.

“No fucking way, mate,” Manchester says.

“He’s right! We can’t get in there if they’re dead!”

Their argument turns physical. Ben lunges at Manchester to grab the tank from him, but Manchester easily pushes him to the side.

“Watch it, mate. Wouldn’t want ya’ to get a bruise,” Manchester says, tauntingly.

Ben is about to respond, but there’s a banging that catches his attention. He turns away from Manchester and his attention shifts to the ducting. He moves closer to the ducting and listens closely. “Do you hear that?” He presses an ear to the duct and listens.

“What?” Otis takes a step closer to listen, but the sound’s cause goes lost on him.

*Scratch. Boom.*

It’s a familiar sound and one that takes Ben a moment to place. It repeats a few more times, and when he finally realizes what it is, it’s too late.

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Kara strains her arm and stands on the tips of her toes so she can angle to lighter as far down the duct as possible. She pulls back and releases the trigger, but the angle makes it difficult.

*Scratch. Boom.*

Kara repeats it, her thumb tensing for one last good hard turn. She cranks the wheel, and a spark forms, a flame erupts, and a blue cloud shoots out in two directions; one toward the panic room, the other toward the bedroom.

Kara jumps off the box and throws herself to the ground, using her blanket to cover herself and Lauren and Lena as best as she can. A bright blue flame engulfs the ceiling with a deafening *whoomph*, and the fluorescent light tubes explode, showering glass to the ground.

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Ben jumps back from the wall, and Manchester wises up and backs away too.

The blue flames burst from the duct, the garden hose shoots off and flails around and because the gas is still pouring from the tank, a blue flame ignites on the end of the house.

“Shit!” All three say in unison.
Otis tries to grab the tank and close the valve, but that only results in his arm catching fire. He screams in pain and runs to the adjoining bathroom to run cold water over his arm. Ben, however, grabs the blankets from the bed and with Manchester’s help, they cover the flame and are able to close the valve.

The blue cloud on the ceiling of the panic room suddenly evaporates with another angry *whoomph*. Lena, Lauren, and Kara peer out slightly from the blankets and, when they see the flames have subsided, they sit up and push the blankets away. Only one of the fluorescent lights remain intact and it casts a flickering, uneven light on the room.

“Is everyone okay?” Lena asks.

Lauren and Kara murmur and nod, still both stunned at what just happened.

Kara goes to move and hisses in pain when she puts pressure on her arm. She lifts and examines it.

“Kara! Your arm!” Lena surges forward and inspects Kara’s arm. Her arm is red, skin is peeling away, and it looks like blisters are starting to quickly form. It could have been worse, but it may still scar.

“It’s fine, really,” Kara says.

“It is most definitely not fine! Lauren, grab some of the water bottles and pour the water over her arm, I’ll see what the first aid kit has.”

Lauren and Lena rifle through the boxes and Lauren returns to Kara’s side with an armful of water bottles.

“We shouldn’t waste the water, we might need it for something later,” Kara says.

“Kara,” Lena sits back down beside Kara with the first aid kit, “there is a very good chance that it’s going to scar. What we do now will determine just how bad the scarring will be. So, just sit still. Please.”

Kara nods and then Lauren and Lena begin pouring the water on her arm. For the next fifteen minutes, Lena cleans and does her best to disinfect the burn, while Lauren shuffles through the boxes, searching for something to eat.

Lena’s almost done with Kara’s arm and wraps a bandage around it to protect the damaged skin. She looks up at meets Kara’s gaze, only now aware of just how close they are.

“Thanks,” Kara says, smiling softly.

“Always.” Lena returns the smile and holds her gaze.

A crinkling to their left breaks the moment. They look away from each other, and Lena moves back slightly. She watches as Lauren opens a granola bar.

“You guys want one?” Lauren asks, gesturing to a small pile of granola bars beside her.

Lena smiles and takes two, handing one to Kara.
The three of them sit in silence and munch away on their food. It’s still tense, but easier now. They’re all okay. They will all be okay. They will get through this.
Hello folks!

Just a quick note about this chapter: it does jump between scenes very frequently. I tried to combine certain scenes, but I found that, for the sake of tension building, having short scenes worked best. If, however, you think that certain scenes would work better combined, please do let me know; I'm always looking for ways to improve my writing! Also, if you get lost at any point about which characters are in each scene, please tell me and I'll have a look at making it more obvious.

The next chapter may also be the final chapter of this story. I haven't decided yet, but if it is, it will be quite long so it may be a while before it's ready. However, I may do a very short epilogue after that.

As always, you can come say hi on Tumblr @just-some-girlll.

Happy reading :)

The tension is thick in the master bedroom. Otis, Ben and Manchester stand in shock at the scene before them.

“We need to talk,” Manchester says, his tone serious and glaring at Otis. “Downstairs.”

Otis nods and leaves, making his way down the stairs and Manchester follows. When Ben tries to follow too, Manchester turns abruptly and stops him.

“Not you,” Manchester says. “You stay, make sure they don’t come out.”

Ben swallows thickly but stays in the room as Manchester and Otis take the stairs to the first floor.

In the panic room, Lauren lays on the ground on her stomach while Lena and Kara sit side-by-side against the wall.

“There’s a tube here,” Lauren says. She sits up quickly and looks over her shoulder to Kara and Lena.

“What?” Kara says.
“A tube,” Lauren repeats. She grabs a nearby torch and lays back down, shining the light out through the tube. “Yeah, see! A tube and it goes right through. I can see outside!”

Kara lies down to Lauren’s left and follows the light beam, her eyes falling to the brownstone across the courtyard. “Someone’s in there,” she says. “I can see someone in that room.”

Lauren hums and Lena sits upright, curious. Kara looks over her shoulder to Lena and urges her over. Lena does so and lies down on Lauren’s right. The tube is small so they huddle close, squinting so they can all see out. They can see it clear as day: a man sleeping in a room with a lamp light still on.

“How do we get his attention?” Lena asks, her gaze fixed.

Kara shrugs, but Lauren begins to flash the torch. At first, the flashing looks random, but Lena and Kara can quickly see that there’s a pattern. Three short flashes, followed by three long flashes, and then another three short flashes.

“Morse code?” Lena turns to Lauren.


“Where’d you learn Morse code?” Lena says.

“Dad.”

Lena looks from Lauren to Kara then, only to see that Kara’s already looking at her. Lauren misses the look of sympathy that graces Kara and Lena’s faces, too focused on sending the message.

It takes a while, but the man begins to stir and winces at the flashing light that fills his room.

“Got him!” Lauren says.

Lena holds her breath and Lauren flashes the message faster.

The man moves to the window and looks out at the flashing light. A hopeful expression falls across Lauren, Lena, and Kara. Maybe they will get out of here. The man is reading the message, so Lauren keeps it up.

“Come on,” Lauren says, desperate.

After another minute, the man gives them the finger and angrily yanks his curtains closed. Kara and Lena drop their heads, annoyed, and Lauren stares out in silence and shock.

Kara and Lena sit up, their hopeful expressions now gone.

“Hey,” Lena places a gentle hand on Lauren’s shoulder, “it was a good idea. Don’t beat yourself up.”

“We’re never getting out of here.” Lauren sighs, turns the torch off and drops her head to the floor.

Lena rubs her back and steals a glance at Lauren’s watch, it reads 79.
Ben stands near the door frame, straining to hear the conversation below. He glances back at the panic room then down the stairs where the conversation is getting more heated. Their conversation carries up the stairs.

“We’re not gonna do anything. He’s fine, trust me,” Otis says.

“If you think I’m gonna let my cut slip away because of him, then you’re wrong. Seriously wrong. That man is a problem. Your problem. Wasn’t my idea to bring him along,” Manchester says.

“That’s right, it wasn’t your idea; none of this was. It’s mine. I came up with the idea, got it?”

“He puts his hands on me again and I’ll shoot him.”

“No, you won’t, because without Ben, there’s no way of getting into the safe. So, as far as I’m concerned, he can set your ass on fire and you ain’t laying a hand on him. Got it?”

Ben is barely standing in the master bedroom now, slowing moving out and towards the stairs where he can better hear the conversation below. He’s just below one of the security cameras and in a blind spot. He glances back and forth between the panic room and stairs. Listening.

Lena’s kneeling in front of the security camera feeds, watching. She glances to the screen showing the master bedroom and something on her nightstand catches her attention: her phone.

“If only I could get to it,” Lena mutters.

“Hmm?” Kara sits up and shuffles so she’s kneeling beside Lena, looking curiously between the monitors and Lena.

“My phone,” Lena says. “I can see it on my nightstand.”

Kara is silent and turns her attention to the monitors. “Maybe we can,” she says. “Look.” She points to one screen showing the security feed for the first-floor entryway. “Two of them are down there.”

“Where’s the other guy then?” Lauren asks, shuffling up to the screens.

All three of them search the screens but they can’t find the third intruder.

“I don’t know,” Lena says, “but I don’t know if we’ll get another chance to grab a phone.” Lena turns to face Kara and Lauren. “I’ll run out and grab the phone.”

“Lena, no,” Kara says. She grabs Lena’s hand and squeezes, urging her not to.

“We don’t know where the third guy is,” Lauren says.

“I know, but we need a phone.” Lena squeezes Kara’s hand in return. “I’ll be no more than five seconds.” She stands, letting Kara’s hand drop as she moves to the door. Her hand hovers over the button that will release the door. “If it looks like I can’t get back, just close the door.”

“No,” Kara and Lauren both say.
“Close it!”
Kara and Lauren nod unwillingly.

More of the argument between Otis and Manchester carries up to the third floor, and Ben is nearing breaking point. He takes another step towards the stairs and suddenly, he appears on the security feed for the hallway camera.

Lauren glances back to the monitors. “Wait!”
Lena freezes, her hand just about to release the door. She moves to the monitors, wide-eyed.

Ben can’t take it anymore and marches down the stairs, not hiding his presence from the others. He flies down the stairs and within seconds, is standing with Otis and Manchester, yelling.

“Go!” Kara and Lauren shout when they see all three men accounted for.
Lena hits the door release button. The door begins to crank open, and Lena slips through the small gap before it’s all the way open. She hurls herself across the room.

Time seemingly slows. Seconds feel like hours, and each step Lena takes feels as though she’s walking through mud. She feels herself slide against the hardwood floor and almost slip.

Lena reaches the nightstand and grabs her phone, but her grip his loose, unsteady, and she drops the phone in her haste to get back to the panic room.

It hits the ground. The sound carries through the house. Just as Lena’s about to pick it up, she hears heavy footsteps running up the stairs.

_They’re coming_, Lena thinks to herself. She grabs the phone and darts across the room. As she passes the bedroom door Lena sees the three men hurl themselves up the stairs in her peripheral vision. Lena lunges herself into the panic room, the three intruders just behind her.

Kara grabs Lena and helps pull her in. Lauren hits the button when Lena’s inside and the steel door closes with a deafening _whang_ that carries throughout the whole house.
“Fuck!” Otis bangs his fists against the steel door.

“What’d she get?” Ben looks around frantically, searching for whatever it was that Lena got. “What’d she… get?” His eyes fall to the nightstand. There’s a lamp, a water bottle and an empty phone charger. “Cellphone.”

“What?” Otis turns away from the door and looks to Ben.

“Cellphone,” Ben says again, louder. “They got a cellphone.”

“Shit!” Otis kicks the radiator beneath the window to his left.

Lena fumbles for the phone and quickly dials 911. She brings the phone to her ear but gets a rapid beeping: a busy signal.

“Oh, no. No, no, no no no no.” Lena stares at the phone; watching the one bar of signal she has flash on and off.

“What?” Kara and Lauren say.

What’s wrong?” Kara asks.

Lena doesn’t answer. She moves around the room, raises the phone high and low, desperate for a signal.

“I don’t think they’ll be making any calls,” Manchester says, almost amused.

“They’ve got a fucking phone!” Otis spins and faces Manchester, moving towards him. “Of course, they’re going to call for help.”

“No, you idiot, they’re not,” Manchester says. “That’s a reinforced steel room, correct?” He addresses Ben now who nods. “Right, so, how’re they gonna make a call if they ain’t got any signal?”

“Is he right?” Otis spins and faces Ben now.

“Almost,” Ben says.

“Almost? What do you mean almost?” Otis says.

“Well, they won’t be able to make a call on the cellphone, but if they’re smart, they’ll connect it to the main phone line,” Ben says.
“Sure, but Otis cut the phone line,” Manchester says. He takes a step closer and pats Otis’ back. “Didn’t ya.”

Otis says nothing. He looks to the ground, avoiding eye contact.

“You did, didn’t you?” Manchester’s voice is firmer now.

“When I told you to cut the phone line, did you go to the basement or did you just cut the cord connected to the landline?” Ben says, his voice just as firm.

Again, there’s no answer from Otis, but his silence is enough.

“Wires!” Lena leaps into action again. She takes part of the air ducting off and reaches in, pulling out a bundle of wires. “Phone wires!” She looks up at Kara and Lauren.

“I thought you said the phone in here doesn’t work?” Lauren says.

“Yeah, but I connected the phone up downstairs and there’s an outlet at the base of this wall outside. I saw it earlier!” Lena detangles the bundle and begins stripping the wires as Kara and Lauren watch on.

It’s nothing flashy, and certainly not perfect, but Lena connects her cellphone to the house’s mainline. She dials 911 again and brings the phone to her ear.

“911, what is your emergency,” an operator’s voice says.

“Yes! I’m at—”

“Please hold.”

A soft tune starts to play through the phone.

“No!” Lena yells. “No!”

“Alex,” Kara says, hopeful that this is the moment where help finally comes.

Lena pushes the phone to Kara’s hand and Kara quickly dials the number she has memorized. She brings the phone to her ear.

Ring. Ring.

Kara waits.

“Fuck!” Manchester runs down the stairs until he reaches the basement, jumping the last few steps.

Fumbling through the dark space, Manchester grabs a torch from his pocket. He searches the mechanical room, shinning a harsh white light around its dingy walls. He pans the beam of light
around and stops when he sees a small box at the far end of the room.

Manchester runs to it and rips the entire panel off the wall.

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*Ring.*

The ringing stops.

*Click.*

Kara’s about to speak; about to throw a whole heap of words into the phone and hope that Alex can make sense of it all. She opens her mouth, but, with an abrupt *shriek*, the line goes dead.
Chapter Seven

Chapter Notes

Hello folks!

Been a while and I do apologise for that, but I've been severely lacking the motivation to write, and I've just been busy. Regardless, I'm going to finish this fic off over the weekend. One thing before you read this: it does focus quite heavily around Lauren being hypoglycaemic. I'm not hypoglycaemic nor do I have particular expertise in the area; my knowledge comes from high school level biology and the research I did. It's by no means thorough, and I don't expect my writing to be accurate because all my sources were telling me different things. If I've got something wrong, or if you have any accurate sources, please feel free to tell me (I'd love to make my piece as accurate as possible).

Come say hi on Tumblr @just-some-girlll.

Happy reading :)

Silence rings through the speaker on the phone, somehow deafening. Kara brings the phone into her lap and looks to Lena and Lauren.

“They cut the phone line,” Kara says, tired, broken.

“What now then?” Laurens asks, looking between Kara and Lena. There’s still hope in her voice. “There’s gotta be something else we can try.” Lauren stands and starts to pace back and forth, firing ideas off.

Kara and Lena share a silent conversation. They both know there isn’t anything else they can do except to wait.

“Lauren,” Lena says, carefully. “Why don’t you sit down?”

“We can’t just give up!” Lauren stops and looks to Lena, desperate, and eyes going glassy. “We can’t. There has to be something else we can do!”

Lena extends her hand to Lauren. “Just sit down for a bit.”

“No! We— we have to try! We can’t just give up!”

Kara stands and moves in front of Lauren. “No one’s saying that we’re giving up,” she says gently. “But getting worked up isn’t going to help. Why don’t we just sit down for a bit and then we’ll figure something out. Sound good?”
Lauren nods, trying to hold her tears back. She goes to sit beside Lena and rests her head against Lena’s shoulder.

“I’m sorry,” Lauren says after a brief pause.

“Why?” Lena looks at Lauren, curious.

“I was trying not to tell you.”

Lena shoots Kara a confused look, who shrugs, confused herself, before looking back to Lauren.

“I’m dizzy,” Lauren says.

Those two words are enough the cause the colour to fall from Lena’s face, and she can feel her heart stop for a second. Lena reaches for Lauren’s watch and reads the number. The readout is now 56. Lena swallows and grabs Lauren by the face.

“You’re in the fifties now. We gotta get some food into you, okay? Try and bring your blood sugar back up,” Lena rushes out. “Can you hear me?”

“I’m dizzy, not deaf,” Lauren answers.

A weak smile makes its way across Lena’s face. “Still a smart ass I see. Excellent sign. Kara, can you see if we have any more of those granola bars or anything with sugar?”

Kara throws herself to the crates and rifles through them all. “There’s a small pouch of juice, but that’s it,” she says, handing the juice to Lena.

“Should be enough for now,” Lena says. She opens the juice pouch and hands it to Lauren. “Here, drink this.”

“What if I keep dropping?” Lauren asks.

“Not an option,” Lena says.

“What if I do though?”

“We’ll cross that bridge when we need to.”

The answer doesn’t completely satisfy Lauren, but it’s enough for now. She finishes the juice and slumps back against the wall.

Lena steps away from Lauren and speaks to Kara quietly.

“What do we do if she keeps dropping?” Kara asks.

“We’ll have to get her some food. She should be fine for now, but if her levels have a rapid drop, she might pass out. If that happens, she’ll need a glucagon shot.”

“We don’t have any in here, do we?”

Lena shakes her head. “There’s some in the kitchen downstairs, but most of it is in Lauren’s room upstairs.”
“We’re leaving,” Otis says.

“The hell we are.” Manchester steps forward, his tone firm.

“After all we’ve been through, I’m not just walking out when we’re this close,” Ben says

“Close? Are you insane? We’re nowhere near close! Fuck this! I’ll just make an anonymous phone call on Monday, they’ll find the floor safe, and I’ll inherit my share.”

“What do you expect us to do, mate?” Manchester asks, though his tone suggests what he said is anything but a question.

“Here,” Otis tosses two hundred dollars on the ground, “for your time. I’ll be making six-hundred thousand, maybe a bit more anyway.” He starts to move towards the bedroom door.

Ben remains silent, seemingly lost in thought.

“Nobody leaves,” Manchester says.

“Funny, because that’s exactly what I’m about to do.”

“You said six-hundred thousand,” Ben says, drawing all attention to him.

“What?” Otis looks at Ben confused.

“Six-hundred thousand, that’s what you said you’d inherit.”

“Yeah, so?”

“Well, you said there’s three million in that floor safe, and I’m willing to bet that your granddad didn’t leave you twenty percent of his estate, and even if he did, I can’t imagine the rest of your family being okay with that. They’d contest it. So, my question is, why would you be getting six-hundred thousand dollars?”

Otis grows uncomfortable, and Manchester shifts his attention to Otis, catching on to what Ben is implying.

“How much is actually in that floor safe?” Ben asks.

Otis doesn’t answer.

“Answer the question, mate.” Manchester moves closer, his voice unwavering.

“Close to forty million,” Otis says after a beat of silence.

Ben laughs, but Manchester seems to grow angry.

“How’d you think you were gonna be able to pull that off? Did you think we’d just wait outside until you took what you wanted? How did you expect to take thirty-seven million from us without us finding out?” Ben laughs at the absurdity of it.

A beat of silence.

“I don’t have to answer to you lot,” Otis says before he storms off down the stairs.
Manchester and Ben follow after him.

Otis grabs one of the drills and starts to remove the screws from the top and bottom of the front door.

“We’re not leaving,” Ben says. “I’m getting into that room and I’m opening that safe.”

“Doubtful, but ten outta ten for attitude,” Otis says.

“You walk out that door and you lose your share of the money,” Ben says.

“Yeah, whatever.”

“I mean it!”

“Adios.” Otis gets the last screw out and stands. He yanks the door open and a blast of wind rushes into the house. Just as he’s about to take a step out an almost silent PFFFT sounds from behind Ben.

A bullet zooms by and hits Otis in the back of the head. He crumples to the ground and Ben spins to find Manchester standing a third of the way up the stairs with a gun and silencer attachment, in hand.

“Nobody leaves,” Manchester says.

Lauren is staring at the video monitors, her eyes wide and never moving from the screen. She raises a finger to the monitor and looks back at Kara and Lena.

Kara and Lena shuffle over to the monitors and follow Lauren’s finger. Their eyes go wide when they see the scene in the entryway.

The three of them silently watch as one of the men drag another one of the intruders by the legs. The video quality isn’t great, but they can still make out blood staining the floor as the lifeless body is dragged into the living room.

Ben picks up Otis’ legs and drags him along the floor until he’s in the living room. There’s a streak of blood that goes from the door to where Otis’ body rests now, and a pool of blood is slowly forming under Otis’ head.

“You’re crazy, you know that?” Ben says to Manchester.

“Careful, mate.” Manchester takes a step towards Ben and holds his gun up. “I’m the one with the gun. Remember that.”

“What do you want me to do?”
“What’d you think? Get us into that room.”

“I can’t.”

Manchester holds the gun to Ben’s head. “You can, and you will. You’re full of ideas.”

“I can’t.”

“You got ‘till the count of three. Then you end up like him.” Manchester nods to Otis, whose brain is slowly spreading out onto the floor. “One. Squeeze.”

“This is insane.”

“Two. Squeeze harder.”

“You shoot me and there’s no way you’re getting in there,” Ben says, a new wave of confidence overcoming him.

“You wanna risk it?”

“Not really. But I don’t have any other choices right now. So, what’s it going to be?”

Manchester is silent, his gun still held to Ben’s head. Then, suddenly, after a moment, he lowers it.

“Good. Now, like it or not, we’re in this together. Doesn’t matter if you get into that room, you need me to get into that safe, so don’t you even think about raising that gun to my head again. Clear?”

Manchester grunts, but backs away. He slides the gun into his waistband and walks away.

Lena isn’t sure how much time passes. It feels like an hour but could be more or it could be less. She’s leaning against the wall again, Kara to her right and Lauren at her left. They’re silent. Waiting for this to end. Lena can feel her eyelids getting heavy and can feel her head lolling to the side. Just as she’s about to fall asleep, a sudden beeping tears through the silence. The sound causes Lena’s stomach to sink. She bolts up and spins to face Lauren.

Lauren is pale, lips blue, and the grip she has on Lena’s arm is getting looser with every second that passes by. The beeping grows louder.

Lena frantically checks Lauren’s watch. “Shit,” she mutters.

“What’s wrong?” Kara’s awake and alert too. She watches Lena panic, unsure of what to do.

“She’s at 24.”

The beeping continues. It’s loud and pestering and all Lena can think about. She lays Lauren down and checks the watch again. 20.

Kara thinks for a second. “Do you keep any food with the glucagon upstairs?”

“Yeah,” Lena says, distracted.
“And just in Lauren’s room, you said?”

“Yeah,” Lena repeats, still distracted, all of her attention on Lauren. “There’s a small fridge in her room with juice and food and the shots.”

Kara kneels in front of the monitors and searches all the screens. A few of the monitors have gone dark, presumably because something has been thrown over the cameras. Kara can’t see the men, but she can see the shadows of two people in the kitchen. She grins.

“Why?” Lena looks away from Lauren to see Kara in front of the monitors.

“I’ll go grab her a glucagon shot and some food.”

“What! No, you can’t go out there!” Lena’s kneeling in front of Kara now, her hands gripping Kara’s forearms.

“What will happen if we don’t give Lauren this shot?”

A beat of silence.

“She could go into a coma.”

“That settles it then. I’ll run up, grab a shot of glucagon and some food, and I’ll be back before you know it.” Kara smiles weakly.

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

Lena pulls Kara into a near crushing hug. “Please be careful.”

Kara brings her arms around Lena and holds her tight. “Always.” She squeezes once before pulling away. Before hitting the button, Kara checks the monitors to see the shadows of the two remaining men in the kitchen. She casts one last glance back at Lena, offers her a weak smile, before hitting the release button and running out, the door barely open.

Kara moves through the master bedroom with ease, and bolts across the hallway before grabbing the banister and darting up the stairs as silently as possible. The socks she’s wearing help to muffle her steps, so when Kara reaches Lauren’s room, she’s confident that the intruders don’t know she’s there.

Kara stands in the open doorframe and scans the room. She throws herself across the room, lunging to the fridge and grabs several shots of glucagon and some food before stuffing everything into a pouch that’s on top of the fridge.

Kara’s in and out in less than a minute.

She’s running down the stairs, her footsteps slightly heavier, making a soft *thud* as her socked feet come into contact with each step. She doesn’t care though. She’s so close now, just a few more steps and everything will be okay. *They’ll* be okay.
Kara’s so lost in her task that she doesn’t notice the person waiting for her in the hallway outside the master bedroom. Doesn’t notice his looming presence until she runs right into him, falling back and landing on the floor with an audible *thud* that she’s sure Lena heard.

“You’re out,” Manchester says, almost laughing. “‘Bout time.” He goes to grab Kara’s arm, but Kara pushes herself away and lunges further from the room.

Kara throws the pouch towards the panic room. It skids across the floor but doesn’t quite reach the room, stopping a few feet inside the master bedroom.

“Lena!” Kara shouts and barely a second later, she sees Lena stick her head out of the panic room.

Manchester spins on his heels, his gaze falling to the small pouch and Lena.

“Get the glucagon and close the door!” Kara shouts. “Hurry!”

Lena pushes herself out of the panic room, practically throwing herself at the pouch. She scoops it up and stops to look at Kara. She stops for barely a second, but time seems to slow in the moment. Kara throws herself at Manchester’s legs, rooting him to the ground. He tumbles to the ground and Kara shoots Lena a weak smile.

“Go,” Kara says, her tone surprisingly calm, as though she’s okay with whatever happens next, just as long as Lena gets back to Lauren. Just as long as they’re both safe.

It’s in that moment that Lena knows that what she feels isn’t some fleeting crush. It’s real and she’s sure there’s no getting over it. She loves Kara and maybe, just maybe, Kara loves her too.

Lena doesn’t want to leave; she wants to run to Kara and grab her hand, pull her back to the panic room so they can all be safe. She can’t though, Lauren needs her and they both know it. Lena returns Kara’s smile, grateful and so full of love. She pushes herself off the ground and runs back to the panic room.

Lena stops at the door frame, stomach sinking and throat going dry. In the door frame stands another man, a satisfied smirk across his face. She tries to push past the man and get him out of the room, it’s no use though and the man pushes her across the room. She skids across the floor and stops against the radiator, groaning at the throbbing in her side.

Manchester’s able to push Kara off himself and she rolls down the first few steps. He runs to the panic room and throws Lena a smirk of his own once she steps inside.

With all the strength she can muster, Lena pushes herself up and throws herself at the room. She can see the door coming to a close and knows that she won’t make it in time. Lena throws the pouch into the room, hoping that it’ll go in. It does and then the door slams shut, Lena and Kara outside, and Lauren and the two intruders inside.

Lena kicks and bangs, screams and cries, desperate to break the door down. “Give her the medicine!” she yells. “She needs that medicine!” She needs to get inside. She needs to get to Lauren.

Kara’s by Lena’s side a few seconds later, looking tired and beaten down.

Lena can feel her rage morphing into painful sobs. Her body shakes and her vision blurs, tears trekking down her face. She collapses against the door and Kara reaches for her, easing them both down so they’re leaning against the door.
Chapter Eight

Chapter Notes

Hello folks!

Here is the end, I am sorry that this has taken so long, but I do hope it's worth the wait. Again, the accuracy of events that take place in this chapter probably isn't at 100%, so if you've got any suggestions, or you see something drastically wrong, don't hesitate to tell me.

Happy reading :)

Silence.

The master bedroom is completely silent. Lena’s stopped crying, her eyes red and tears stain her cheeks, but she’s utterly and completely silent. She stares ahead with a blank expression, back against the door and Kara’s hand held firmly in her own.

Neither of them utters a single word.

The PA system crackles to life and both Lena and Kara’s heads snap up to the speaker at the sudden intrusion.

“If you leave the house, we’ll kill her,” comes through the speakers, the voice raspy and very much British in its inflection. “Understand?”

Lena stands on shaky legs and moves to stand in front of the camera in the master bedroom. She looks up at it and nods, terrified.

“Both of you?” The same voice says.

Lena looks to Kara, desperate, and motions for her to stand too. Kara does, and looks up at the camera, equally scared. She nods.

“I just— I need forty-five minutes,” a different voice says this time.

That sends fear straight through Lena and Kara. Lena’s panics again and starts shouting into the camera.

“Give her the medicine!” Lena yells. “She needs that medicine!”

Kara disappears for a moment, running down the stairs to the ground floor, leaving Lena in the bedroom, shouting at the camera.

“Shut up,” the British voice says.
Lena doesn’t let up though. She continues screaming, hoping that they’ll somehow hear.

Kara reappears a minute later, pen and paper in hand. She quickly writes out a message and holds it up to the camera.

‘SHE NEEDS THE MEDICINE’

There’s a brief moment of silence, and Kara and Lena think they’ve lost. That the intruders aren’t going to see the message. That Lauren will die. However, the PA system crackles to life again.

“What medicine?” a far more concerned voice says over the system.

Kara writes another message out, this one reading: ‘GLUCAGON.’ She holds the piece of paper up to the camera and the pair wait for a response.

“What’ll happen if she doesn’t get it?” The same voice again.

Lena grabs the papers and pen from Kara, writing out the message herself this time. It reads: ‘DIE’ in bold, capitalized letters.

“Fuck.” Ben leans away from the security monitors.

“What’s the problem,” Manchester says, coming up to look over his shoulder at the screens. He reads the message and then glances back at Lauren, his expression cold.

“Fuck, fuck.” Ben ignores Manchester’s questions and crawls over to Lauren. He puts his ear next to Lauren’s lips. “What is it?”

“… need… ‘jection…” Lauren says, her voice barely above a whisper. She raises a weak and shaky hand to point to the pouch that lays abandoned in the far corner.

Ben crawls over to the pouch, grabs it and opens it. He inspects the contents and his stomach sinks at the realization.

“What’s going on?” Manchester asks again, growing irritated with each minute that passes by.

Again, Ben ignores Manchester and crawls back to Lauren. “An injection? You need this stuff?”

Lauren nods.

Ben glances down at the contents of the pouch and then back to Lauren. “Can you do it yourself?”

Lauren shakes her head.

“Well, I don’t know how,” Ben says.

Lauren looks at him, eyes pleading, desperate.

“I don’t fucking believe this,” Manchester almost laughs, running his hand over his head. “You’ll have to wait,” he says to Lauren.

Laurens just looks at Ben, silently pleading for him to help.
“Yeah,” Ben nods, agreeing with Manchester. His voice is shaky though, nervous, as though he’s hesitant about not helping. “Just… just like… half-an-hour. Maybe a little more. You can wait half-an-hour, can’t you?”

“Yeah, she can.” Manchester pats Ben on the back, look at Lauren as he speaks. “You’ll be fine. Just tired. Just rest then you’ll get your medicine, sound like a plan?”

Fear consumes Lauren. With what little energy she has left, she shakes her head, frantic, desperate for the medicine. “Please,” she says, voice coming out strangled.

“You’ll be fine,” Manchester says. “She’ll be fine,” he says to Ben, gently pulling him away.

Ben shakes off Manchester’s hand and leans close to Lauren again. “Tell me the truth, okay? What’s going to happen if you don’t get this medicine?”

Laurens swallows and licks her cracking lips. When she does speak, it’s breathy, barely audible, but the words are clear.

“Coma. Die.”

In the master bedroom, Kara paces back and forth, speaking rapidly about what their options are; Lena stands still, waiting for the PA system to crack to life again, fear and anxiety consuming her whole.

*What if they don’t give Lauren the medicine? She’ll die. Lauren’s going to die. She’ll die because I wasn’t fast enough. She’ll die because of me,* Lena thinks, repeating it over and over in her head until it’s all she can hear.

Lena jolts out of her thoughts at Kara placing a warm hand on her arm.

“You okay?” Kara asks.

“No! No, I’m not okay! Lauren is in there with those— those people. Those people who broke in! They broke into my home, Kara. They aren’t good people, and now Lauren’s trapped in there, probably dying, all because I wasn’t fast enough!” Tears start to slip from Lena’s eyes and her sobs become too strong to push away. “She’s going to die all because *I* wasn’t fast enough. She’s going to die because of me!”

Kara pulls Lena into another hug, holding her tight and whispering soft reassurances.

“I’m sorry, that was a stupid question,” Kara says. “I shouldn’t have asked it.”

“I’m sorry for yelling at you,” Lena says, after several moments pass. She looks up at Kara.

“Sorry.”

“Hey, hey.” Kara takes Lena’s hands in her own and holds her gaze. “You’re scared. You’re tired. I get it, okay? Really, I do.” Kara manages a weak smile. “If you need to yell and scream, then that’s okay. Do what you need to do. But Lauren is not in there because of you. You’ve been keeping her safe all night, you’ve done nothing but made her safety your number one concern. This is not your fault. We are going to get her back.”
Lena’s nodding, trying to accept Kara’s words as true. She wants to, really, she does. But it’s hard.

“Lena, I mean it. Lauren’s a Luthor, which means she’s a fighter. She will be okay, and we will get her back.”

Lena takes a deep breath and squeezes Kara’s hands. She nods, certain now.

The PA system cracks to life again, and a quick message sounds through the house.

“We’ll give her the shot.”

And then, the system clicks off.

“Wasting your time, mate!” Manchester shouts. “You don’t know how to do this, and the longer we’re in here, the more likely we are to get caught.”

“Were you planning on opening the safe?”

Manchester is silent.

“Thought so. Now shut up and get out of the way.” Ben stares Manchester down until he eventually backs away to watch the monitors. “Okay, kid,” Ben crouches down beside Lauren, “all I know is what I’ve seen on TV, you’ll have to walk me through this.”

Lauren tries to speak, but she’s too weak. Ben nods nervously and swallows.

“No talking, okay. No problem. TV doesn’t lie, right?” Ben reaches into the pouch and begins prepping the shot. He ties a length of rubber tubing around Lauren’s arm. “Too tight?”

Lauren shakes her head.

“Right— um—alright.” Ben takes out a syringe and vial of glucagon. “For what it’s worth, I’m sorry that we’ve gotten you mixed up in all this. You seem like a good kid. Hey, nod or something, show me you’re still alive.”

Lauren nods.

“Attagirl.” Ben grins and raises the full syringe. “Alright… just, hold still.”

“No like she has a choice,” Manchester mutters from the monitors.

Ben ignores the comment and focuses on finding an exposed vein in Lauren’s arm. He finds one and carefully administers the injection. “There you go.” He rolls Lauren’s sleeve down. “Better?”

Lauren nods, still weak but she’s already looking a little better. Ben helps her sit up and lean against the far wall.
The PA system cracks to life yet again, and Kara and Lena snap their heads to the speaker in the master bedroom, their hands still firmly locked together.

“She’s okay. Now sit down and wait.”

The system clicks off.

Kara nods, reassuring herself. “Okay, okay, she’s good. Lauren’s good.”

Lena’s gaze falls to an object behind Kara and out into the hallway.

“Lena?” Kara questions, and turns around to follow Lena’s line of sight when she gets no response. Her eyes fall to a small hand pistol that Manchester dropped during the struggle.

“Do you trust me?” Lena snaps her gaze back to Kara, her hold on her hands somehow tightening.

“Of course.”

“Good, because I’ve got a crazy idea.”

Kara nods in agreement and Lena drops Kara’s hand and goes to grab the gun, a fiery confidence now taking over.

Ben is hovering over a metal floor safe, drilling into the lock and a deafening shriek fills the small panic room. Lauren pushes herself into the far corner, holding her legs close to her chest, and trying to block out as much of the shrieking as possible.

Lauren can see the security monitors from where she’s sitting, and she watches, curious, as Lena and Kara scramble around the master bedroom. She watches as Lena disappears from the camera just before Kara tosses a jacket over the camera.

The monitor goes black.

Lauren watches as each monitor turns black in quick succession, and before long, all that’s left is one screen showing the front stoop.

Manchester follows Lauren’s line of sight when he sees her watching the monitors with rapt attention.

“Oh, shit!” Manchester jumps to his feet, scrambling to get Ben’s attention. “Shit, shit, shit!”

“What’s the problem now?” Ben halts his drilling but doesn’t bother to stand.

“That’s the fucking problem!” Manchester points aggressively to the monitors, and just as he says this, Lena appears on the final camera’s feed.

Lena grins into the camera, seemingly aware that everyone’s currently watching her, and before Ben or Manchester have a chance to tell her to stop, Lena swings a baseball bat at the camera, and the feed goes dead.

“Fuck!” Manchester bangs a fist against the wall, Lauren jumps and the monitors shake. He pauses
and takes a breath. “Okay, okay. We still have the upper hand here.”

“Are you serious!” Ben shouts. “They’ve destroyed all the cameras. We won’t know where they are. What do you think is gonna happen when we try to leave, huh?”

Manchester grins and goes to reach for his gun, but his face falls when he doesn’t feel it. “Oh, shit!” He begins searching the room, showing panic for the first time all night.

“What’s the matter?” Ben sighs.

“My gun! Can’t find my fucking gun!”

“This is why you shouldn’t have brought a fucking gun. Now they’ve probably got it!”

Manchester’s fuming, but he’s clearly trying to stay calm, knowing that’s the only way they’re going to be able to get their money. “Just keep drilling.”

“What now?” Kara asks, standing in the master bedroom watching Lena walk from the back wall of the house and stopping after several feet. “What’re you doing?”

“Counting. The centre of that door,” Lena points to the panic room door, “is eight of my feet out from that wall.” She then points to the back wall.

“Okay? Why are you counting that?”

“This is where my plan gets a little crazy.” Lena comes to stand in front of Kara. “I want to break into the panic room.”

Kara can only blink in response.

“Only three of the walls are made with re-enforced steel. The wall it shares with the neighbour’s is made of brick. We can get in through there.”

“Why can’t we just wait for them to come out?”

“As long as they have Lauren, they have the upper hand. This will take that upper hand away from them and give it to us. They won’t expect us to break in through the neighbour’s house.”

“Okay.” Kara nods. “What’s the plan?”

“One of us break down the wall, and the other will stay here with the gun in case they try to run with Lauren.”

“How are we gonna get into the neighbour’s house? It’s not like they’ll just let us come in and break down their wall.”

“Lauren’s in there with those men. Trust me, I’m breaking that wall down.” Lena slides the handgun into Kara’s palm and closes her hand around it before grabbing the sledgehammer the intruders left in the bedroom. “We’ve got this.”

With the sledgehammer firmly in her hands, Lena leaves Kara in the bedroom. She’s just about to
run down the stairs when she stops herself at the banister. She wants to get Lauren, more than anything she wants to get Lauren to safety, but there’s something she needs to do. Something she needs to do in case her plan goes horribly wrong.

Lena leaves the sledgehammer by the stairs and quickly runs back into the master bedroom, finding Kara exactly where she left her.

“What’s wrong? I thou—”

Whatever words were about to leave Kara’s mouth goes lost as Lena quickly crosses the room and tugs Kara’s face down to meet her own.

Lena’s lips brush against Kara’s for the briefest of moments, softly, delicately; just long enough for Kara to inhale Lena’s breath, and feel the warmth of her skin against her own. The taste of Lena’s toothpaste lingers on Kara’s lips when they pull apart. Their foreheads rest against one another as they bask in the moment. It feels like eons that they stand there, still and unmoving, but it’s only a few seconds that pass before Kara speaks.

“Right… um… okay.” Kara’s mouth opens and closes, at a loss for words.

“That okay?”

Kara nods, quick, and a wide grin starts to take hold of her lips.

“We’ll talk about this later?”

Kara nods again.

“Right, well, I’m gonna go get Lauren.” With a small amount of hesitance, Lena quickly leans up again to press one last fleeting kiss to Kara’s lips. It’s quick and might be seen as a casual display of love under normal circumstances, but it means so much more right now. Holds so much more meaning. “I’ll see you soon.”

Lena leaves, and Kara is alone, an unbreakable smile still on her lips but a nagging itch in the back of her mind that something isn’t right. Something’s going to go wrong.

Despite the shrill scream that drilling into the safe causes, Manchester manages to hear muffled shouting coming from the other side of the wall – the wall shared with the neighbours.

Manchester presses an ear to the wall, listening. “Stop that drilling will you!”

Ben does and watches Manchester. “What’re you doing?”

“Just stop talking.” Manchester presses closer to the wall, the muffled yells more obvious now.

**Whomp! Crunch!**

Manchester jumps back from the wall and everyone in the panic room watches the wall.

Silence, and then: **Whomp! Crunch!**
“What the fuck!” Manchester jumps back.
“Someone’s trying to break in,” Ben says.
“The walls are steel!”
“Not that one.”
“Not that one?!”
“It’s the neighbour’s house! Who breaks in through the neighbour’s house?!”
*Whomp! Crunch!*
“We’ve got your kid!” Manchester shouts at the wall. “What the fuck are they even thinking?!”
“They’ve got your fucking gun, that’s what she’s thinking!”
*Whomp! Crunch!*

Ben throws himself back at the floor and goes back to work on the safe. The drill screams to life again, piercing through the metal lock.

The pounding continues and as Ben works on opening the safe and Manchester begins to unravel, Lauren quickly snatches the small pouch with her medicine in it. She palms the remaining syringe and tucks it into the waistband of her pyjama pants.

Sheetrock is torn away from the wall and Lauren can hear bricks tumbling to the ground.

Finally, the door to the safe collapses in on itself, yielding to the relentless drilling and at that very moment, the head of a sledgehammer breaks through the wall of the panic room. Manchester grabs Lauren, pulling her to her feet.

Ben ignores everything though, his focus on the safe. He opens the safe to reveal… nothing.

*Crunch!*

The sledgehammer strikes again, widening the hole by a foot across. Light spills into the room from the neighbour’s home as well as the hysterical voices come from the neighbours.

At the safe, Ben remains calm. He takes a deep breath and opens the false bottom, revealing a manila envelope. He snatches it up, rips it open and his eyes dance over the contents. Inside are fourteen individual one-million-dollar U.S. Treasury Bearer Bonds. He fans them out, eyes drinking in the sight.

“We have to go! I’ve got the money.” Ben stuffs the bonds into his jacket.

The hole in the wall widens, and Lena tosses the sledgehammer through before she pulls herself up and through, landing with a *thud* on the steel floor.

Manchester slams the button and the door flies open. He pulls Lauren with him as he runs out and Ben follows. They emerge in the master bedroom, completely unaware of Kara standing tall with the gun.

“Stop,” Kara says, her voice surprisingly calm. “Lauren, you okay?” Her gaze softens when it shifts to Lauren.
“Been better.”

Lena emerges from the panic room a moment later, the sledgehammer dangling by her side and a fiery look across her face.

“Look, we can all just walk away from this. No one needs to get hurt,” Ben says, holding his hands up and frantically looking between Kara and Lena.

“It’s too late for that! They’ve seen my face; they’ve seen your face!” Manchester shouts in a craze, and he pulls at Lauren as he tries to move to the doorway.

“Fuck this, I’m gone!”

Ben runs out of the room and Kara follows the gun’s aim until he’s out of sight. She promptly returns her focus to Lauren and Manchester.

Even with the rain pounding down outside, the room is silent.

“Let her go,” Lena says.

Kara doesn’t aim the gun at the pair – not wanting to frighten or accidentally hit Lauren – but she does keep it ready by her side. Her knuckles turn white.

“No, no. Here’s what we’re gonna do; I’m gonna walk out of here and your kid is gonna come with me. You’re not gonna shoot your gun.” Manchester nods to Kara. “And you’re not gonna hit me with that hammer.” He nods to Lena.

Lauren uses her free hand to carefully grab the syringe from the waistband of her pants. She holds it by her side, waiting.

“Sound fair?” Manchester says.

Lauren grips the syringes just a little bit tighter.

Manchester starts to walk, pulling Lauren with him, and Lena and Kara take a step to follow.

“Stop! No following, ladies.”

The next sequence happens in a matter of seconds, but time seems to slow as everything unfolds. Lauren plunges the syringe into Manchester’s thigh. Manchester screams and collapses to the ground. Lauren pushes away and runs to Lena’s side, crossing the seemingly large distance between them with barely three steps.

In a blind rage, Manchester climbs to his feet and throws himself at Lauren.

And in that moment, Lena does the only thing she can do. The only thing to keep Lauren safe. She grips the sledgehammer and swings it at Manchester’s legs.

He collapses again and cries out in pain when he tries to stand again.

Lena tosses the sledgehammer away and pulls Kara and Lauren into a hug. The three stand in the middle of the room, arms tightly around each other, and they all breathe a deep sigh of relief.

Bright white beams of light fill the room, and heavy footsteps follow. Police officers – five of them – stand in the master bedroom, guns out. They’re shouting, but their words are nothing but a loud mess to Lena, Kara and Lauren.
They are safe.

Ben is clutching at the Bearer Bonds in his jacket pocket as he dashes across the small courtyard behind the house. The rain beats down, slightly obscuring his vision.

He’s just about to boost himself up and over the fence separating the yards when several beams of light surround and fall on him. Despite the violent storm going on around him, he knows they’re police officers, and can hear what they’re saying.

“Empty your pockets!” an officer yells over the storm.

Ben doesn’t.

“Take your hands out slowly!” another yells.

Ben does so this time, though with great hesitance. He raises his hands, the Bearer Bonds still grasped tightly in his fist.

“Drop it!” an officer shouts.

Ben does. He watches the Bearer Bonds dance in the sky. A few fall to the ground in the rain while others scatter across the sky. Ben watches as thirty million dollars is destroyed, and he realises, with startling clarity, that everything – this entire night – has been all for nothing.

THREE WEEKS LATER

A gust of wind disturbs the leaves at rest along the ground. Lena sits on a park bench and watches as Kara jogs up to a nearby coffee cart. Lauren rests her head in Lena’s lap, stretching out along the bench, reading from the real-estate section of a newspaper.

“Four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and 2,800 square feet,” Lauren says, reading aloud from the newspaper that rests against her knees.

Lena brings her gaze away from Kara and down to Lauren. She scratches gently at Lauren’s head and brushes some hair from her face. “What was that?”

Lauren rolls her eyes and looks up at Lena. “Are you even listening?” she says, amusement in her voice. “Or are you staring at Kara again?”

“What do you mean ‘again’?” Lena feigns offence.

Lauren smirks, but doesn’t offer up an explanation “So, what’d you think? Where do you think we should live?”

“Well, where do you want to live?”
“I don’t know, maybe near a park? I like this one; do you think we could live near this park?”

“I think we could.” Lena smiles down at Lauren. “What’s the newspaper say?” She nods at the paper.

Lauren looks back at the newspaper, excited, and starts to scan through the various listings. “Here’s one; five bedrooms, three bathrooms, north-facing, and 3,100 square feet.”

Lena thinks for a second. “Too big.”

Lauren hums her agreement and continues to scan the newspaper.

“Found anything yet?” Kara asks as she sits down beside Lena, bringing an arm around her shoulders. She passes a cup of coffee to Lena and a hot chocolate to Lauren.

“No, but we’ve decided that we’re going to live near this park,” Lauren says, looking up at Kara with pure happiness filling her eyes.

“Excellent choice. This is a very nice park.” Kara returns Lauren’s smile.

Lauren goes back to reading through the newspaper, crossing some listings off with a red sharpie and circling others she thinks could be good.

“So, thinking of living near this park?” Kara says lowly, so only Lena can hear it, a hint of amusement in her voice.

Lena shrugs and takes a sip of her coffee. “It’s a nice park.”

Kara hums, a knowing smirk across her face. “It is, which is why I live less than two blocks from it.”

“Do you?” Lena smirks, feigning innocence. “I had no idea.”

Kara hums, narrowing her eyes and a grin in place. She presses a quick kiss to Lena’s cheek. The pair return their attention to Lauren when she begins to read aloud again, happy smiles firmly in place.

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