Invictus
by commandmetobewell

Summary

After a devastating battle leaves Supergirl powerless and Alex injured, National City is left in shambles. With their resident hero removed from the fight, the city descends into chaos. Crime rates spike and the people are vulnerable to theft and murder. Months after Supergirl vanishes, a mysterious being emerges from the darkness, seeking justice by any means necessary. With the threat of a new villain looming ahead, the world creeps closer to total annihilation. Alex, Kara, Lena, and Maggie must navigate the new vigilante, stop a war, and prevent the end of the world.

But, when a horrifying secret is revealed, all four women are sent reeling.

Will they be able gather themselves in time to save their home, or will it be too late?

Notes

Please read the story note carefully!

Okay, first off, this is such a weird experience. A disclaimer that's already in the tags, but just in case it needs to be said again, here it is: I have never watched Supergirl before,
therefore I know nothing about any of these characters aside from small clips/montages of them on Youtube or gifs on Tumblr. I don't know if I'll ever watch the show, mostly because the CGI is kind of cringe and I don't trust The CW, but I am a huge DC fan and love this universe a lot.

Secondly, this story is actually complete. It has a total of 36 chapters and an epilogue, coming in at roughly 170,000 words, give or take (depending on edits per chapter). So, if you are worried about the angst and don't want to be heartbroken in case it doesn't end, fear not! There is an ending, and it is a very happy one (I promise). Chapters will be posted once a week, or more, depending on my schedule and the availability to edit, but no longer than a week.

Third and final, this story draws lightly on various DCEU themes, but especially from Man of Steel and Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice. It's not super heavy, but if you squint you'll see the references. I really love both those movies and I loved paying homage to them here.

I have never finished a multichaptered fic before (and while it's ironic that it's for a fandom I'm not even a part of, I'm still so happy and proud). I would absolutely love your guys' feedback and comments, especially since I don't know much about this show or its' characters. Feel free to tell me if I've fucked something up or if it doesn't make sense. The story doesn't follow the show (obviously, because I haven't seen it), but I hope the characters aren't too OoC!! :)

Thank you so much for all of your support throughout my writing process, and especially to those few of you that have been tracking me all over the various fandoms I've written for in the past few years. It means a lot. I hope you guys really like this one as much as I did writing it!

So-without further ado-sit down, strap in, and enjoy the ride! :)

See the end of the work for more notes
Platinum

Chapter Summary

Alex struggles with her break-up with Maggie.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: Alcohol as a Coping Mechanism, Child Neglect.

Here's the first chapter! In this story, Sanvers is slow-burn (so they do get back together, don't worry) and Supercorp is established. Even though this chapter is Alex-centric, most of the following chapters alternate between both Alex, Kara, Maggie, and Lena's point of views.

June 28th, 2018

“See you around, Danvers.”

It was a phrase Maggie would use often, teasingly, based on their first interactions. Never Alex, but sometimes Ally or Lex if she was tipsy. Most often, it was Danvers. Alex never thought much of the nicknames back then, but now, she realizes just how special they'd been. How special she’d felt when Maggie would use them. It was a name for her and her alone. Sure, Kara would often call her Lexie, but that was it.

Kara and Maggie, they are her world.

But now, Alex thinks as she tips her glass back and downs the fiery burn which accompanies the scotch in the tumbler, she has no world.

Two rings—platinum—lay on her dresser, collecting dust.

Alex looks to her phone, swallowing thickly. She sets aside the glass and unlocks the screen, trying to ignore the pang of hurt festering deep within her as she eyes the picture of her and Maggie on a date by the beach. Maggie was smirking into the camera while Alex had her face hidden within the column of Maggie’s tan neck. As much as she'd tried to say it was sunburn, they both knew she was blushing.

“Why can’t you take a decent picture, Danvers?”

“I don’t want to miss any moment with you, baby.”

“Gay.”

“I am. I really, really am.”
Alex opens up her messages and clicks on the first icon, noting that her previous messages from an hour ago have still gone unanswered. A pit settles inside of her, and Alex wills herself not to cry again as she pulls up the keyboard and starts typing.

**Alex [11:54pm]:** Please. I know we fought… but I need you.

Tossing the phone aside, Alex resigns herself back to the bottle. It’s pathetic, she thinks as she takes a long swig, that through the years, the rough patches, the highs and the lows, alcohol has been a constant. It’s a numbing agent, a pain reliever, a sunset on a beautiful day. It’s a best friend, a lover, a sister…

The phone doesn’t buzz, and Alex let’s herself collapse on the bed in a huff, edging out of tipsy and well towards drunk, but she doesn’t care. In the end, what does any of it matter, anyway?

Alex Danvers was never meant to be loved, to be happy…

No. Never.

* * *

**June 23rd, 2018**

“Let me get this straight, you’re breaking up with her?”

Alex sighs into the phone, rubbing her forehead as she nurses the headache from her hangover with a half-bottle of whiskey. “I told you, it’s not because I don’t love her… I do… so much, Mom, but she can’t give me what I need, and what I need is to be a mother—”

“Not the kids thing again, Alex. Be realistic here.”

There’s a pause before Eliza sighs. “Alex, you’re not a mother. Weren’t all the lessons I taught you when you were younger not enough to remind you of the failure you are when it comes to caretaking? Your sister is always in danger, and she’s almost died multiple times under your watch. She’s always looking out for you. Imagine if you raised a child, Alex. How often would they be in danger because of you?”

Rage simmers within her, but it does nothing to temper the heartache which lays atop, prickling at her skin. She hates the truth in her mother’s words, ones that fire at her insecurities. Alex closes her eyes and clenches her teeth, struggling to keep calm and cool.

“You’re not a mother,” Eliza sneers, “you’re lucky you even found someone to love you and you threw it away.” Alexa hiccups, gasping for air as tears break through and slide down her face, hot and searing against her skin as she lets the words bury themselves into her chest.

There’s a small breath before Eliza mutters, “you were always a disappointment to me. First flunking through school, now this.”

Alex can’t hold back the cry which leaves her lips. Eliza snickers.

“You are nothing, Alex. You never will be anything—”

Alex hangs up. She doesn’t need to hear the rest.
It’s just… for once, she wished it were different.

But no, the truth remains, and deep down, Alex knows her mother is right. She’s not built to be loved. She is built to protect, to fight, to serve her country and keep her sister safe at all costs. There was no room in her life for anything more, especially not a family of her own.

“I’m sorry,” she whispers to no one in particular, “I’m sorry.”

She’s not even sure what she’s sorry for. But she is and she always will be.

Alex has long-since given up on the day where she won’t be.

* * *

She’s well into her second bottle of scotch when there’s a whoosh at her windowsill. Alex doesn’t look up from where she’s hunched over on her desk, pouring over reports and schematics. Alex doesn’t look up; she knows who it is, and this time she’s not bothered.

Usually, she cleans up before Kara comes, but not this time.

No, Alex thinks, there’s no point in pretending anymore.

Kara decides to speak first when she doesn’t acknowledge her sister. "Eliza called me."

Alex snickers drunkenly, taking another swig from her drink. “Congratulations.”

“Alex,” Kara warns, her tone steady. “What are you doing?”

“What?” Alex growls, turning her head so quickly she’s unsure if she’s going to have whiplash as a result. “What do you want, Kara?”

Despite being the woman of steel, Kara looks terrified right now.

“It’s because of you, Alex thinks, Mom was right, look at you.

“Please,” Alex begs as she turns away. “I just want to be alone.”

“You’re a wreck, Alex. And now you’re going to break up with Maggie—”

“Don’t,” Alex hisses, clutching the neck of her bottle tighter. “Don’t you come in here and try to talk to me about her.”

“Alex—"

“I don’t need your pity,” Alex sneers, letting the alcohol talk for her, push her away, to isolate her from the pain. “I don’t… I don’t need you, Kara, so why don’t you just go back to whatever the Hell it was you were doing and leave me the fuck alone?!”

There’s a cold breeze which sweeps through them, intensifying the tension which keeps brewing, higher and higher until it overflows.

Kara’s voice is soft when she murmurs, “you don’t mean that.”

No, Alex pleads to herself, I don’t.

“I do,” she lies instead, her eyes coldly trained on her wide-eyed sister. “Now get out, Kara.”
She expects Kara to get upset, to be sad or to give her those puppy-dog eyes she does so well, but instead, she’s met with rage.

“So that’s that, then?” Kara asks, scoffing as she crosses her arms in anger and hurt. “This is typical Alex Danvers behaviour; if something doesn’t work your way, you just brood and drink yourself into a stupor. This is disgusting, Alex. You can't keep doing this to yourself.”

That makes Alex almost wince, but she relents with a nonchalant wave of her hand. “Good to know. Thanks for the advice, sis.”

“You know what?” Kara growls, putting her hands on her hips. Alex ignores her sister as she paces a line into her hardwood floors nervously. “You want to go ahead and throw your life away like you always do, then do it. I’m done picking up your pieces. I have my own things to deal with, things that you can’t be bothered to ask about because you're too busy trying to poison yourself from the inside out.”

“What things?” Alex asks, finally looking up to her sister with tears in her eyes. “What is wrong, Kara? What do you need?”

“Fuck you.”

In all of their years together, Alex has never heard Kara swear.

It doesn’t hit her until there’s a shattering and her palm burns.

Alex looks down to the glass embedded in the muscle between her thumb and index finger, dazed as blood quickly bubbles and cascades down her wrist in rivulets. She distantly hears Kara gasp, but the sound is muddled in her ears as she keeps her stare pierced on the blood, flowing and flowing, like a river, and Goddammit it feels so good—

“Alex,” Kara whimpers as she practically teleports herself to Alex’s side, reaching out for her palm desperately. But Alex flinches.

“No,” she says, shaking her head, pulling her hand back. “Stop.”

“Alex, I’m not trying to hurt you!”

“But what if I want to hurt?” Alex growls, stunning both her and her sister as her true feelings seep out of the walls she’s built.

Kara’s face crumples at the insinuation. “Alex, what are you—”

“I just want to be alone, Kara. Please.”

Kara was always the sweeter of the two of them, the one filled with happiness and hope and everything that Krypton stood for. She was your neighbourhood hero, the girl with stars in her eyes. She was never a disappointment, never a failure, never a weak excuse of life. Kara was everything the world wanted and needed. Despite everything ever been thrown at her to make her crumble, Kara never faltered.

And, it seems, her sister is just as surprised as she is at the request.

Tears well in Kara's eyes as she whimpers, “Alex, I—”

“No,” Alex mumbles, waving her off. “It’s fine. Just… go.”
For a moment, Kara is conflicted, and Alex can tell that she wants to stay and fight, but the moment passes when Kara lets out a tempered breath. They look at each other for another second before Kara, dressed to the nines in her super suit and all, exits the way she came: silent, swift, and quick. She doesn't look back, and she doesn't speak again. She just... goes. And Alex? She just stares after her quietly.

For years, Alex protected her sister from harm.

Alex has been stabbed, beaten, kidnapped, tortured, drowned, shot at—the whole nine yards, to keep Kara safe. She’s held onto world-ending secrets, she’s killed people (so many people) but it’s all for nought. All those years, all that pain and hardship, for nothing.

Because, Alex realize it was never about anyone else.

It wasn’t about Kryptonite or evil meta-humans or corrupt corporations.

The one person Kara needed protecting from was herself.

* * *

June 27th, 2018

Maggie changes the music, and Alex almost wants to laugh.

“Say the words,” she remembers only a day ago, “say it, Alex.”

Alex. Not Danvers. Alex.

“We can't be together.”

“Hey,” Maggie says, placing her trembling palm over the back of Alex’s hand, where she’s packing her things. “Stop, just… stop for a second and dance with me? For old times’ sake? I don't want the last memory I have of you as packing boxes and listening to sad music.”

It breaks her heart. She should say no, but Alex has never been one to turn from temptation as she looks to Maggie’s pleading eyes.

She doesn’t hesitate to reciprocate when Maggie takes her hand and draws her into her chest, swaying them both to the beat. It’s an upbeat song, something so happy and easy, but they’re both crying, sobbing into each other as they cling to the fragments of their relationship. Alex’s nose is pressed to Maggie’s hair, her tears sliding down her cheeks as she tries to smile, tries to laugh through it…

Instead, Maggie’s hands come up and cup her cheeks.

Alex’s lips move downwards.

And the rest is history.

Their lips are quivering with the kiss, the music forgotten—nothing but white noise in the background as Maggie surges into her, leaning up on her toes so she can deepen the kiss. Alex, unable to hold back, clings to the one person who's shown her happiness. They’ve been through so much together, and it’s all burnt down because Alex wants something Maggie doesn't want and they can't move past it.

But Alex won’t dwell on that now. She can live in the present.
She can give herself, a moment of reprieve, a breath.

God, it’s been so long since she just took a breath.

“I love you,” Maggie sobs into her lips, tugging her backwards, tripping over the steps to the bed as she claws at Alex’s tank top. There’s an animalistic desperation in her movements as she hisses into her neck. “Please… I just… one more night. Please, Alex. Please.”

And who is Alex to say no?

Margherita Sawyer is the love of her life. She’s everything Alex could have ever dreamed of having—a reality she’s always craved. Happiness in the place of depression; light instead of dark; hope stepping in front of despair—these are all the things she is with Maggie.

She’s not sure who she is when she’s alone.

(Deep down she knows, but she hates the answer).

Alex puts the self-deprecation away for a moment to reach and hoist Maggie into her arms, reconnecting their lips desperately as she walks them to the bed. Maggie’s legs lock around her hips, grinding ever so slightly as Alex squeezes at her ass and bites her bottom lip hard enough to draw the bitter taste of blood into their kiss.

But then it slows down when Maggie’s back hits the bed.

Alex pulls back, heartbroken as she drinks Maggie in, memorizing her because she knows she’ll never see this, feel this, again.

“I love you,” Alex says back, means it, “I love you so much.”

“Don’t let me go then,” Maggie whispers back, reaching up to pull Alex into a devastating kiss. "We can figure this out, Alex. We can talk it through. Just… don’t let this go. Please." Alex shakes her head, gasping in pain as she claws into the sheets, tortured by the ultimatum.

"Maggie," she breathes between pain-laced kisses, "you know that we can't. I can't."

She’s lived her whole life for others—done things she’s never wanted to do, said things, felt things, endured things, but for the first time in her entire miserable existence, Alex wants something… something more than what is already so, so good.

Maybe her mother was right, all those years ago.

Maybe deep down, Alex will never be content with anything.

And perhaps that’s selfish of her, but she can’t stop this feeling.

She wants to be a mother. She wants a purpose. She wants the crying, the vomiting, the shitty diapers, the beauty of a new life. She wants the highs and the lows, the mood swings, the morning sickness. She wants to cradle her child in her arms and whisper stories of bravery and love, to feel proud of something for once.

But Maggie doesn’t want that, and they’re at an impasse.

Unless either of them changes, it just won’t work.

So, Alex thinks sadly, the least we can do is have tonight.
The both of them are naked within moments, their fevered hands roaming and gliding over warm skin as they tumble between the sheets. Alex stays on top, grinding into Maggie’s pelvis with calculated thrusts, her motions aided by her deft fingers as she tries to reach deep within Maggie, to assure her that this isn’t her fault. She seeks solace and retribution within Maggie's clenching walls like a confession.

Because of course, who else is to blame for this except herself?

“Fuck,” Maggie gasps, her hips jolting up. “Fuck, Al… there…”

Alex reattaches their lips, swallowing the poignant scream of pleasure which tears through Maggie when she reaches her peak. Sweat gathers in the crooks of her collarbone and under her neck as she helps Maggie ride out the high with languid thrusts and soft pecks to her cheek and jaw. Maggie’s nails are dug in deep enough to leave welts in her back, but Alex craves the pain like it's a drug. Pain and alcohol—the only two things which remind her she’s alive.

If only she could have more, Alex muses despondently.

Maggie flips them once she’s caught her breath. She presses a strong hand into Alex’s scarred chest, her eyes flitting over to the raised line on Alex’s shoulder from the water tank. Alex covers that small hand with her own larger one, squeezing gently as she nods.

“I’m okay,” Alex tells her, but it’s a lie.

Maggie knows it's a lie, especially when Alex blinks back tears.

“I’ll be okay,” Alex tells her again, thought they both know it’s more-so an attempt to console herself than Maggie. Alex was touch-starved and so needy for love from the start—addicted like she was to the sweet burn of alcohol or the bitter pull of a cigarette.

So instead, Maggie deflects with a small, sad smile.

“Let me take care of you.”

But it isn’t enough.

It isn’t enough when Maggie kisses a line down her chest before dipping below to where the sheets were tangled between their legs. It isn’t enough when Maggie parts her legs and kisses the insides of her thighs so delicately, like she’s made of glass. It isn’t enough when Maggie doesn’t just eat her out—she fully devours her. It isn't enough when Maggie is tracing loving words into her skin with her tongue.

Alex gets close, but she never gets there.

The guilt overbears the pleasure, and eventually Maggie concedes.

The silence between them speaks the words they can’t say.

It’s finally over.

“I’m sorry,” Alex whispers, closing her eyes. “I’m sorry I'm not enough, Maggie.”

Maggie opens her mouth to disagree, but Alex has pulled the covers back and is fumbling for her clothes in the dark. She can feel her body aching for a drink, something to calm the voices in her head. She can't separate the thoughts threatening to drown her violently.
“Alex,” Maggie's shaky voice calls after most of her clothes are set on and she's buckling her belt. “Don’t you ever think that was the reason this didn’t work, okay? We just are at different places and want different things. It’s mutual. I don't hate you for this, I swear.”

But Alex doesn’t turn around—she can't turn around. Instead, she just nods, hangs her head, and bolts from the room without another word. She finds the closest bar and stays there until four in the morning, walking home drunk off her ass as the sun rises.

What a beautiful sight, Alex thinks, pausing as she stares at the bleeding oranges and reds as they cast over the city’s skyline.

The moment is gone as Alex returns home to a made bed and a scrawled note on her dresser, where the two rings sit side-by-side. She throws her leather jacket to the ground haphazardly, ignoring the letter for a moment as she stumbles into her kitchen for the bottle of Blue Label. She forgoes the glass; she doesn’t need to kid herself. She pops off the lid and downs a shot before reaching for the hastily folded paper and opens it up. Her back hits the door with a sharp pang as she slides down until her ass thuds against the cool hardwood.

Alex,

I will always love you, but you’re right, this won’t work when both of us want different things. I… I'm not abandoning you, but please don’t call me or text me for now. I think some space will do us good. Else, we’ll just keep doing what we did today, and we don’t deserve that.

I honestly hope you find peace one day.

See you around, Danvers.

-- Maggie.

P.S. You’ll make an amazing Mom one day.

Alex’s eyes pool with tears as she crumples the letter and finally lets the weight of her guilt and anger and sadness consume her. She chugs the neat whiskey, ignoring the burn and the pain. At some point, it just becomes a numb tingle, one that leaves her cold and dirty.

It’s a cruel reminder that Alex did find love. But as easily as it was found, it was just as well lost.

* * *

August 5th, 2004

Alex can’t remember a time when Eliza hugged her. She’s just ripe of fifteen, heartbroken after her first real break-up, but Eliza is scolding her for being insolent and daft.

“Stupid girl,” Eliza mutters as she shoves Alex out of the way, “you should be focusing on doing something with your life, rather than meddling over love interests. Instead, you are wasting your time. Only certain people are capable of giving and receiving love, Alex.”

And you're not one of them, Alex thinks as Eliza brushes past her to where Kara is wrestling with Jeremiah, giggling and laughing.
“See that?” Eliza asks, a warmth passing over her voice. “That’s what you should be aspiring to be. I swear sometimes, they switched out who was adopted. Kara is more of a daughter to me than you ever will be, Alexandra.” Hanging her head, Alex just nods mutely.

What else can she say?

“So the table up,” Eliza grumbles, snapping her attention back to the present. “Don’t just stand there, Alex.”

Alex nods, blinking back tears. “Yes, Mom.”

Eliza waves her off, turning her attention back to Kara as she bounds into the living room. Alex waits a moment, watching as Eliza scoops Kara into her arms and gives her a hair a ruffle before hugging her tightly. Alex’s heart pangs as she watches the interaction. Her fingers tap against her arms, trying to simulate the touch, to imagine what it would be like to be hugged and loved.

“Alex,” Eliza quips disapprovingly, “the table?”

Lowering her hand, Alex gulps. “Sorry, I’ll do it right now.”

That night, Alex takes her spare pillow and tucks it under her arms. She takes a breath and wraps her arms around the soft material, squeezing gently. She closes her eyes and burrows her face into the pillowcase, pretending that the fabric is cut from the same cloth as her mother’s sweater. She scents the softener, imagining it’s her mother’s perfume. She squeezes harder, desperate to feel something squeeze her back in return.

But the air stays cold and her bed stays empty.

It’s that night, Alex realizes she’s a fool for love.

* * *

June 29th, 2018

When Alex wakes up, the first thing she does is hurl into the carefully placed bucket at the side of the bed. Her gut protests at the violent upheaval as she spews two bottles’ worth of alcohol from her system. She’s gasping for air when she’s done, but it doesn’t temper the addictive pull for more, to burn in her chest. Instead, all she craves is the pull of the bitter liquid against her throat. She wants to forget.

Alex, hungover and dead on her feet, stumbles into her kitchen and reaches under the sink for her good stash and fishes it out with a lopsided grin. She looks to her duck taped, gauze-wrapped palm spotted with blood and grimaces, but ignores the faint pulsing. She knocks back a shot of the scotch before collapsing on the couch, her eyes flitting over to the wedding rings still on the dresser, mocking her from afar with their silver tint. She watches them for a moment, wondering just how stupid she must have been to let Maggie go.

It’s not the universe slapping you down from happiness, she thinks mournfully, it’s you.

Unable to fathom the truth behind her thoughts, Alex turns her gaze away from the rings with another gulp of her drink. She reaches for her phone, checking her messages, but nothing comes up. Sighing, Alex leans her head back and closes her eyes as her headache numbs.

The pain is gone and all Alex feels is nothing.
*Back to square one, I suppose.*

“Cheers,” Alex mumbles, tilting her bottle up. “To us.”

*And to never loving again,* she thinks as she downs a shot.

No, never again.

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**Chapter End Notes**

Thanks for reading! :)
“I don’t get it, Lena! She’s pushing me away.”

Lena watches as Kara paces back and forth in front of her, her hands wrung tightly as she nearly burns a path into the ground. While Kara hadn’t explicitly told her that she was Supergirl, she is doing a poor job of hiding it right now, she thinks amusedly. Her first hint, of course, had been the glasses. She wasn’t sure if Kara thought Clark Kent's example of subtle disguise was an inspiration, or if she just couldn’t see how poor of a disguise it could be. Not to mention their almost identical personalities.

“Kara,” she sighs at her agitated girlfriend, “you’re going to crack the floorboards.”

“What?” Kara asks, stopping in her tracks. Lena’s gaze shoots downwards, her brow arched as she gives her a pointed expression. Kara follows it, gulping at the splinters in the wood. A blush creeps up on her cheeks as she swallows her shame.

“I’m just… um… well,” Kara stammers awkwardly, rubbing the back of her head, "sometimes when I get really upset..."

Deciding to take pity on her bumbling lover, Lena raises her hand and offers her a weak smile.

“You don’t have to keep it from me anymore.”

Kara’s head darts up in fear. “Keep what? I-I'm not keeping anything—”

"Come on, Kara. You really don't think I know?" Lena asks, her tone not unkind as she stares at Kara blankly. Lena feels her heart snap inside her chest. One thing she had always wanted was to make Kara as comfortable as she does to her. She hates secrecy more than anything, but she thought that by now, Kara would have come clean to her. Everyone else seemed to know.

Lena tries not to feel jealous that Maggie, Alex's ex, knew even before she did. And she is Kara's girlfriend.

“T—I… I...” Kara stutters nervously. “I’m not sure what you’re talking about.”

Lena rolls her eyes in a mix of fondness and pity. This poor girl really can't lie to save her life, she
thinks amusedly.

“I know you’re her,” Lena says, spelling it out. “Supergirl.”

Kara’s eyes widen at the suggestion, her mouth agape. “Lena, that’s ridiculous—”

“You eyes were glowing,” Lena interrupts, raising her brow. Kara's mouth shuts instantly, a blush creeping up on her face as Lena continues with a nonchalant wave of her hand. “When you were talking about Alex. Your eyes were glowing bright red. Heat vision?”

Kara curses under her breath, and Lena can’t help but smile at the way Kara grumbles to herself about being careless. Lena stays patient, waiting for Kara to come to an appropriate response before moving forward. She reaches out, taking Kara’s hand lightly into her own. Kara looks up at her, blue eyes watery and scared, and Lena sighs. She squeezes her girlfriend's hands.

“You don’t have to hide it from me anymore—though I understand why you had to,” Lena whispers, drawing their clasped hands up to her chest, pressing it flat against the sheer material of her dress shirt. “I don’t think of you any differently now I know, Kara.”

Kara still looks like a deer caught in headlights as she swallows thickly. “Lena, I…”

“Besides,” Lena says, leaning her head down so their foreheads graze. “You both kiss the same way. Kinda hard to miss, dear.”

Kara blushes when Lena leans forward, gently pressing their lips together. She feels her chest ache at the hesitance in Kara's motions as she kisses back slowly, riddled with guilt. Kara’s body shivers under her touch as Lena reaches up, wrapping her arms over Kara’s neck when her mouth parts slightly. Kara’s tongue pokes out and licks at her teeth hungrily. Lena gasps into her lips when she feels Kara’s strong hands on her waist, her feet slowly leaving the ground as they hover in the air, mid-kiss.

Lena pulls back, blushing and content at the return of her girlfriend's confidence. “That’s more like it, Kara.”

“How long have you known?” Kara asks, shame tinting her voice. There's hurt and guilt in her tone, but Lena is quick to reach over and smooth the crease in Kara’s forehead with her thumb. She sighs, before pecking her lips once more with a half-hearted smile.

“Awhile now. Probably a few months. The glasses don't really do anything to hide it, honestly.”

Kara blushes, but Lena quickly kisses her cheek to ease her guilt. “And you didn’t want to say anything?”

“I was waiting for you to tell me,” Lena replies, shrugging. "I figured you were going to at some point."

“Oh,” Kara says, looking away as she blushes again. “Right.”

Something in Lena’s heart snaps. “Were you going to tell me?”

Kara’s gaze darts back up and she sets her jaw. “Of course, Lena, but you know that if you know Supergirl—if you know me—it’s a world of trouble. I mean look at what’s happened so far! You’ve been kidnapped, drugged, taken away by your conniving mother—it’s dangerous to be associated with me. I just… I wanted to protect you from all of that.” Lena smiles at Kara’s overprotectiveness.
“I don’t think you get it,” Lena sighs, weaving her fingers through Kara’s blonde locks, “you’re special, Kara. I love you and I have for awhile now. I don’t care if that means I have to love the danger too, because I will. And I do, by the way. Keeps my life exciting.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara whispers, leaning back down to reattach their lips. “I’m sorry I kept it from you. It was stupid… I should’ve—”

“You were protecting me,” Lena reassures her, “and yourself.”

Before Kara can respond, an earth-shattering boom knocks them both from their embrace. Like it’s instinct—and at this point it might as well be—Kara wraps her arms around Lena as the L-Corp building wavers as another sharp boom pierces the air.

“What was that?” Lena asks, pressing herself closer to Kara, who grabs her tightly before flying them away from the cracked windows. She looks up to see Kara's eyes narrowing over the city skyline, most likely scanning to assess the coming danger.

“I don’t know,” Kara murmurs with a frown. "I can't see anything." She shakes her head, placing Lena on the couch before peeling her shirt and pants off to reveal the suit underneath. She tosses her glasses to the table before glancing at Lena worriedly.

“Stay here,” Kara says as she hovers with her hair billowing out behind her. “I’m checking it out. I’ll be back.”

Before Lena has a chance to protest, Kara smashes through one of the windows and into the sky. Lena watches as she darts through the skyline before plunging further upwards. After she's gone, Lena scrambles to her feet and makes her way over to her desk. She fumbles around in her drawer before grabbing the radio under some papers. After turning it to the right frequency, she turns it on and holds down the receiver. Her gaze stays trapped outside, where smoke starts to billow.

There’s only one person who could know what's going on.

Lena speaks into the radio, her voice wavering slightly. “Agent Danvers, do you read me?”

There’s a cackle on the line before a reply sounds, clipped and hard. “Yeah, I read you, Luthor. Where are you? Are you safe?”

“I’m in the office. What happened?”

“Don’t know. Some sort of portal opened up in the city centre. We’ve got these bizarre monsters piling out of it. I can’t talk.”

“Supergirl just left to investigate, is she with you?”

“Negative. It’s just me and Vas—argh!”

“Agent Danvers?” Lena asks into the phone, concerned. “Alex?”

There’s no need for a reply, not when there’s a supersonic boom which echoes through the sky. She doesn’t need to know what caused Alex to get cut off, because it’s clearly bad enough of Kara is chasing her. Lena looks out her window to see a flash of blue and red plummet towards the ground, sending an explosion of dust between the lower levels of the adjacent towers.

“Shit,” Lena curses as she stumbles to the windows, noting the destruction and havoc in the streets. “Kara… please be okay.”
Maggie maneuvers her bike through the destruction, weaving between overturned cars and slaughtered bodies as she tries to make it to the heat of the fighting in the city’s square. She can hear gunfire and shouting in the distance, but she ignores the panic brewing within her to get to the epicentre. She brings her bike to a grinding halt as she leaps off of it, tossing her helmet aside. She can hear people screaming and crying, smell the acrid scent of death and burnt flesh, and she almost wants to gag.

“Detective!” A voice calls out from across the rubble. “Over here!”

Maggie swivels her head to see Vasquez climbing out from under an overturned truck. Blood is running down her face, coating her neck in a sickening mix of grit and sweat. Maggie darts over and gasps at the blood seeping from a wound in her side which is covered by the agent’s shaking hand. Maggie quickly gathers her in her arms and tries to inspect the wound with a grimace.

“What happened?” She asks, a sinking feeling erupting in her gut when she realizes that if Vasquez is hurt, then Alex must be in trouble. If she didn’t run with Supergirl, Vasquez was next. “How bad is it, Susan?” Vasquez grunts, shaking her head painfully.

“They came out of nowhere, these… these aliens,” she gasps, slumping in Maggie’s arms as she crumbles to her knees. “They… they looked like bugs. Oh God, Maggie, they were so terrifying… argh… I… fuck… it hurts, Maggie.” Maggie eases her down slowly, cradling the short-haired woman to her chest as she presses down over Vasquez’s hand to stem the bleeding.

“A portal,” Vasquez chokes out, “it opened in the city.”

“Where’s Alex?” Maggie asks, dread deep in her voice. Vasquez hisses and shakes her head, trembling harder now under the pain. Her lips quiver as she tries to piece together an answer, and Maggie’s worries increase at the blood tinging her lips.

Eventually, Vasquez catches her breath. “Alex… she went to the middle of it… she’s still there…”

Maggie nods, silently cursing Alex's impulsive streak. “And Supergirl?”

Vasquez sucks in a pained breath. “I don’t know. She’s probably here too, if she isn’t on her way. I think I heard her fly over, but I don’t know… I can’t…” Maggie nods, looking back down at the agent’s wound. Taking a deep breath, she pulls away slowly.

“Susan,” Maggie says, pleading. “I…”

“I know,” Vasquez says with a curt nod, wincing. “Go. I’ll be fine.”

“Your wound—”

“Is superficial. Back up is on the way. I’ll be okay, Mags.”

“Radio me,” Maggie says as she stumbles to her feet. “If anything goes wrong, you radio me, got it?” Vasquez nods, leaning back against a concrete block as she struggles to breathe deeply.

“Go raise Hell, Sawyer.”

Alex gasps as a sharp pain explodes across her midsection when she’s thrown back into a wall. She
crumples to the ground, feeling her head spin as she struggles to reorient herself. She can feel the blood and bile creeping up in the back of her throat, but she swallows it down as she stumbles to her hands and knees, gasping. She reaches for her gun, drawing it into her hands as she finally makes her way to her feet. Gathering herself, she looks up.

The creatures are bug-like humanoids, flying around and tearing into anyone fleeing or chasing. Their mouths are bloody and dark, adorned by sharp, limitless teeth and slithering tongues. Their eyes, red and almost cybernetic in nature, glow with bloodlust.

She shoots as many as she can down before she’s out of bullets. One of the bugs flies over and clips her injured side, sending her tumbling backwards. A sharp snap sounds in her wrist as she slides to a halt with a muted scream. Looking down, Alex gags at her broken wrist, hanging haphazardly at her side as she gasps in pain.

Before one of those disgusting beings can come down on her again, a flash of blue and red darts out of her peripheral. Alex watches as the demon-creature is catapulted to the side, leaving the world’s most majestic, superhero standing in its wake.

Kara turns around and looks at her, wide-eyed and afraid.

“Alex.”

“I’m fine,” Alex mutters as she stumbles back to her feet. “I was handling it. I really didn’t need you to intervene, Supergirl.”

Kara’s face shifts from concerned to angry. “Really? Are you still mad at me for caring about you? Alex, this is ridiculous now.”

Before Alex can retort with something cruel and cold, she looks past Kara’s shoulder to another demon coming their direction at a breakneck speed. Without thinking, she leaps forward and shoves Kara out of the way, causing the creature to careen into her back and send them both to the ground in a heap of dust and ash. Alex grunts as she hears the creature squeal beneath her, unhappy.

That makes two of them, she supposes grimly.

Its’ jaws part and enslave itself around Alex’s right shoulder, causing the agent to scream out in agony as she is literally ripped aside and sent tumbling into some rubble with a harsh thud. Alex’s head smashes against the concrete as she gasps in shock, her shoulder burning brighter than a million stars as she bleeds out. She tries to wrangle the bug off, but her eyes grow unfocused.

“Alex!” Kara shouts as she kicks at a demon approaching her in the distance. “Hold on!”

A violent shiver courses through her body and Alex’s eyes slide shut as she remembers the last time those words were said to her.

“You just need to hold on, okay? We’re coming.”

Hold on.

Hold on.

Hold...
Maggie spots Kara’s supersuit from a mile away as she watches the youngest Danvers sibling take care of the last of the creature-demons. She doesn’t look harmed, so it relieves her to know that these creatures don’t seem to possess enough power to take down a Kryptonian. Sighing with relief, Maggie darts into the centre of the nearly-destroyed square, searching for Alex.

“Supergirl!”

Maggie calls out her name, drawing Kara’s attention from where she's grappling with a smaller demon. She can see the relief mixed in with agony in Kara’s expression as she battles the last few oncoming creatures. Maggie watches as Kara remains rooted to her spot. It’s odd, Maggie thinks, because it would make more sense for Kara to move around and draw the demons into a chase.

But then Maggie looks behind Kara’s body, and she can’t move.

Kara isn't standing her ground, she's protecting what lies behind her.

“Alex?” Maggie chokes out as she looks at the deathly-pale skin of her ex-fiancée lying crumpled on the ground. She sprints into the clearing, trusting in Kara to divert any and all enemies in her direction. She doesn't care about anything else then, just Alex.

Her beautiful Alex.

“Danvers?” Maggie gasps as she slides to her knees in front of Alex’s limp body. She gathers her ex into her arms worriedly. “Danvers, Alex—oh God, wake up.” She presses her head to Alex’s chest, gasping in relief to hear the soft, steady beat. Something wet and sticky slides against her cheek, and Maggie recognizes by the acrid scent alone that it's blood—specifically, Alex's blood.

“Mags…,” Alex whispers, drawing her attention. Maggie’s head darts up to see Alex’s half-open eyes, red-rimmed and brimming with pain. One of them is heavily bloodshot, and from the way the pupils don't respond to the light, she knows Alex is concussed.

Still, Maggie puts on a brave face. “Hey, hey, it's okay. You're gonna be okay, just hold on.”

“Hold on,” Alex murmurs tiredly, her eyelids drooping. “Hold on.”

Maggie assesses Alex’s body with shaking hands and distraught thoughts. She notices—aside from what seems to be a few bruised ribs, an awfully broken wrist, and what could very well be a bad concussion—Alex is fine, barring her gruesome shoulder wound.

Reaching out, Maggie gently pulls back at Alex’s torn uniform, only to be met with resistance from her ex-fiancée.

“Burns,” Alex mutters, groaning as Maggie tries to get at the skin again. “Stop.”

“"I know it hurts but I need to see," Maggie grunts, her heart breaking at the desperation in Alex's gaze. "Please, Alex."

“Maggie,” Kara’s panting voice cuts in from behind her. “Is she…?”

“She needs a hospital,” Maggie says, looking back at Kara in fear. Alex continues to moan, her head lolling in her grasp. “I can’t look at the shoulder wound. The blood is getting stuck to the fabric, which is getting stuck to her skin. They'll have to cut it away to get a look at it.” Maggie can see the panic brewing in Kara's bright blue eyes, and she knows seeing Alex like this can't be easy.
"Hey," Maggie says, drawing the hero's attention. "You gotta focus, Little Danvers. She's hurt real bad and she needs your help."

At that, Kara's face straightens and she nods determinedly. "I can fly her—"

Before she can finish, another *boom* startles through the air.

* * *

Kara looks up to the blue sphere opened up in front of them.

From the portal, out steps a tall, lean woman, dressed in gold with long dark hair. She’s brandishing a sword, smirking at them. Unsure of whether she's a friendly or a hostile, Kara eyes her carefully, her fists clenched in anticipation of an attack. The woman takes notice of her, as well as Maggie and Alex behind her, but seems unfazed as she chuckles, her sword glinting in the light.

“My, my, what do we have here?” The woman drawls, sauntering over with a confident strut. "A real, live Kryptonian?"

“Who are you?” Kara growls, standing over Alex and Maggie protectively. She can feel her eyes blazing with her heat vision, ready to unleash all sorts of Hell if the woman takes one step closer to them. “What do you want?” The woman only chuckles again, sighing.

“I *was* searching for Earth’s champion,” the woman replies, eyeing Kara. “But it seems I’ve found something even better.”

Kara is about to leap forward when the woman holds up her hand.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you, Kryptonian.”

Out of the corner of her eyes, she sees Maggie glare up at the mystery woman, but before she can interrupt with her own cutting comment, a keeling moan sounds out from under her. Glancing down, Kara gasps at the extremely pale colour of Alex’s skin. There’s blackness tinting her neck veins as she gasps. Her eyes, specifically her pupils, have changed from their amber brown to a sickly greyish-black. The sight makes Kara's stomach twist as she looks back at Maggie in horror. The woman seems unaffected.

“Burns,” Alex chokes out, writhing as her fingers claw at nothing. “Please… make it stop.”

“Humans,” the woman chuckles. “Pathetic, aren't they?”

“What do you want?” Kara demands again, turning around to glare at her, eyes blazing yet again.

The woman only shrugs, her gaze more curious than anything. “I’m not sure yet.”

“Supergirl,” Maggie hisses, and Kara turns again to watch as she presses a ripped part of her shirt into Alex’s shoulder, ignoring the scream of pain which leaves Alex’s lips at the touch. “We have to get her out of here now. There's no time. She’s been poisoned.”

“No,” the woman cuts in before Kara can reply. “Not poison.”

Kara’s demeanour shifts. “Help us. I’ll give you anything in return.” Alex shakes her head at that, gasping harder and deeper.

“Supergirl…,” she wheezes agonizingly. “No…”
“Anything?” The tall woman purrs. “You tease me, Kryptonian. What a powerful proposition. Hmm… now, what do I want?”

“Help her,” Kara pleads as she looks between the woman and Alex’s paling body. “Please, I can’t… you need to help her.”

The woman glances at Alex with an arched brow. “Who is she to you?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Kara growls. “She can’t die.”

“But countless others already have,” the woman states matter-of-factly. “Tell me, does she matter more than them, Kryptonian?”

Kara tries to not let her emotions show, but the woman calls her bluff with a deep chuckle. She steps forward, sword gripped tightly in her arms as she finally comes toe-to-toe with Supergirl herself. It’s only then that Kara realizes how tall the woman is. She towers over Kara by almost half a foot, her arms lean and built like rock. But Kara doesn’t let that deter her as she growls fiercely.

“Easy now, little Kryptonian. You won't hurt me. You make a mistake caring for these humans,” the woman tells her, her voice low and hard. She looks Supergirl up and down, sizing her up. “Their lives are nothing compared to yours, Supergirl. That is what they call you, right? And the other Kryptonian—Kal, I believe his name is. He is Superman to these peasant-folk. How drab, honestly.”

Kara can hear Alex’s heartbeat start to slow, and her own picks up at the sound of the gurgled breaths leaving her sister’s lips.

“Can you save her?” Kara asks, looking at the woman. “Please.”

The woman waits a moment before she looks over Kara’s shoulder to where Alex is growing weaker by the second. Maggie is crying into Alex’s chest, pleading with her to just keep breathing, to hold on. Kara’s insides twist as the woman gazes back at her blankly.

“Very well,” the woman says, "hold out your arm, Kryptonian.”

Kara is confused at the cryptic demand, but she can’t stand by and listen to Alex dying when there’s something—even as risky and as unknown as whatever this is—which can be done to save her sister. Swallowing thickly, Kara goes to extend her arm when Alex interrupts again. She turns her head to see her sister's near-black eyes staring at her in desperation and anger, shaking her head.

“No,” Alex growls, her breath whistling in her chest. “Supergirl, don’t—”

The woman doesn’t flinch. “Hold out your arm, Supergirl, or she dies.”

Kara extends it out, and before she can react, the woman quickly grabs her palm before squeezing hard. Kara yelps as she feels her bones crushing under the woman’s grip. Alex growls behind her, but Kara ignores the sound in favour of watching the woman work on saving her sister, so she hopes. The woman takes her sword-held hand and stabs it downward, sinking it into Alex’s leg.

Kara’s eyes widen in horror. "Alex—"

“No!” Maggie cries out when Alex screams. “No, what are you doing?! Stop it, you're hurting her!”
Kara feels some kind of energy coursing through her, a bizarre show of weakness befalling her as she crashes to her knees with a gasp. She looks up, unable to speak as she chokes on her gasps, as the blade on the woman’s sword glows a brilliant golden colour. The gold seeps into the incision made on Alex’s thighs. The woman doesn't react to anything as she keeps it inside.

“What… what are you… doing?” Kara hisses, trying to fight the power. "Stop it…"

The woman doesn’t reply, and Kara watches in horror as Alex starts convulsing. She can make out Maggie trying to steady her, but there’s no use. The drumming of blood in her ears drowns out Alex’s heartbeat. Kara tries to focus, but there's no use. She can't.

“Stop,” Kara pleads as she feels tears well in her eyes. “You’re hurting her, please stop.” The woman gives her no notice.

But then the glowing stops and Alex lets out a final breath.

The woman pulls her sword free and releases Kara’s hand. The pain in her hand ceases and Kara slumps over, spluttering as she struggles to regain her breath. Her vision is swimming as she watches the woman take a step back, too tired to notice the lack of blood on her sword. Her heart is racing and her mouth feels dry, and as Kara looks over to Alex's prone body, she cries silently.

The woman holsters her sword and looks down to Kara blankly. “It is done.”

“What did you do?” Maggie cries out in agony, clutching Alex’s motionless body close to her own. “What did you do, you monster?”

The woman ignores Maggie's cries, choosing only to look at Kara. “I have only done what you asked, Kryptonian.”

“No,” Maggie cries out, burrowing her face into Alex’s neck. “No…, no…, please Alex, don’t go… please…” Kara watches, numb and in shock as Maggie cradles her sister’s limp body like a rag-doll. Kara watches it from where she's slumped, her heart clenching.

The woman turns to her, face still blank. “You have made your choice, Kryptonian. Whatever comes next, it is on you alone.”

Before Kara can protest, the woman stalks back to the portal and it closes up, leaving them alone on the remains of the city centre. The only sounds which remain are the faint cackling of fires burning in the distance, and the horrifying sound of Maggie crying. It takes a few moments for her energy to replenish, but Kara eventually finds enough to move to her knees. She crawls over to Alex slowly. She looks back at Alex’s body, tears streaming down her face as she strains to listen for her heartbeat, but she can’t find it.

In fact, she can’t hear anyone’s heartbeat.

“Maggie,” Kara gasps as she stumbles forward again, her body feeling unusually light and powerless. “Maggie, check her pulse…”

But Maggie isn’t listening. Kara reaches out for Alex’s leg, pulling herself up to her sister’s face while Maggie weeps incessantly. In a state of shock, Kara’s dusty fingers feel the underside of her sister’s jaw, trembling as she tries to focus on the beat in her neck.

It’s faint, but it’s there.

“Maggie,” Kara gasps in relief, “Maggie, she’s alive.”
That pulls Maggie from her near-manic state. “W-What?”

“Radio for backup,” Kara instructs, her voice shaking as she reaches down to hold Alex’s good hand in her own. “We need an ambulance.” Maggie looks between them both, confused as she takes in Kara’s dishevelled appearance, not piecing it together.

“Can’t you fly us there?”

Kara closes her eyes and shakes her head. “My powers are depleted.”

"Fuck," Maggie growls as she looks back down to Alex. "She's hurt real bad, Kara."

"I know," Kara whimpers sadly, "but I can't help her, Maggie. I… I can't…"

Maggie takes a moment to digest the information before she fumbles in her back pocket for her radio. She calls in for every available unit while her eyes stay trained on Alex’s limp figure. Kara’s fingers are still pressed against Alex’s pulse, and she draws herself to it like a lifeline. It always has been her lifeline. She can feel the fatigue washing over her now, a common symptom of solar-flaring, but usually it isn't as bad as it feels right now. Everything is swimming as Kara struggles to focus on Alex’s pulse.

“I can’t lose you,” Kara whispers as she hangs her head over Alex’s chest. “You need to fight this. Please, for me.”

Kara doesn’t choose to focus on the fact that she has never once felt like this before, that her body has never felt so not-her-own. She feels powerless—she is powerless—but it feels different this time. She feels dissociative, like she’s floating in space. She knows she should be terrified of the feeling, but she can't think about herself when her sister could very well be dying in her arms.

Something is wrong, very wrong, but Kara can’t dwell on that now.

Instead, she just focuses on the hope that Alex will pull through.

*She has to pull through,* Kara thinks as she feels her eyelids droop. Because without Alex…

Without Alex, there is no Kara.
"She’s still unresponsive?"

Maggie sets the lukewarm coffee down on the table as she lets her words filter through the stale room of the DEO’s medical bay. Kara, who’s been sitting vigil beside her sister since she’d been brought in two days ago, doesn’t respond to her question. Not that Maggie expects her to, really. She keeps staring blankly at the tubes running out of Alex’s chest and mouth blankly. Kara had spoken maybe a total of three words since the incident, and she can see the weight bearing on her shoulders. Maggie rubs at her head tiredly, exhausted by the week’s events.

“She’s alive, Kara. Dr. Hamilton and Eliza said it could have been a lot worse,” Maggie says as she settles on the chair opposite to Kara’s, taking Alex’s mangled wrist lightly into her palm. “She’s not dead, and there’s no sign of poison or swelling in her brain. She’s okay.”

“Then why isn’t she awake?” Kara growls, tears burning in her blue eyes. “Why is she still like this, Maggie? It’s been two days—”

“It takes as long as it takes,” Maggie assures her, even if the words taste bitter on her tongue. “I don’t care if it’s two days or a year—all that matters is that she comes back.” Kara just scoffs and shakes her head, looking to her hands with anger and guilt. Maggie sighs.

“It’s all my fault,” Kara croaks dejectedly, sniffing. Maggie hates the amount of self-deprecation in the younger Danvers’ voice. “I was supposed to protect her, and I couldn’t. She took the hit for me. She always takes the hits for me, Maggie. Some superhero I am, right?”

“Hey,” Maggie whispers as she swallows down her own fear. She can’t afford to let Kara know how scared she is for Alex's condition. The last thing the devastated city needs to add to the mix is an unstable Kryptonian. So, Maggie steels herself and offers Kara an encouraging nod. “None of this was your fault, Little Danvers. You didn’t open up a portal and let out a she-demon to zap your powers. You wanted to save your sister and you did. She needs you to keep your cool right now, Kara. You can’t lose yourself over this. She needs you to be her strength.”

It takes a few moments and a squeeze of Maggie's hand on Kara's wrist for the younger Danvers to nod helplessly, but even with the bleak gesture, Maggie knows her words are lost on her. The two of them continue their silent watch over the agent, the only sounds being the humming and beeping.
of machines keeping Alex alive. It feels like hours before Maggie musters up the courage to speak.

“Did… did they come back yet?” She asks softly. “Your powers?”

Kara flinches and Maggie sighs, “I guess not.”

“I’ve never been without them this long,” Kara says worriedly. “I have been under the sun lamps for two days now. Usually when I solar-flare, I can get everything back within the day, but this… this is different. I don’t know what that woman did, but… they could be… you know…”

“No,” Maggie says firmly. “We’re not thinking like that right now, Kara.”

“The world needs Supergirl,” Kara snaps, a growl curling in her throat. “But if I don’t have my powers, Supergirl doesn’t exist.”

“Kara—”

“I can’t deal with this,” Kara mutters as she stands up, shaking her head. “I can’t be here right now, I need space, I need air—”


Kara sighs, rubbing her forehead. “I’m sorry, Maggie. For snapping.”

“It’s okay,” Maggie tells her, drawing her attention back to a still-slumbering Alex with a sigh. “It’s tough weathering a storm without an anchor. I can’t understand what you’re feeling now. I mean, I do understand, but obviously not to your extent. I’m really sorry, Kara.”

"It's not your fault," Kara says, scuffing her boot against the linoleum as she casts a sidelong glance at Alex. "I should have been quicker. If I had gotten to Alex before that weird demon thing did, I could have saved her from being bitten. I should have been better—"

"Don't," Maggie says softly, "don't go there, Little Danvers. I don't blame you and Alex would never blame you and you know it."

Kara scoffs, blinking back tears as she looks up at the ceiling. "That's because Alex never blames me for anything."

"She's your big sister," Maggie says, shrugging as she looks to Alex. "That's what big sisters do, Kara."

"But she does this all the time," Kara whimpers, hugging her arms around her chest as she lingers by the door. "She always throws herself headfirst into danger for me, without thinking about what it's going to do to her. She forgets she isn't the bulletproof one. I can protect myself, but she still insists on taking charges. When will she learn that I don't need her protection? I just need her safe, Maggie."

Maggie lets the words sink in, her eyes closing as she remembers Alex's similar plight over Kara's safety. Alex's most common emotional-drunk-ramble moments often stemmed from her insecurities over losing Kara, so it doesn't surprise Maggie that Kara experiences the same distress towards her sister. She opens her eyes, takes a breath, and then walks over to where Kara is still standing nervously. Perhaps if Kara was wearing her supersuit, Maggie would find irony in the way Kara looks so timid and scared—but now, dressed in Alex's Stanford sweater and a pair of her sweatpants—Kara just looks small. It's a reluctant use of the word, but right now, it fits the current situation.
"I love her," Kara says quietly, tears welling in her eyes. "Losing her… I can't even think about it, Maggie."

"I know, kid. I know," Maggie hums, reaching up to wind her arms around Kara's shoulders and draw her in for a hug. "'C'mere."

She knows it mustn't compare to a hug from her sister, but Maggie hopes that she can convey the same comfort and warmth Alex always does. Kara folds like paper in her arms, sobbing as she burrows into her neck and wraps her arms around her back. Maggie shushes her calmly, her hands running soothing lines on Kara's back as the younger woman keeps crying. Maggie closes her eyes again, sighing.

"Alex will be okay," Maggie murmurs, "all you have to do is just wait, okay? I know you Danvers' folk. Waiting is hard for you."

"Yeah," Kara chuckles, a watery, ugly noise. "We do suck at being patient."

"And at being patients," Maggie humours, earning a laugh from Kara. "I'm sure the nurses won't be missing this rare moment of peace."

There's a few moments of them hugging before Kara eventually pulls away with a sniffle. "Thanks, Maggie. I really needed that."

"I'm not a big fan of hugs, Little Danvers, but I think you and your sister taught me a thing or two about them to change my mind."

Kara smiles at the joke, but it doesn't quite reach her eyes. It pulls at Maggie's heartstrings, the similarities between the Danvers siblings, always needing to put on a mask to face the world. Both so strong, so stubborn-headed, so vulnerable in their own ways. Kara steps back, wiping her palms on her pants before heading to the door. Before she steps out, she pauses and turns to look at Alex.

"Keep me updated?" Kara asks, glancing at Maggie. "On when she wakes up?"

Maggie knows she doesn't need to, what with the super-hearing and all, but she knows what Kara is really asking. Something in her heart bursts at the soft look of affection Kara gives her—a look which is more often than not only reserved for Alex, and sometimes Lena.

"Of course," Maggie says, offering a half-hearted smile. "Get some rest, Little Danvers. Everything will be okay, I know it."

Kara sighs and turns around, murmuring, "I hope so."

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Lena is working with Winn and Dr. Eliza Danvers in the lab when Kara walks in, eyes red and lips fitted to a tight line. At the sight of her foster daughter, Eliza steps away from the console from where they'd been working to embrace her daughter in her arms. Kara folds immediately, and Lena can tell by the way her eyes close that she's exhausted. She knows her girlfriend hasn't been sleeping well in the last few days, but now with Alex hurt and her powers depleted, she knows Kara feels more than a little bit lost in light of recent events.

"Hi, sweetheart." Eliza's voice is soft, nurturing. "How are you?"

Lena winces as Kara flinches in her foster mother's arms. *Yeah, she thinks bitterly, not the right question to ask, at all.*

Eliza pulls back to offer her a sympathetic glance. “I’m sorry, Kara. Lena and I are trying hard to figure out what’s wrong.”

Kara just looks up coldly. “Why haven’t you visited her?”

Lena can feel the whole room grow tense when Eliza startles at the question. The other lab technicians pause for a moment before they distract themselves in their work, not wanting to be part of this conversation. Lena doesn't know whether to look at her girlfriend or her foster mother, or to simply follow in the lab techs’ shoes and ignore it. Before she can make a decision, however, Kara gives a light scoff.

"Kara?” Eliza asks, her voice a bit hoarser now. "What's wrong?"

Kara doesn’t react, however, short of tilting her head. In any other situation, Lena would find the action cute.

But right now, it’s just sad.

“She’s been in there for two days,” Kara says quietly. “Why haven’t you visited her yet?” Eliza’s gaze hardens as she stiffens.

“Alex will be fine,” Eliza retorts with a dismissive wave of her hand. “There’s nothing to worry about, Kara. It's just a simple head contusion. She will be awake within at least the day, if my calculations are correct. I know you're worried, but you're honestly overplaying her injury—”

"Overplaying?” Kara guffaws angrily. "She nearly had her shoulder torn off and that's considered overplaying?"

Eliza looks back to her vials, nonchalantly replying, "she had it repaired, did she not? Kara, honey it's a concussion—"

“You didn’t answer my question, Eliza.”

Eliza frowns at the Kara's cold interruption. “What? Kara, what has gotten into you—”

“No,” Kara growls again, stepping forward with fury dancing in her eyes. “What has she ever done to make you hate her?”

Eliza looks to the rest of them, clearly embarrassed at the public humiliation she's currently enduring. Lena doesn't know the Danvers matriarch well, considering this is one of the few times they've met that wasn't a holiday. Yet, she knows from Kara's angry ramblings whenever the three Danvers share a space for more than fifteen minutes that Eliza is a piece of work. While she's not the older sibling, she can sympathize with having a neglectful and at times abusive mother. For the sake of not wanting to choose sides, Lena often keeps quiet on the Danvers family matters—besides, she's only been 'part of the family' for a few months now, not enough credulity to make decisions or have an opinion, she thinks. But right now, with Alex two rooms over still in a coma, she can't help but side with Kara.

Eliza, however, doesn't seem to see the problem in Kara's statement as she hisses, “Kara, perhaps we should talk privately. This is a family matter, after all.” Kara shakes her head, stepping into Eliza’s space as she snarls at her. Lena winces at the ire in her eyes.

“All she ever wanted was for you to love her, Eliza.”
Kara mentioned once that she doesn't call Eliza her mother. Lena had been curious as to why, considering Kara had lived with the Danvers nearly her entire life—and Eliza was more than just a surrogate mother at this point. Kara never really wanted to answer it, other than to claim that she had a mother and her mother died with her planet. But, when Lena first attended the Danvers’ annual family Thanksgiving last year, Lena understood from Alex's near-drunken stupor and Kara's nervous expression why Eliza was a terse subject.

"I do love her," Eliza says, snapping Lena back to the present with her grating words. "She is my daughter, Kara. Of course I do."

"Then answer my question," Kara says coldly, crossing her arms. "Why haven't you visited her, Eliza?"

Eliza doesn’t blink as Kara’s shoulders slump defeatedly. Lena almost crosses the space between them to comfort her girlfriend, but then Kara just shakes her head and puts her hands up in surrender. Eliza hardly reacts to the gesture, which only lights a fire within Lena.

“I’m going outside,” Kara says, turning away as she blinks back tears. “I’ll be back.”

Lena doesn’t hesitate the bound after the younger woman, darting down the halls to keep up with Kara’s long legs striding away from her. Even without her powers, the taller woman was still a fast walker. She doesn’t know if Kara can tell that she’s following her or not (what with her being without super-hearing and all), but she manages to catch up to the frazzled blonde as they exit the building.

“Kara,” Lena says, gently pulling on her shoulder. “Kara, look at me, baby, I know this is all overwhelming to you now—”

“My sister could be dying,” Kara says, avoiding Lena’s gaze as she fidgets on the spot. “I can’t do anything about it because I don’t have any way to help her. I’m… I’ve never felt this useless before. I… I don’t know what to do, Lena. I can’t lose her. I love her. I’m scared.”

Kara collapses into Lena’s arms with a sob, clutching tightly to the older woman as she burrows her face into Lena’s neck. Lena just strokes her back, murmuring words of encouragement as she pecks Kara’s cheek and holds her tighter, trying to lend her the strength and courage that she desperately is craving to own. She feels Kara fold deeper into her embrace, so Lena doesn’t let go.

“I’ve looked over the scans and the reports with your mother,” Lena tells her steadily. “Alex isn’t brain-dead and she isn’t dying. Her EEG data is clean, and based on the EKG we ran, there aren’t any heart problems either. It’s just a matter of her waking up, baby. That’s all.”

“But she will wake up,” Kara sniffles, her voice watery and clogged. “Right?”

Lena sucks in a deep breath. “I think so, yes.”

“Promise?” Kara asks, pulling back to eye Lena carefully.

“Kara,” Lena sighs, cupping Kara’s cheeks. “You know I can’t do that.”

Before Kara can respond, it’s Winn who darts outside, out of breath and wild-eyed as he looks between the both of them.

Kara freezes and Lena can already see her girlfriend imagining worse-case scenarios. “Winn?”

“You gotta come now,” Winn pants, his voice wavering nervously. “She’s awake.”
Alex’s head is fuzzy and her shoulder throbs to the beat of her heart as she dazedly blinks her eyes open. It takes a few blinks to steady herself before she can see white walls and glass doors surrounding her. The low humming of a machine and the beeping of a monitor drown out the roaring of blood in her ears. She goes to speak, but her mouth doesn’t move. She gags, but she can’t close her mouth.

She’s choking.

“Alex! Alex stop it, you’re going to hurt yourself!”

There’s something in her mouth and she’s choking.

"Alex? Alex, stop! Hey, I need help in here! Somebody help she's awake!"

Suddenly, the white walls disappear and are replaced by glass and darkness. The tube in her throat transforms to cold liquid and just like that, Alex is no longer in whatever room she currently is in, but instead she’s back in the tank. Her lungs are filling up and she can’t breathe.

She's dying all over again.

"Alex, listen to me, you have to calm down. It's me, it's Maggie. Please!"

Alex stops her thrashing and muffled screaming to see a blur of brown hair and worried eyes peering down at her. The novelty of Maggie being in the tank cuts her from her flashback as she focuses on her ex-fiancée. Maggie leaning over her desperately, holding her down by the good shoulder as a flurry of medical personnel rush into the room. She tries to focus on the swimming features of Maggie's face, but Alex still can’t breathe and she’s struggling to keep calm when everything around her is spinning and churning and oh God she’s going to be sick—

Just as the intubation tube is damn-near ripped from her throat, Alex retches. Someone gets a receptacle underneath her quickly to catch the contents—a mixture of saliva and bile—before she can make a mess. She feels someone rubbing her back as she heaves again. Her ribs protest the movement, but the taste of her own vomit triggers yet another retch. The hands on her back keep rubbing as Alex feels the room begin to sway. She can hear the doctor inside of her already diagnosing, post-concussive nausea, triggered gag reflex, dizziness, confusion…

God, sometimes she really hates having gone to medical school.

It takes a few more torturous gags before she’s finished, her stomach burning from the toll of her forceful vomiting. She barely has the energy to glance to her side to see Maggie beside her, teary-eyed but relieved. Alex tries to muster up a smile, but it falls flat when she remembers their last conversation. All she feels is heartache. She flops back against the pillow—tired, feverish, and sweaty from hurling.

“Alex!”

Alex’s eyes flit weakly to the door where Kara tumbles in, with Lena chasing her a few feet behind. Alex barely has the time to purse her lips before Kara is flinging herself onto the bed with a sob, wrapping her tightly in her arms as she cries into her neck. She winces at the pull in her ribs, but she can't turn down the comfort of her younger sister. She reaches up, despite the pain, and cradles Kara closer as she sighs in relief.

“I was so worried,” Kara croaks between hiccupsed cries. “I thought I lost you. You weren't waking
up and I was scared…”

When Kara trails off, Alex rubs her back again and chuckles weakly, taking a deep breath. “Can’t get rid of me that easily, kid.”

Kara only grips her harder, but it’s not the usual strength that Alex is used to.

She frowns, looking at Kara. “Are you taking it easy on me, Supergirl?”

Kara flinches at the name, pulling away from Alex. At the ashen expression on her sister’s face, Alex realizes it’s now her turn to be worried. She tries to sit up, but she can’t manage more than a shuffle before she slides back down against the bed with a stifled moan of pain. Kara looks up, distraught—unsure even—of how to help ease her agony. Alex tries to muster a smile, but that too, falls flat.

“Kara?” Alex asks, ignoring the burning in her shoulder. “What happened? I… I don’t remember anything after being tossed around.”

When Kara doesn’t reply, Lena steps in. “You were bit, Agent Danvers, by one of those creatures. Para-demons, J’onn calls them.”

Alex grimaces. “Does that explain why my shoulder feels like a brick?”

Lena smiles half-heartedly at her attempt at humour. Alex feels relief knowing that at least one person is trying to lighten the situation. “Yes, so it would seem. Bloodwork and imagining studies have ruled out infection or poison. You will have a scar, but the damage is far less bad than we could have ever anticipated. Your ribs and wrist will take longer to heal, as well as your concussion.”

Alex sighs. “I suppose it could be worse.”

“Worse?” Maggie spits out, sniffling. “You could’ve died, Alex.”

Alex hangs her head, looking away. “Yeah, well, maybe I should have.”

“What?” Kara asks in tandem with Maggie, aghast. “Alex…”

“Forget it,” Alex says, waving them off as the same loneliness she’d been feeling only nights before washes over her again. Without alcohol in her system, her thoughts are far more tangible and violent. “I didn’t mean it, okay? It just slipped out. I’m… I’m just tired.”

“Tired…,” Maggie drifts off, her voice broken. Alex stiffens.

“I just woke up from a two-day sleep. It’s the longest I’ve had in years—so forgive me if I’m not used to it,” Alex growls defensively. “Now, will everyone stop worrying about me, please? I’m fine. I just need a bit of time to adjust and then I’ll be good for a discharge within a few hours.”

“Discharge?” Maggie guffaws. “Alex, did you not hear Lena? You got hurt, real bad. Trust me, I saw it. We’re worried about you.”

“And why do you care?” Alex growls, removing their interwoven hands. “Hell, why did you even come? You weren’t so willing to stick through adversity a few days ago, so what changed? You didn’t want to even try to entertain the idea of having children. You just quit.”

“Alex,” Maggie croaks, reeling back as if she’d been slapped. “Just because we’re not together
doesn’t mean I don’t love you.”

“Love me?” Alex sneers, shaking her head with a scoff. “Get out, Maggie.”

“What?” Maggie whimpers. “Alex, please—”

“I don’t want to see you.” Alex’s voice is cold. “Leave. Now.”

“Alex…” Kara drifts off, trying to defuse the tension. “Come on. Don’t take it out on Maggie. She's done nothing wrong—”

“No,” Maggie sighs as she sniffs. “It’s okay. I’ll go.” She shakes her head dejectedly, dries her tears, and shrugs at Kara. The look in her eyes damn-near threatens to kill Alex on the spot, but her head is muddled with anger and loss and confusion and she's overwhelmed. The last thing she wants to do is turn into one of the assholes that abandoned her ex-fiancée, but Alex can't stop herself from reacting.

"Alex, stop. This isn't who you are," Kara says pleadingly, staring between them like she's witnessing two parents fighting. "Maggie loves you. Yes, you both had your differences, but that doesn't mean you get to make her feel like she's the reason why you ended. It's not her fault."

"Kara," Maggie hums softly, "it's okay. I'm just going to go wait outside, clear my head."

"No," Kara says, whimpering slightly. "She can't talk to you like that. She's my sister, yeah, but so are you."

Maggie lets out a soft breath and Alex feels guilt coursing through her at the mixture of sadness and relief on her ex-fiancée's face. She agrees with Kara, that none of what happened between them is any of Maggie's fault, but Alex can't seem to get at the words within her to explain why she feels the way she does. Instead, she just keeps quiet, stirring in her own self-loathing thoughts as Maggie swallows thickly.

"Thanks, kid, really, but I should go," Maggie whispers, not looking to either of them. "I… I'm glad you're alright, Danvers."

She stands and gives Alex one last sad nod before she turns around and heads for the door slowly, waiting for Alex to reconsider.

But Alex has nothing more to say. Well, she has so much more to say but right now all she can think are potent, poisonous thoughts. It feels like something is eating away at her like a parasite burrowed under her skin. Alex's mind is burning, deeper and hotter with each second that passes. Inside of her chest, she's pounding on her ribcage, pleading and begging for all of this to end so she can apologize and make it up.

Yet, none of that happens, and Alex stays completely and utterly silent.

After the door closes, it suddenly grows more tense with only Lena and Kara in the room.

“You didn’t have to be so hard on her,” Kara mutters bitterly, “she’s worried. You would’ve acted the same if it’d been me or her.”

“It almost was you or her,” Alex growls back. “You were reckless again, Kara. You risked your life by staying with me.”

Kara flinches at the snap, and Alex feels guilt settle inside of her again. She knows Kara must have
been at her bedside for the majority of her time since she’d been hospitalized, but she can’t stop hearing the echoes of their previous fight ringing in her ears. Kara stands, frowning. Alex watches as Lena steps closer to her sister, and for some reason the action only makes her more furious and irritated.

"You're being a jerk," Kara says flatly, "and I'm not going to take it. You almost died, Alex. Clearly that means nothing to you."

Alex looks away, willing herself not to speak as Kara sniffs and wipes at her nose with the back of her hand.

"Look I’m sorry," Alex eventually mutters, still avoiding her sisters's eye contact. “I didn’t mean to get mad.”

“It’s not okay,” Kara says quietly, slumping into the chair. “You’ve been through a lot, yeah, but you can't take it out on us—it's not fair. I shouldn’t have tried to overwhelm you, I'll admit, but still.” Alex notes something in Kara’s voice, a despondent tone she’s never heard before. When Alex gazes over at her, she notices that Kara doesn’t even quite look the same, either. Alex frowns, suddenly concerned.

“What happened, Kara?” Alex asks, looking to her sister. “What aren't you telling me?"

There’s a pause, before Kara defeatedly looks up.

“They’re gone,” Kara’s voice cracks on the reply. “My powers.”

Alex’s brow furrow in confusion. “What are you talking about?"

Tears slide down Kara’s cheeks as she shakes her head in defeat. Her shoulders lift in a half-hearted shrug. Alex looks over Kara’s shoulder to see Lena looking on in a mixture of pain and sympathy. It takes a few moments, but then she slowly pieces it together.

“What did you do?” Alex asks, turning back to Kara. “You saved me, I know that much, but what did you do to save me, Kara?” Her voice is not intended to be cold, but she’s afraid—Kara is Supergirl, without her powers, Alex can’t protect her as well as she needs.

“There… there was a woman,” Kara sobs, curling into herself. “She had this sword, and she told me that she could save you, but that I needed to give her something in return. She… she didn’t say what.” *Seems like she didn’t need to, Alex* fills in the sentence sadly.

“She took my hand,” Kara gasps as she looks to her palm. She studies the cracks and lines within it, something that Alex had never noticed before due to Kara's inability to scar or bruise. “And then she stabbed you in the leg with her sword, and I felt… I felt this wave… it was like nothing I’ve ever felt before. It was like I was being drained. And then it was over, and she left as soon as she came.”

Alex’s heart stops for a second. “Kara… did she…”

“I don’t know,” Kara whispers, looking up with a heartbroken expression. “I don’t know if the effect of the potential transfer was permanent, but I haven’t been able to do anything I used to do. It's all just… gone. Lena's been running tests and J'onn tried to scan me, but… nothing.”

Alex stays quiet for a moment, digesting the information and putting the shattered pieces of her memory back together until it all plays on a loop in her mind. She reimagines herself laying there, watching as Kara fought off demon after demon, not budging from her place in front of Alex
instead of flying off to stop them. She sees Kara standing her ground protectively, not letting a single one lay a hand on Alex again.

She finally remembers Maggie’s head curled over her chest, the bloodcurdling scream which had left her lips when Alex started convulsing and the pain had gotten far too intense to manage. She recalls Kara begging to save her, pleading with someone to do anything to bring her back. She remembers the blonde halo of light around the mysterious woman, the sword piercing into her thigh, the indescribable shooting pain of her tissues repairing themselves forcefully until she’d passed out from the agony.

Suddenly, Alex remembers everything.

“Kara,” Alex stutters her name. “What did you do?”

Kara startles at the harshness of her question. “Alex—”

“You… you threw it all away,” Alex gasps out, her heart rate climbing as she struggles to sit up on the bed. “How could you throw everything away for me? The world needs you, Kara! I told you that Supergirl is bigger than me, that you can't sacrifice yourself for me. How could you?”

“Throw it away?!” Kara suddenly booms, standing up as her misery is replaced with anger. Alex watches as even Lena flinches at her raised voice. “Alex, I saved your life! You would have died out there without me. If I had to go back, I would do it again, and again, and again. Got it?”

“No,” Alex growls, clenching her fists and ignoring the pain in her limbs. “No, Kara. I don’t ‘got it’, okay? The world depends on you, not me. I’m just another cog in the machine—I’m replaceable. If you can't understand that, then I don't know what to tell you.”

“Yeah, well, I don’t care that the world depends on me, okay?” Kara snarls back, tears streaming down her cheeks. “This isn’t my world, Alex. My world was destroyed. Despite everything, Earth is not my home. I have given so much to this planet for nothing in return. I am ostracized, criticized, targeted—and so are the people whom I love. I can’t do it anymore, Alex. I’m not strong enough. I never was. Not like you.”

“Kara,” Lena gently calls her sister’s name, “maybe we should go outside, take a walk.” Kara just shoves off Lena’s hand on her elbow and glares at Alex with an insurmountable amount of pain and anger. Alex feels her lungs rip apart at the fire in Kara’s ice-blue eyes. She's reminded of the incident with the Red Kryptonite all of the sudden, but this is worse, Alex decides, because this is Kara's honest thoughts.

And she isn't even under the influence to say them.

“You’re not replaceable, Alex. You’re my family,” Kara says, her teeth gritted together harshly. “But if you don’t want that anymore, fine. I've already lost one, so I'm sure I can learn to lose another, right? I can’t stop you from feeling the way you do. So instead, I guess I’ll just go.”

Before Alex can reply, Kara darts out the door without a word.

“Kara wait,” Alex croaks, tears welling in her eyes as she realizes just what she'd said. “No I didn’t… I'm sorry…”

“She loves you more than anything else in this world,” Lena tells her coolly, trying (and failing) to mask her protectiveness with professionalism. “You put her first, you protect her—how can you not expect her to do the same with you? Think about that, Alex.”
Alex lets the words stew within her as Lena straightens her suit and looks out to the door, her shoulders stiffening with worry.

“Right now, Kara is lost. Her powers are her only remaining connection to her planet,” Lena explains calmly, though her fingers are knitted together into tight fists. “You have lost much in your life, Agent Danvers, but do not forget Kara has, too. You may be her sister, but I’m her girlfriend. I love her, and the thought of harm coming to her brings me a great deal of anger and pain. But that harm coming from you? Well…”

Alex stays quiet as Lena trails off, her eyes darkening. Alex gulps at the ferocity in the Luthor’s expression, but she understands. A part of her is grateful that her sister has someone looking out for her when clearly she can’t do the job well enough. Alex would have thought with the years of protecting Kara and loving her that nothing could drive them apart, but clearly she's wrong. Just like always, she screwed it up again.

Lena stands and makes her way to the door, her hand pausing on the handle as she takes a deep breath and turns back to Alex.

“I hope you figure everything out, Alex. For all of our sakes.”

The, when Lena leaves, Alex is alone again.

She takes the moment of silence to think about what she’d said, of what Kara had been through. She can’t imagine having powers and then losing them. Everything Kara possesses, it’s the only thing she had left of her home. Alex feels tears burn in her eyes as she thinks about when she had saved Kara from the Black Mercy, from where she saw the perfect reality of her planet, of Kara with her parents, with her real family. Kara had been so happy. First, she'd killed Kara's only remaining blood relative, and then she'd pulled her from bliss.

Inside that pseudo-reality, Kara had been more at peace than Alex had ever seen her act on Earth.

Alex did her best when she was younger to protect Kara from bullies, to nurture Kara’s best interests, to raise her to be the best woman that she could be. She gave Kara love and affection and support—all the things she never received from Eliza. Alex sacrificed her childhood, her dreams and her hopes—even her own family, to be Kara’s everything. She tried—she honestly tried to not fuck it up.

But it wasn’t enough then and it isn't enough now.

It’s never enough.

Because with only a handful of words, Alex has shattered the only stable relationship she's had her entire life.

And for what? Self-deprecation? Pity? Is she truly this obtuse?

Perhaps, she is.

There’s a dull ache in the back of her head, and Alex wants to sleep, to restart this life, to fix every mistake she’d made, but she knows that she's fucked it up beyond the point of repair. She wants to go back and choose to face her problems head-on, not to repress them. She wants to go back and hold Kara, to tell her that she’s sorry, that she loves her, that she’s been a massive idiot and to make it better.

But Alex isn’t strong enough for any of that.
And now, all she can do is accept the suffering as condemnation.

Surely, *that* has to be enough, right?

* * *

Maggie stands outside the DEO, watching the sun set over the city skyline in the distance. She feels the warmth of the summer rays on her skin, but she feels cold all throughout. She knew that her and Alex were done, that their relationship was over, but she couldn’t help but wish she could change her feelings on kids. She finds herself questioning whether she could make an exception for Alex.

Despite how she feels for the other woman, Maggie knows no relationship should have an ultimatum. Love is not a game, she reminds herself, when she thinks about her girlfriend before Alex. You can’t love someone for only bits and pieces. You have to love everything.

Maggie looks down to her ring finger and takes a breath.

Does she love all of Alex?

Or just the *idea* of Alex?

The question hits her like a bullet and Maggie gasps.

Maybe she was a fool, thinking that she could fall for someone like Alex. While Alex was goofy and sweet, she had built walls the size of skyscrapers around her mind and heart. She was as damaged as Maggie was, and it wasn’t a good thing. Maggie saw through the blocks of trauma, saw through the years of pain Alex had repressed, and fell in love with the naïve idea of Alex being perfect. Maggie had taken that leap and dug herself into a rabbit hole to be with her, because maybe deep down, even she was tired of being so alone.

Was that all Alex was? A settlement? Some sort of surrender to a conventional norm of having a wife?

“I’m sorry. About what she said.”

Maggie snaps from her daze to look over and see Kara walking up to her, hands nervously wringing the sleeves of her sweater. Her steps are hesitant, and her eyes are red-rimmed from crying. Maggie offers her a sympathetic smile and a shrug before turning back to the sunset with a heavy sigh. Kara steps up next to her, crossing her arms and tucking her hands under armpits nervously, looking down.

“She doesn’t mean it,” Kara says softly. “She wouldn’t mean it. She does love you, Maggie. I know she does, she’s just… lost.”

“I can’t give her the one thing she wants,” Maggie says, shrugging as she blinks back tears. “I wouldn’t blame her for being upset.”

Kara sighs. “You don’t owe her anything. Alex is just being… obstinate.”

Maggie frowns at Kara coming to her defence. “She’s your sister, Kara.”

“So are you,” Kara says, her voice steady. “Even if you aren’t together anymore, I still think of you as my sister, Maggie.”
She feels her eyes water at the admission. Maggie had never had siblings growing up and her aunt never had any children. She was used to doing things by herself, functioning independently, making sure she never had to rely on anyone. Even when she had been with Emily, she was sure to take care of herself and to lick her own wounds when necessary. But right now, as she looks to Kara, she realizes that dating Alex—falling in love with Alex—was a different deal altogether. Because she didn't just get Alex, but she also got Kara and J'onn and Winn and Eliza.

Falling in love with Alex meant Maggie got something she'd never had before.

A family.

It's what makes this break-up unbearable. Yes, Alex had a first real relationship to lose, but Maggie lost so much. She doesn't want to be selfish, but the fear of being abandoned again is terrifying. Kara is the younger sister she'd always dreamed of having, but never did. To lose that terrifies Maggie to her wits' end. While she doesn't always agree with Supergirl's intentions, she loves Kara unconditionally.

But before she can dwell further on the notion of a family, Kara speaks again, her voice tiny and sad.

"But I don't know if Alex and I are okay," Kara mumbles, blinking back tears. "I don't know if she still wants to be my sister."

Maggie turns then, her eyes watery as she places her hand on Kara’s trembling shoulder in silent support. She leans over and pecks the taller woman on the cheek, trying not to breathe in the familiar scent. Kara and Alex always smelt so similar, so warm, so homely. It was what Kara used to say when they had their game nights—you don't date one Danvers without dating the other. At first, Maggie had been confused and a little more than concerned at the insinuation of dating both Danvers sisters, but then she understood as time went on.

Alex and Kara are a packaged deal. At times, Maggie was envious of their bond. She'd never had siblings of her own, but even so, she isn't sure if she would be as close to them as the Danvers sisters were with each other. Despite their disagreements and arguments, the two of them were practically stuck at the hip. While Maggie isn't particularly religious, she does believe in the concept of soulmates.

Before she can contemplate the nature of their relationship, Kara's voice interrupts her thought process.

"I don't think she wants to be my sister anymore," she whimpers softly, her voice cracking. "I think… I think this time it is over."

Maggie frowns at the defeated nature of Kara's tone. She reaches out and rubs the taller woman's shoulder in comfort. "Hey, Kara, c'mon don't think like that. You know just as well as I do that if there’s anything in this world Alex loves, it’s you. Even when I was with her, I knew that if she had to choose between us, she’d always pick you.” Maggie tells her, her voice cracking with emotion as she leans her head against Kara’s shoulder. “She used to tell me, ‘Kara Danvers is my favourite person’. That never changed. And I don't think it will.”

Kara sobs at the words, hanging her head. “I let her down.”

“’No,” Maggie reassures her softly. “No, sweetheart. You didn’t.”

“She’s so mad at me, she hates—"
“No,” Maggie repeats firmly this time. “She could never hate you.”

“I took everything from her, Maggie. I took her mother, her father, her sense of belonging, her childhood… I took it all away,” Kara cries out in frustration, crossing her arms tighter. “Everything—all the pain she feels, all that trauma, it’s all because of me. I did this to her.”

“That’s not true and you know it,” Maggie tells her, turning Kara so they are looking at each other. “If Alex heard you saying that she’d be furious. All Alex wants to do is protect you, even if it means pushing you away from her. She will sacrifice that to keep you safe. She only wants you to be happy and healthy and safe. It’s not the healthiest mechanism, I agree, but that’s what she thinks works for her.”

Kara drinks it in, but Maggie can tell she’s still unconvinced.

But then, Kara asks, “what if my powers never come back?”

Maggie smiles sadly. “Alex will love you just the same, no less.”

“Will… will I still be her sister?” Kara croaks vulnerably, tears streaking down her cheeks. “Will she still want to be my family?”

“Always,” Maggie whispers, kissing her cheek. “It’s all she has ever wanted, Little Danvers. It’s always been you and her against the world, with or without powers. You know that, so does she. You said Alex is your world, your home, but you're the same for her. You know that, right?”

Kara nods half-heartedly, exhausted by the day’s events. Maggie just strokes her back, drawing her into another hug. Kara doesn’t hesitate to wrap her arms around Maggie’s shoulders and squeeze. Maggie just hums sweet nothings into her ear until she calms again.

“I think you need a break,” Maggie suggests, pulling back so she can wipe at Kara’s straggling tears. “A vacation, if you will.”

Kara laughs sadly, shaking her head. “Where would I even go?”

“How about Ireland?”

Both women turn around to see Lena standing in the doorway, a hopeful look on her face as she keeps her attention on Kara. Maggie takes a step back as Lena moves towards them, her hands reaching for Kara’s own. Lena doesn’t hesitate to wrap her arms around Maggie’s shoulders and squeeze. Lena just hums sweet nothings into her ear until she calms again.

“I have a farmhouse on the Cliffs of Moher, near County Clare. My grandfather used to raise cattle, sheep, and pigs there,” Lena explains, blushing nervously. “The property is mostly empty, though I think it’s maintained by a family friend. It would be just the two of us, away from this city. Just to take a breath. We could spend some time away from the bustle and noise, and just take in the nature of Earth.”

“What about Alex?” Kara asks, looking back to the door. “I can’t leave her here alone.” Maggie sighs, before she squeezes her arm.

“Alex will be fine. If anything, I’ll be here if she needs,” Maggie says gently. “But Lena’s right. Some time away would do you good.”

“There’s a laboratory there too,” Lena says, “an old one, but it has what I need to investigate the disappearance of your powers.”
Kara contemplates the offer for a moment, before she resigns.

“Okay,” she says, smiling as she looks at Lena. “Ireland it is, I suppose.”
August 30th, 2018

The warmth of soft hands on her skin wakes Kara in the morning.

“Mm,” Kara mumbles as those hands are replaced by lips. “I suppose the sun is up, then?”

Teeth lightly nip at her bare shoulder and Kara grins into her pillow, still lingering in her sleepy state. The warmth spills down her body, nursing the barely-there ache from the previous night. Growing up essentially invulnerable to pain, the dull throbbing across her shoulders and between her thigh is a pleasant change. Kara hums as those lips place soft butterfly kisses to the back of her neck.

“I love you,” Lena murmurs into her skin as she runs her hand down the muscles of Kara’s back. “Let me show you how much, baby.”

Kara can only sigh contently as Lena’s hand disappears under the sheets and massages her ass and the back of her thighs. Kara shivers when those lips reattach themselves to the back of her neck, suckling a gentle love-bite into the muscles corded there. Kara mumbles and tries to shift, but Lena’s hands are firm as she feels herself being pressed further into the bed. Kara smiles against the pillows at the pressure.

“Hm,” Lena hums as she runs her fingers between Kara’s legs. “You’re wet.”

A shiver courses through her at the words. She can only nod as she feels Lena practically grinning into her skin from where she’s kissing her shoulder. Kara bites at the pillow when those soft fingers gently explore her nether regions in a languid, loving fashion, gathering slick.

“Always,” Kara says, smiling as Lena lets out a pleased hum. “For you.”

Lena works her good and slow, murmurs sweet nothings into her ear as Kara starts to quiver and shake. The mattress creaks as Lena adds the slow thrust of her hips into Kara’s bottom. One of Kara’s hands reach behind her, fingers corded through her hair and tugging Lena closer to her neck as she feels the feeling rise. Kara gasps and whimpers as she feels something building, buzzing and tingling, deep within her.

It’s not an explosion, no.
It’s not something akin to lightening or a shot in the dark.

(Though some nights and mornings, it is.)

No, her climax is like a melodic lull to her heart. It sends healing waves of pleasure all through her body, and Lena rides her through it, praising her, telling her words of love and encouragement, until Kara is nothing but jelly between their sheets. The combination of the gentle praise and the steady hand of girlfriend grounding her is nearly overwhelming. Even then, Lena only slows to a stop, doesn’t pull out.

“Good?” Lena asks, kissing Kara’s shoulder once the spasms ebb. Kara only sighs sleepily.

“I love mornings.”

Chuckling, Lena finally removes her wrinkled fingers, wiping them on the sheets before she reaches out to tug Kara into her arms. She pecks Kara’s forehead as the younger woman’s head slides onto her chest slowly. She listens for the familiar sound of Lena's heartbeat. She strains, trying to pick up more than just the steady beat, but she can’t seem to go deeper. Accepting her defeat, Kara lets her eyes close and sighs.

“Any progress?” Lena asks, her voice quiet. Kara shakes her head numbly.

“No,” she mumbles into Lena’s skin. “It’s been two months, Lena.”

“We'll figure something out,” Lena assures her, pressing kiss after kiss into Lena’s forehead. “I'll run my analysis again.”

Kara just nods, her eyelids already sliding shut again under the lull of Lena’s heartbeat. She doesn’t dream—she hasn’t since she’d arrived in Ireland, but she prefers the tranquility of her mind. There's no pressure of putting on a suit and saving the world, there's only peace.

And sheep. Lots of sheep.

Lena wakes her up a few hours later, rousing her with the promise of eggs, bacon, and some fresh Irish hashbrowns. Kara doesn’t quite leap out of bed, but she does have a spring in her step when she descends the steps in a pair of Lena’s old sweats and a ripped shirt to the smells of breakfast food wafting from the kitchen. Her hunger hadn't diminished, but the amount of food she could ingest has lessened slightly.

When she first tried to consume a mountain of potstickers, she immediately vomited after a few minutes. It was then, as Lena held her hair back and cleaned the mixture of snot, saliva, and tears from her face, that she explained that Kara's anatomy was mimicking that of a human one. As a result, her hunger and appetite remained unchanged, but she no longer broke down food with the metabolism of a Kryptonian.

“Your coffee is on the table,” Lena says as she finishes up plating both the dishes, drawing Kara away from her thoughts about food and food consumption. “No cream, two sugars.” Kara hums happily as she holds the steaming cup in her palms before raising it to take a sip. That was another thing that changed—temperature suddenly mattered. Now, a hot cup of coffee could burn her tongue, leaving it tingly and raw.

It sucked. A lot.

Lena sets her plate down in front of her with a peck to her hair before she takes her own seat. "Eat up, love."
“I was thinking of visiting the orphanage today,” Kara says as she digs her fork into some eggs and shovels it into her mouth. “The kids really liked it when I came last time. And I think… it’s good for me.” Lena smiles at that, and Kara feels pride burble in her chest at the love in Lena’s gaze. She can’t stop herself from leaning over and capturing those perfect lips in her own, tasting the familiar Orange Pekoe on Lena’s tongue.

“I love you,” Kara whispers, “I forgot to say it back this morning.”

Lena pecks her jaw. “I know, honey. Now finish your breakfast before it gets cold.”

Kara chuckles, digging back into her eggs. “So, what are your plans for today, Ms. Luthor?”

“I’m going to work on some things in the lab,” Lena says as she takes a forkful of potatoes into her mouth and chews slowly. She waits until she’s swallowed to finish with, “I’m making progress on trying to figure out how to restore your powers, even if it is minimal progress.”

Kara’s chest deflates. “Oh right. That.”

Lena stops her fork mid-way to her mouth. “Is something wrong?”

Kara fiddles with her fingers, suddenly not interested in whetting her appetite with the delicious breakfast in front of her. Lena sets her fork down and Kara hates how observant her lover is. She avoids Lena’s stare, but the Luthor is as patient as she ever is.

“Kara,” Lena hums her name sweetly. “Talk to me, love.”

Kara takes a breath before glancing up with a wince. “What if… what if I don’t want you to work in the lab?”

Lena frowns in confusion. "What do you mean, Kara? Do you…?"

“I just…,” Kara trails off, looking down as she starts to twiddle her fingers nervously. “These last two months, without my powers, have been some of the most peaceful two months of my life on Earth. I… I don’t have responsibilities. There’s no one to hunt or hurt. There’s no one to protect. It’s just me and you. I can feel the grass between my toes, the sun in my hair. When I had my powers, I never felt anything, you know?”

“Kara…,” Lena whispers her name. “You don’t want me at least try?”

Kara swallows and looks back up, shaking her head faintly.

“At least,” Kara says, “not for now. If that’s okay?”

Lena smiles, eyes watery as she nods. “Of course, Kara.”

Kara sighs in relief, before picking her fork back up. She takes a few more bites of her food, happy with the taste now the discomfort of the conversation is passed. Lena watches her carefully between her own bites, still curious, but doesn’t ask. Instead, she decides to turn the subject around to something else.

“Have you called her?”

Kara stops mid-chew. “Who?”

Lena sighs. “Don’t be daft, Kara. You know who.”
“She doesn’t want to talk to me,” Kara says with a shrug of her shoulders as she finishes her bite. “I can’t force her to communicate. If she wants to reach out to me, I’m here. But I don’t think she cares. Something changed in her that day, Lena. She’s not the same Alex I know.”


“Perhaps she’ll call soon,” Lena says, reaching over to place her hand over Kara’s own in support. “She hasn’t forgotten you, Kara.”

Kara just shrugs, pushing the sadness away for now.

* * *

“Another shot.”

“I should be cutting you off,” M’gann says, eyeing Alex suspiciously as she reaches over the counter and swipes at the bottle anyways. “Any normal human’s tolerance is way less than yours. Besides, you’ve been drinking a lot recently. I’m getting worried about alcohol poisoning.”

Alex snorts as she downs the shot. “Don't worry. I know what I'm doing.”

“I suppose you do,” M’gann says quietly, leaning on the bar counter as some patrons stumble into the establishment. “If there is something you want to talk about, you know that you can confide in me, right? I know you, Alex, but this is the fifth time I’ve seen you this week.”

“I’m peachy,” Alex says with a shrug. “Couldn’t be better.”

“How many hours are you working?”

“Enough.”

“Alex.”

“No,” M’gann says, swiping the bottle from Alex’s grasp. “Enough.”

Alex just snorts, shaking her head. “Don’t use my own word against me.”

“I’ll do what I want,” M’gann says, folding her arms across her chest as she sets the bottle back down behind the bar. “This is getting out of hand, Alex. You’re drunk more often than sober. J’onn called me telling me to make sure you didn’t drink half of my store. He's also worried.”

“Everyone worries, mostly for nothing. I haven't died, and I haven't gotten poisoned. Maybe this is the only way I can live with myself,” Alex growls, fingering the rim of her glass as she glances up at the television screen. The Gotham Rogues are demolishing the Metropolis Meteors.

“I wonder if Maggie’s at the game,” Alex says as she raises the glass to her lips, her eyes glazing as she thinks about the detective. “She always did love watching football. I, myself, could never get into it. The rules are much too confusing and plus it's just a bunch of men tackling each other. What's so entertaining about that? Probably the men thing… mostly the men thing. Ladies tackling ladies, well that's a thought, huh?”

M’gann stays quiet, letting Alex stir in her own thoughts. Alex finishes her drink and sets the empty glass down with a small thud. Her head is pounding with the overload of sensory information, and God, when was the last time she had properly slept? Discreetly, she takes a small
whiff of herself—add shower to that list, she thinks with a light scoff. She’s disgusting, but she
doesn’t care. She hasn’t cared in a long time.

Two months to be exact.

“Did you call Kara?”

Alex freezes, her grip around her glass tightening.

“Why should I?” Alex bites out bitterly. “She left, not me.”

“She was going through a lot, Alex. She deserved a break, too. Lena told me what you said to her;
I’m sure you feel awful.”

_I do. I feel miserable._

Alex sighs, hanging her head. “Yeah… I know. I just wish she’d said goodbye. Don’t I deserve that
much, at least? God, I was so worried about her, M’gann. She disappeared and I couldn’t reach her,
and I thought I… but then Lena called me, and Kara didn’t even want to talk to me. I mean, I get it
through. I don’t want to talk to me, either. I know I have to apologize to her, but each day I delay it,
the gap just grows worse and I don’t know what to do.” Alex finishes with a pained sigh. She hangs
her head and gestures to M’gann to pour her another drink.

“No,” M’gann says, “I can’t do this anymore, Alex.”

“You’re a bartender and I’m a patron,” Alex says, brows furrowed. She feels unsteady as she glares
up at the older woman in frustration. “What can’t you do about that?” M’gann just eyes her and
Alex relents with a scoff. “Fine, I’ll go home and drink then. What do I owe you, M’gann?”

“It’s on the house,” M’gann says tersely, and Alex avoids her peering gaze, “but I thought maybe
you would want to stay the night with me and J’onn. It might do you some good. I can tell by your
physiological vitals you’ve not slept. I think that perhaps some company would be nice.”

“Don’t read my mind or body or whatever it is you are currently doing.”

“Alex, I do not do it because it amuses me.”

“Goddamnit,” Alex snarls, slamming her fist onto the counter. “I’m not a fucking child. You and
J’onn and everyone else at the goddamn D.E.O. need to stop acting like I’m this helpless little girl.
I’m fine. I will always be fine, and just let me fucking live, okay?”

M’gann just sighs and nods. “Fine. Just… text me when you’re home.”

Alex nods, fishing out a wad of bills before placing them on the counter. She stumbles off the stool
before M’gann can protest, making her way to the door. She takes the bus home, knowing better
than to drive drunk like she’s done countless times before. It makes her think of how J’onn initially
found her—drunk and coked out in a jail cell after a DUI, lost to the world because she hadn’t a clue
as to who Alex Danvers was.

_Hell, Alex thinks, I still don’t know who I am._

After a half hour of nearing sobriety, the bus comes to a halt outside her building. Alex kicks her
shoes off when she enters the apartment. She kicks over empty beer and whiskey bottles until she
reaches her kitchen. She pulls open the door and takes out a bottle of Jack. She uncaps the lid and
tosses it into the general area of her overflowing garbage before she drops down onto her couch
with a heavy sigh.

Her shoulder aches with the movement and she rolls it, trying to ease the tension between the muscles there. She downs a shot of the Jack before she cuddles the bottle into her chest. She nurses from it steadily, feeling her eyelids growing heavier and heavier.

Maybe tonight she’ll sleep without nightmares.

Maybe tonight, she’ll be at peace.

*Maybe.*

* * *

**July 4th, 2003**

The fireworks are always spectacular. It’s the one thing Alex has always looked forward to every single year. She’ll sit sandwiched between her mother and father, looking up to the gunpowder in the sky bursting with light, feeling like she could reach the stars.

But this year, Alex can’t even see the stars.

Because this year, Alex is in their home because Kara can’t handle the noise and her mother said that she must take care of her sister.

She despises Kara sometimes.

Before Kara, things were great. Eliza thought she was amazing, was proud of her, even, but after Kara came it was like Alex ceased to exist. It was always Kara-this, Kara-that. Nothing about Alex. And maybe she’s selfish, wanting attention when the girl currently cowering beneath their desk lost her whole world in a nanosecond.

Alex tries to imagine being alone, being without her mother or father, her friends at school or even her babysitter. She tries to imagine being the last of her kind, and it makes her tremble.

“A-Alex?”

Alex squats down to where Kara is curled up under the desk, hands cupping her ears as the fireworks shoot off in the distance. She swallows and offers Kara a gentle smile before she nudges her way into the small space, opening up her arms to allow Kara to burrow into them. Kara squeezes a bit too hard at first, but for the first time, Alex doesn’t really mind the slight pain to her ribs.

“I’m scared,” Kara whimpers, “it’s too loud.”

“Ssh,” Alex whispers, taking Kara’s palm and placing it flat to her chest. “Don’t listen to them, Kara. Focus on my heartbeat.”

It takes a few moments before Kara calms, and Alex smiles when Kara slumps against her chest, her hand still over her heart. She drops a kiss to Kara’s forehead and rubs her back lovingly. Kara nuzzles closer, humming contently when she’s managed to focus on the steady ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum of Alex’s heartbeat within her chest.

“Whenever you feel scared, you focus on my heartbeat, okay?” Alex says softly, squeezing her sister’s hand. “You don’t have to worry about anything anymore, Kara. Not while I’m here.” Kara
sniffles.

“You promise?” Kara asks as she presses closer. Alex’s eyes mist.

“Ubikiri genman, uso tsuitara,” Alex says, smiling. Kara frowns.

“What does that mean?” Kara asks, tilting her head up.

Alex opens their hands and curls their pinky fingers together.

“Pinky promise.”

Kara looks to their intertwined fingers and smiles, hooking her pinky tighter to Alex’s own, causing the older girl to chuckle.

“You’ve lost your world, I know. But you haven’t lost your family,” Alex assures her, pecking her forehead again. “You’ve got me, Kar. And I’m not abandoning you. This I promise. Pinky promise, kid.”

Kara sniffles and smiles, nodding. “Pinky promise.”

* * *

S e p t e m b e r 5 t h , 2 0 1 8

“Dr. Alexandra Danvers?”

“Please,” Alex mutters as she stands at the sound of her name. “Can’t exactly call me a doctor if I never got the degree conferred.”

The nurse just looks at her tiredly. “Dr. Cruz will see you now.”

Alex tiredly smiles and nods, following the nurse as she leads her into a room. There are a pair of clean scrubs on the exam table.

“Get changed and put your feet up on the stirrups,” the nurse instructs blandly, not looking up from her clipboard. “And please… don’t touch anything else.” The nurse gives her a decent side-eye.

Alex rolls her eyes with disdain. “I’m Alex, not Kara.”

“Regardless,” the nurse mutters, “the Danvers sisters are always a pain in the ass. Anyways, get changed and call if you need.”

Alex watches the nurse go with a few choice words mumbled under her breath. She quickly changes into the scrubs and places her legs in the stirrups. She takes a deep breath, staring up at the ceiling as she tries to ignore the fact that she’s really here.

“Alex!”

Alex looks over to see the source of the familiar voice. Dr. Victoria Cruz walks over to her with a cheerful smile. “Hey, doc.”

“You’re looking perky today,” Dr. Elena says, looking her over as she sets her clipboard down and snaps on some rubber gloves. She looks up, giving Alex a once-over before quirking up her brow with a slight smirk. "Might I even say that you're glowing, Alex?"
Alex gulps nervously, trying to squash down the butterflies floating in her stomach. “I just came to check. I’ve been sick the last few days,” she explains, her voice trembling. “It could be food poisoning, but I don’t have a fever or diarrhea. But then I thought it could be a stomach bug or maybe just nerves, but I—”

“Alex,” Dr. Cruz cuts her off with a polite smile, “why don’t we just check?” She rolls her stool over between her legs, pulling on her mask before she looks back over to Alex. “Did you take one?”

Alex gulps again, her hands growing clammy. “Three, actually.”

“Oh, scientists and their need for reliability and validity.”

“I had to be sure,” Alex says defensively, “This is my first time doing it, so I don’t want… you know.”

“To be disappointed?” Dr. Cruz finishes sympathetically. Alex just looks away before she nods. Dr. Cruz pats her leg gently.

“Well, let’s check then, shall we?”

Alex doesn’t react when her blood is drawn or when she’s getting examined… down there. She doesn’t react when she pees in a cup or gets a stomach ultrasound. She stays stoic and calm throughout it all, even when she’s left fully-clothed and waiting in the sterile room. She looks to the clock on the wall, focusing on each tick. She knows that life has a magical way of smacking her down when she’s happy, so she waits.

It hadn’t been long after her last visit with M’gann that Alex truly asked herself about her attitudes towards children. In the months that passed after the battle and in her recovery, the thought became more salient. She wanted to be a mother, even if it meant she walked the road alone. She loves—loved—Maggie. She wanted to be a wife, to be happy, but Alex also wanted children, to nurture and love something innocent.

She wanted her hands to be warm with life, not cold with death.

So, without telling anyone, Alex rifled through donors-after-donors before finally selecting one that she refuses to believe looked and had similar traits of her ex-fiancée, invested a good amount of her savings into fertility trials, and began the process of becoming a mother.

M’gann saw her less, the bottles in her fridge diminished, and Alex even started doing pre-natal exercises, just in case.

It’s a shot in the dark, but she wants a baby more than anything.

But then she hears Eliza in the back of her head, telling her that she’s not cut out to be a mother, not cut out to love, to be loved—

Oh God, she thinks miserably as she continues to wait. What if she was right?

Her thoughts are interrupted by the clacking of Dr. Cruz’s heels in the distance, alerting her of the impending news.

At the sight of her, Alex prays to anyone listening—Jesus, God, Rao, her father—to just let her have this. Alex keeps her hands glued to her side as she finishes the plea just as the door clicks open and Dr. Cruz waltz in, a barely-kept grin tugging at her lips as she takes a seat.
“Alex Danvers,” Dr. Cruz states with a grin. “Congratulations…”

Alex doesn’t hear the rest of what Dr. Cruz says, because all she can focus on are the results of her blood work, the words ‘baby’ and ‘successful’ and ‘no complications’ being the only clear things she hears. She’s numb with happiness and relief and completion.

“You already know which vitamins and such to take,” Dr. Cruz instructs as she scrawls something down on her prescription pad, “but I’m going to write them up for you anyways because otherwise there would be no point to my job. Seriously, though. Congratulations again, Alex. I have no doubt that you will make a fantastic mother. If there is anything you need, do not hesitate to contact me. I have plenty of resources.”

Alex takes the prescription and looks down, her lips curving upwards as it all finally kicks in. She places a hand over her stomach, her eyes closing. She can picture it’s small body, curved in her womb, nestled within her, warm and safe.

**Pregnant,** she thinks elatedly, **I’m going to have a baby.**

“It’s you and me now,” Alex mumbles quietly, unable the fight the smile which curls at her lip. She looks to her belly, grinning.

“You’re my Little Bean.”

* * *

Lena drops Kara off at the orphanage before she heads back to the house. She told Kara that she wouldn’t work on restoring her powers, but she did mention that she did have a few projects she had to check up on since she was spending time away from the city.

Kara, of course, had felt guilty and said that she was okay to return if Lena needed to go, but Lena knew that Kara wasn’t ready yet, and to be quite frank, neither was she. It wasn’t only the former Supergirl that needed a break from everything. So did she.

She enters the lab and sets her keys in the bowl beside the door. Walking over to the mass of computers and screens, Lena takes a minute to remember the events of this morning, of Kara so warm and pliant beneath her, so open and wet and ready and lovely. She remembers the way Kara looked at her after it was over, dopey and hair-mussed from both sex and sleep, and it sparks a joy in her heart to think that Kara actually loves her back.

She powers on the supercomputer and watches the screen light up.

“Greetings, Administrator Luthor. What is your query today?”

“Access folder Project PD.”

“Accessing folder Project PD. Last update was twenty-two hours ago. Do you require anything else today, Administrator Luthor?”

“No thank you.”

Lena flips through the security footage of Kara fighting off the para-demons in National City, flinging them into buildings as she stands over her wounded sister. Lena takes notes as she watches the mysterious woman walk through the portal and communicate to Kara about saving Alex. Lena pauses the video when the woman grips Kara’s hand and stabs the sword into Alex’s thigh,
looking at the mysterious golden light.

“Who are you…?” Lena mutters to herself as she zooms in on the woman’s face, crystal clear in the security footage. “And why did you come to National City and not do anything else?”

“Administrator Luthor, you have an incoming call from the DEO.”

Lena sighs. “Accept it.”

Alex’s face shows up on the screen and Lena offers her a nod of greeting as she takes in the excitement flickering in Alex’s gaze. Her cheeks are almost glowing, and Lena’s almost sure she’s never seen Alex look so happy in her entire life. Just a month ago, she’d seen the same woman calling her, hungover but somehow still drunk. Now, however, it is like looking at the woman Kara always spoke about from her youth.

Lena wonders what changed.

“Agent Danvers,” Lena greets her with a smile. “You look good.”

Alex grins, her eyes bright with happiness. “Ms. Luthor.”

“It’s late for you, is it not?” Lena checks her watch. “Something around four in the morning, right?” Alex nods and smiles, rubbing at her forehead as she fumbles for something on her desk. Lena waits until eventually Alex pulls up her tablet and shares a file.

“What can I do for you, Agent?”

Alex clicks at her tablet. “I’ve been reviewing the security footage with J’onn and Clark from the day of the battle. After consulting with the Justice League, J’onn thinks that the woman in the video could be someone called Big Barda. She is the leader of something called the Furies, an elite group of assassins from some planet called Apokolips. J’onn isn’t certain, but it’s a start. It’s more than we could ever hope to have.”

“Hmm,” Lena mutters, mulling over the information. “What do you think a group of assassins would want with Earth?”

Alex shrugs. “Beats me. J’onn mentioned that Apokolips is ruled by a war monger named Darkseid. The parademons are eerily similar to his grunt soldiers, according to him.” Alex pauses and brings up a picture of the aforementioned creatures. “J’onn told me he only knew stories of Darkseid. He destroys other worlds to fuel his own. He’s known to be one of the most powerful beings to exist in the universe.”

“And J’onn thinks Earth is next on his list?” Lena concludes with an arched brow. “That doesn’t sound good.”

“It’s a theory for now, but yeah, it seems to be that way, yes.”

“How long until he comes, you think?” Lena asks. "If he does?"

“Can’t tell. We don’t even know if it was him, anyways.”

Lena nods, contemplating. Alex waits patiently on the other end for a response, but when she doesn’t get one, she breaks the ice. Suddenly, the happy expression that had been on her girlfriend’s sister’s face falters. Lena bites at her bottom lip, already knowing what Alex is thinking.
“She still hasn’t got her powers back, has she?”

Lena looks away guiltily, trying not to think about her earlier conversation with Kara. She sighs, swallowing down the anxieties coursing through her as she debates telling Alex the truth. Luckily, Alex doesn’t seem to read too much into her silence, and only shakes her head.

“J’onn already called in Diana, Barry, and Arthur. Clark also spoke with Bruce, Kate, and Dick. We’ll have to be prepared for the worst if he comes,” Alex says, rubbing at her face. “But don’t panic. These are only preparations. Kara doesn’t need to know yet.”

“Alex…,” Lena says, watching as Alex pinches the bridge of her nose tiredly. “Perhaps you should take some days off and relax.”

“Ha,” Alex chuckles as she looks back up. “Not all of us can go gallivanting in Europe, Luthor. But… but if any of us should, it should be Kara. She deserves it. I just hope she’s happy. Is she?”

Lena bites back tears as she nods. “Yeah, she is.”

Alex sighs and nods, smiling faintly. “Good, good.”

“She worries about you,” Lena says, “you know that, right?”

“She doesn’t have to worry about me,” Alex says, smiling again, but Lena sees straight through it. “I’m fine. I’m always fine. And I mean it right now. I’ve got good things going on, and when Kara gets her powers back and you return, I’ll tell you all about it. And… I’ll apologize, too.”

There’s a momentary lapse of silence before Alex looks down.

“Anyways, I should go. Crew will be here soon. Gotta prep for meetings.”

Lena just nods, holding back happy tears as Alex nods warmly.

“Take care of my baby sister, Luthor. We’ll talk later.”

“Goodbye, Alex.”

* * *

Alex is at the bar, drinking a club soda and looking down to her phone when she feels a tap on her shoulder. She looks up to see J’onn smiling down at her before nodding to the seat beside her. Alex takes a sip of her drink, cringing at the taste before she nods to the seat.

“Go ahead,” Alex says, moving her glass to the side. J’onn orders some orange juice before he looks at Alex curiously. “What?”

“You’re acting strange,” J’onn says, though he can’t hold back his smile as he nods to her drink. “Not to mention your drink choice.”

Alex flushes, clutching the glass tighter. “You know?”

J’onn chuckles. “Alex, I’m a psychic. Of course, I know.”

A blush creeps up on her skin, but before Alex can ramble out something, J’onn wraps his arms around her shoulders, drawing her in for a tight hug. She hesitates for a minute before she leans in, grinning against the shoulder of a man she considers a father-figure.
For a moment, Alex imagines Jeremiah, how he’d react.

“He would be proud of you,” J’onn says, reading her mind—obviously, Alex thinks. J’onn pulls back to nod at her. “As am I, Alex.”

Alex gulps, fiddling with her drink. “You aren’t worried that it will interfere with the job?” J’onn sighs, reaching for his orange juice as he takes a small sip. Alex watches his throat bob slowly.

“Alex,” J’onn says her name with a wistful tone, “when you first started, all I cared about was your job as an agent. You were the best in my field at every element, whether it be interrogation, science, or just being a field agent and a soldier.” Alex shrinks in her skin, unused to being complimented and given praise. J’onn’s face turns solemn as he looks back to his glass distantly.

“I made you endure such pain,” J’onn says, his voice cracking slightly. “I wanted you to be Kara’s perfect protector—her human shield. I… I tortured you to teach you how to keep a secret. I made you imagine impossible scenarios in order to control your emotions. I forced you to make decisions that would haunt even the best of soldiers. I made you as strong as you could be… for her.”

J’onn hangs his head as Alex’s eyes blur with tears. “But I,” he chokes on the words, looking back over to her. “I forgot, Alex, somewhere along the way, the real reason why you are the best.”

“J’onn,” Alex says, growing uncomfortable. J’onn smiles sadly.

“I forgot,” J’onn whispers, leaning into her. “That you were the best not because of all the pain, but because of what you chose to do in light of it. You never take, Alex. Everything you’ve done in your life has always been for others, to protect them, to love them. I forgot your greatest strength is your greatest weakness.”

“I’m not sure I understand,” Alex says, blushing again. J’onn reaches out, wrapping his arm around Alex’s shoulder comfortingly.

“Your selflessness, Alex. That’s what makes you not just a great agent, but an even better woman,” J’onn tells her, leaning over to peck her temple. “I think, for once, you shouldn’t be selfless.”

Alex’s bottom lip quivers as she feels tears burn in her eyes.

J’onn just smiles again happily. “You will make a fantastic mother, Alex. And you should know, we’re here for anything you need. Though I won’t lie, I’m not the best at baby-sitting. M’gann is probably a better bet.” Alex chuckles, feeling tears track down her cheeks silently.

J’onn just smiles again, gripping her tighter before he lets go and reaches for his glass, hoisting it up slightly. Alex laughs and wipes at her tears before she reaches for her own glass. J’onn clinks them together and they drink, smiles on their faces.

“Congratulations,” J’onn tells her warmly. “You deserve it, Alex.”

Just as J’onn is about to say something else, Alex feels a warm hand skirt across her shoulders. She looks over to see an attractive brunette smiling at her knowingly, a grin tugging at her lips as she winks at her before walking away. Alex flushes when her gaze automatically darts down to the woman’s ass. Guilt courses through her for a moment as she thinks about Maggie, but then she realizes they’ve been broken up for almost four months. Alex hadn’t ever been in a serious, long-term relationship before, so she isn’t sure what qualifies a decent ‘move-on’ period. All she knows is that the last four months have been lonely, tiring, and painful. She looks back at the woman, unsure of what to do.
“Go on,” J’onn says with a forced laugh, clearly uncomfortable. “It might do you some good to get out of your head for a night.”

Alex grimaces, blushing. "Are you telling me I should…?"

"Please don't make me say it," J'onn says, forcing down the last of his orange juice before humming. "but if I need to, I will."

"Oh God."

J'onn chuckles and shakes his head as she sets his empty glass down. He stands, nodding down at her proudly.

"Remember what I told you, Alex. Being selfless is an admirable trait, but sometimes even selfless people deserve a moment to be selfish."

Alex blushing deeper when J’onn squeezes her shoulder once more before heading to the door—but not without muttering something about the downside of being psychic underneath his breath. She knows he'd read her thoughts, because the look on his face makes Alex want to wither. She watches him go before looking over to the other end of the bar where the nameless woman is staring back at her with a flirty grin.

“Selfish,” Alex says to herself, standing, “I can be selfish… just for one night.”

She cups a hand over her stomach and smiles.

As she walks over and introduces herself, Alex feels her nerves settle as she introduces herself. The woman chuckles at her jokes and leans into her, and for once, Alex is happy enough to not try and picture this woman to be Maggie. The elation of her good news fuels her courage.

“Hey,” she says softly, “you wanna get out of here?”

The woman smiles back at her warmly.

“I thought you’d never ask.”
Everyone begins to move on… but it's not always for the better.

OKAY QUICK NOTE.

There is Sam/Alex in here but it's not like the Sam/Alex in the show. In this version, Sam and Alex had never met before and the assumption is that Alex and Maggie only stumbled upon the kids conversation through natural ways, not via Sam and Ruby. Also, Sam and Ruby's characterizations are really OOC so if you hate them I totally get it, but they're like that for a reason in this story.

Anyways, leave a comment and let me know what you think! Thanks to everyone for the feedback so far--I really appreciate it even though I've not found the time to reply to y'all just yet!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

September 6th, 2018

“Fuck, right there.”

Alex snaps her hips up as she pounds into the nameless woman beneath her. She can taste strawberry Chapstick on her lips when she leans down to kiss her, the buttery leather of her strap warming with each thrust against the woman’s hips. Alex growls as the friction stirs something inside of her, urging her faster. While she always felt more of a switch when she'd been with Maggie, there's something about fucking this nameless woman into her mattress which seems to qualm the slow-burning guilt niggling at the base of her skull.

It's like she has all the control, even when it hardly feels like it.

“Faster,” the woman pants, clawing into Alex’s back and drawing her back into the moment, “fuck me, baby.”

Like a good soldier, Alex follows the command diligently, ramming her hips up until the woman is practically twitching with release. She keens, her nails clawing deeper as she lets a primordial scream of pleasure. The sound reverberates off her walls, filling the small space with heat and tension. Alex hooks an arm under her waist and keeps up a few steady thrusts to help her ride through it before the woman shoves at her shoulder weakly and whispers for her to slow down. Her other hand claws into the sheets, the same sheets she once used to with—
Don't, she thinks miserably, don't think of her... please don't...

“Damn,” the woman pants breathlessly, chuckling as Alex collapses beside her in the bed. “You fuck like a God, Alex.”

It’s a disgusting line, one which does nothing for her.

Maggie would never say something so... cheesy. Alex remembers Maggie's words, filled with grit and low rumbles of desire on particularly rough nights, the sounds of fuck Alex, you like that babygirl, you like with when I stretch you out, when I take you so good, what would your agents think, seeing you like this, so wrecked and pleading and fucked for me—

Stop, she thinks again, gritting her teeth as she slides her forearm over her eyes. Don't think, don't think, don't think—

But not thinking only makes the images worse.

She sees different images. Sometimes Maggie is on her knees, clawing into her thighs while eating her out with abandon in their kitchen, with Alex gripping the countertop hard enough for it to crack underneath her palms. Other times, it's Alex cuffed to the bed with Maggie riding her, head thrown back, neck exposed, a trail of dark love bites smattered across her throat and chest, pleading and whining and begging to come.

Sometimes, it's their last night together.

Desperate. Lonely. Sad.

Incomplete.

"You okay?"

The elation she’d felt only hours earlier dissipates at the sound of the nameless woman's gruff voice. So much for being selfless, Alex thinks as she rubs at her brow, wiping away a stray bead of sweat. She looks down to see her partner blissed out, satisfied with Alex's performance. Alex sighs, knowing that her supposed 'selfishness' could've only lasted so long. She makes to remove the straps from her harness when the woman gently places her hand over Alex's fingers. She pauses, watching as the woman smirks up at her, hair mussed and eyes darkened.

"Did you come?" She asks, her free hand tracing the taut ring of muscles on her abdomen. "I know I did, but what about you?

Huh, Alex thinks, can’t remember the last time I did.

Maggie, her mind reminds her, it was with Maggie.

She has to bite her lip to stop the images from falling in place again.

But she didn't come, not in the last time they slept together. No, the last time they made love, back when they were happy, when there was no tension between them—that was when Alex came. It was so long ago that Alex barely remembers the feeling, the elation, the pure joy.

God, she thinks bitterly, and to have thought I could move on.

But then the thought is interrupted when she feels a gentle tap on her temple.

“Hello? Anyone in there?”
Alex blinks to see the woman staring back at her. “What?”

The woman chuckles, tapping Alex’s skin. “I asked, do you want me to do you?”

Alex just shakes her head, smiling half-heartedly. “I’m good, don’t worry.”

The woman only chuckles, swinging her legs over Alex’s hips to straddle her, bucking slightly when her wetness comes in contact with the ridge of Alex’s soaked cock. Her long brown hair (not dark enough, her mind reminds her) cascades down her shoulders. She takes Alex’s hands and places them on her hips, trying to encourage further touch. But Alex just feels lost, staring up at this woman she hardly knows.

Before Alex can think more deprecating thoughts, the woman chuckles. “Fuck… you sure, baby?”

Alex is powerless to the way the woman takes her hands again, this time guiding them up to rest on her breasts. Alex just stares up into her brown eyes, glances over her mussed, sweat-streaked hair, and feels her chest deflate. She tries to imagine Maggie instead—or tries not to, she really isn't sure anymore, but all she feels is a heaviness settling deep within her gut. She wants to close her eyes and fade away, to wake up when this nightmare is over. The woman takes no heed of her lost expression as she leans down to place kiss after kiss on her chest.

“Let me blow you,” she whispers into navel, grinning. "I'm good, I swear."

Alex's eyes open as she gulps, silent as the woman slides further down until she’s able to take her cock into her hands. One of the woman’s hands runs up the inside of her thigh, while the other cups at Alex’s free hand. She guides it to her hair and smirks teasingly. Alex remains near catatonic, unable to voice that she doesn't want this, that she wants to go home, even though she is home—but she isn't, because her home isn't a place, it's a person, and that person is gone because she made sure of it, she traded that home for the small bean inside of her.

Some Jack and the Beanstalk nonsense, really.

Still, it doesn't stop the niggling question in the back of her head.

Is this all worth it?

Once again, she's drawn out of the rabbit hole by the woman's love, gravelly voice.

“Be as rough as you want, baby. I can take it.”

Alex watches as the woman takes her cock into her mouth, giving her what would have been one of the sexiest blow-jobs she’d ever received. But it isn’t, because she feels nothing for this woman. The novelty of the one-night stand is wearing off and Alex is tired and in need of something stronger than sex. The woman keeps sucking at her, and Alex applauds her effort, but there’s no use. She’s not even here.

Finally, after Alex’s hand slides out of her hair limply, the woman looks up, confused at the distant expression in Alex’s eyes. She wipes at the string of spit clinging to her bottom lip before easing up, leaning her weight on her forearms as she frowns in Alex's direction, brow arched.

“Want to talk about it?”

Alex looks back down at her, surprised.

Well, that’s new.
None of her one-night stands (or at least the ones she remembers) have ever asked her if she wanted to talk about her troubles. Most often than not, Alex gives them a mind-blowing orgasm and then kicks them out of her bed to go drown herself in scotch or her work, or both, until she passes out. But now she's not drunk and neither is this woman, so in some way, Alex supposes it is different. No one has asked about her.

“Hey,” the woman mutters as she moves up and kisses Alex’s jaw. “You okay?”

Alex isn’t sure what comes over her. Maybe it’s the loneliness, or the lack of alcohol numbing her system, or her lack of sleep.

Or it could be the fact that she’s pregnant.

God, she’s pregnant. Should she even be doing stuff like this?

But instead she says, quietly and fearfully, “no.”

“We’ve all been there,” the woman says, sympathy lacing her voice as she runs patterns over Alex’s chest with her finger. When Alex frowns, the woman chuckles. "I'm not that obtuse to know this is a rebound fuck, Alex. Trust me, it feels like shit now, but one day, you’ll wake up and things won’t feel so heavy. You’ll look at the sun and feel warmth. You won’t have to hope anymore because it’ll be there, and you’ll be okay.”

Alex looks into the woman’s eyes, trying to search for a lie.

All she receives instead, is empathy.

“My ex-wife died,” the woman says as she lays her head on Alex’s chest. “She was my whole world. We were going to do everything together. We did most of it, actually. But then she died, and it suddenly felt like everything we did do no longer mattered. I felt… empty. Useless.”

Alex swallows thickly as she looks to where the woman's hands are splayed on her stomach. “Did you have kids?”

The woman smiles against her chest, nodding. “Yeah, we did. A daughter.”

Alex looks down at her, her gaze softening. “What’s her name?”

The woman only sighs, resting her head on Alex’s collar.

“Ruby.”

* * *

**September 10th, 2018**

"You know, I haven't seen your running buddy in awhile."

Maggie looks up from where she's doing up the last of her buttons on her uniform to see Officer Mendez walking into her office. Maggie shrugs as she throws on her windbreaker. "Everyone needs breaks, Mendez. Even superheroes. Probably the woman's on vacation."

"Nah," Mendez says as he plops down on bench next to the heavy bag. "Something changed after that lady broke her hand."

Maggie freezes on the last button, swallowing thickly. "What are you talking about?"
"Surely you've heard the scuttlebutt, Sawyer. The whole precinct is talking about it. Supergirl is powerless. I mean, do you really think we'd be out on the amount of homicide runs we are now if it weren't for her mysterious 'vacation' you're talking about?" Mendez practically drawls the words, almost amusedly as he kicks his feet up on the step. "Hell, I'm about to make my fiftieth arrest of the month. That's a high, Sawyer."

"No, that's fucked," Maggie corrects gruffly as she does up the button and spins around. "What about the crime prevention program—"

Mendez snorts, laughing. "Are you serious? C'mon Sawyer, you know that was just a ploy to shut up those social justice freaks."

"The Captain said—"

"The Captain was covering his ass," Mendez says as he leaps to his face. "The world's on fire, Maggie. This time, there aren't any heroes but those of us dressed in blue. But, Hell, even we aren't enough. That's the thing about these Supers, we forget how to take care of our own."

"Supergirl didn't abandon this city," Maggie growls, her eyes ablaze in anger. "She would never—"

"She's an alien," Mendez says coolly. "This isn't her planet, Sawyer. Why should she give a crap what happens to it?"

When Maggie can't reply, Mendez smirks and shoves past her. Maggie keeps her stare rooted to the floor even as she hears him walk away, leaving her alone in the small precinct gym. She stands in the bare light, her thoughts running a mile a minute as she takes in his words.

Supergirl would never abandon this city, because while this isn't Supergirl's home, it does belong to Kara Danvers.

And if she knew her pseudo-sister as well as she thinks she does, she knows Kara would never give up on National City.

At least, that's what Maggie hopes.

* * *

September 17th, 2018

Kara sits at the edge of the Cliffs of Moher, simply taking in the breath-taking view of the water lapping up against the rocks several feet below. Her legs swing off the edge, and she realizes, as she looks down, that if she jumped, she would not survive.

She isn't suicidal—that's the word one of the social workers at the orphanage had used about a child who'd been found with his wrists slit in the bathroom—but she has wondered sometimes. If her powers are gone, is she no longer destined to a long lifespan? Is she now a human?

Reaching into her back pocket, she pulls out the small razor blade she'd taken from one of Lena's new shaving sticks. She eyes the small metal curiously, examining the sharp edge before she looks to her arm, pale and unmarred by any scars over the past few years.

Cautiously, Kara lowers the blade to her wrist and applies pressure. At first, nothing happens, but when Kara pushes just the slightest bit harder, the contact stings and blood burbles to the surface. She isn't suicidal—that's the word one of the social workers at the orphanage had used about a child who'd been found with his wrists slit in the bathroom—but she has wondered sometimes. If her powers are gone, is she no longer destined to a long lifespan? Is she now a human?

Cautiously, Kara lowers the blade to her wrist and applies pressure. At first, nothing happens, but when Kara pushes just the slightest bit harder, the contact stings and blood burbles to the surface. The substance is warm, thick, red. The cut isn't deep, but it's still fascinating that she is now as
fragile as a human.

“Kara? What are you doing over there?”

Kara doesn’t hide her arm away when Lena approaches. Instead, she just lowers her bloody arm and stares out at the ocean peacefully.

“Kara, there you are. You didn’t come home after—what is that?”

The fear in Lena’s voice doesn’t startle Kara. She just calmly glances up before following Lena’s gaze glued to her wrist. Kara sighs and drags her finger through the line of blood before raising the pad of her finger up to her face, inspecting it closely as it cools on the calloused tip.

“Kara…,” Lena says her name so brokenly as she sits down beside her, placing a trembling hand on her thigh. “What’s wrong, honey?”

“I’m fine,” Kara says, reaching into her pocket for a cloth as she wipes the blood away. “I just… I wanted to test something, is all.”

Lena looks at her like she’s grown two heads. “Test something?”

“If I can bleed,” Kara says, shrugging. “If… If I’m human.”

She can tell that Lena has no idea what to make of this new information. Of course, it had to be strange to see your lover practically cutting herself open in front of you; testing theories would seem to be the least likely explanation for such an action. But Kara needs to know, because it's been months since her powers have been gone and now this lack of control isn't a solar-flare, it's something permanent. She doesn't remember what every sound in the world rushing into her ears feels like. She doesn't remember the impenetrable armour of her skin when bullets crashed against them. She doesn't remember searing a turkey with her eyes in a matter of seconds as a cool Thanksgiving trick.

She doesn't remember what it feels like to be Super.

It’s the truth, and Kara can see Lena recognizes it when they look at each other. Lena leans back and looks to the blood again.

“You… you’re sure you aren’t feeling like…”

“No,” Kara assures her. “I swear. I’m happy, Lena. I am. Trust me. If I wanted to kill myself, I'd have just jumped.”

“Yeah?” Lena asks, reaching out to tuck a strand of hair behind Kara’s ear. “You’re sure you’re not missing home, baby?”

Kara doesn’t reply to that. Instead, she looks back to the ocean.

“Do you think I’ll live as long as humans do?”

Lena is taken aback by the question. “Why?”

Kara shrugs, looking down to the small, unhealed cut. “I just… if I’m no longer indestructible, what does that mean about my lifespan? Am I going to live just as long, or shorter than before? We already know my metabolism has slowed considerably, but what about my cells?”

“Kara,” Lena says, sighing. “What brought this on, sweetheart?”
Sucking in a deep breath, Kara looks down to her lap.

“I miss Alex.”

Lena’s arm wraps around her shoulder, drawing her in for a hug as she pecks Kara’s forehead. “I know, baby. She misses you, too.”

“How’d you know?” Kara asks, sniffing. “She doesn’t talk to me.”

Lena pauses a moment, and Kara doesn’t need powers to guess.

“You’ve been talking to her,” Kara deduces with a scoff. Lena’s fingers still in Kara’s hair, but she doesn’t pull away yet.

“Kara, Alex and I are talking solely because I am helping investigate the para-demon case with the DEO,” Lena explains, without remorse. “The nature of our conversations have been strictly work-related, nothing more. I didn’t want to tell you because you already had so much on your plate, and I know your relationship with Alex is strained right now. But, please, she still loves you, and she misses you dearly. I mean that.”

“Then why hasn’t she called me?” Kara demands angrily, rising to her feet as she bunches up her fingers into tight fists. “If she really missed me, she would call. She would talk to me. She’d apologize for what she said.” Lena reaches down to squeeze Kara’s thigh, steadying her.

“I think, maybe, Alex needed some space of her own,” Lena suggests, even though she knows the space Alex has cultivated so far has been nothing short of self-destructive. “She just broke up with the woman she was going to marry, Kara. I don’t think anyone can recover from that, while also trying to juggle keeping the world in balance without needing some personal space. And then you lost your powers, and suddenly she’s thrown for a loop. I’m not defending her actions, because I know that what she said was wrong, but maybe some time away from each other is not such a bad thing. Besides, honey, Alex is strong. Kara. You are strong. I have no doubt that in the end, you’ll get through this.”

Kara shrugs helplessly, tears welling in her eyes.

“But what if… what if we never do?”

* * *

September 30th, 2018

“Agent Danvers.”

Alex looks up to see James Olsen striding through the main office of the DEO with a blank face. Alex barely holds back the urge to roll her eyes at the man as he saunters into her office with no regards to knocking or asking first. He’d been spending the last few weeks angrily confronting her about Maggie and Kara, blaming her for their distance and for the rift between everyone working at the DEO. While Alex had initially been too stubborn to admit to his insinuations, she knows that he has a point, but she can’t seem to break past her own mind.

*I could make this all go away,* she thinks miserably as he marches into her room. *Why can't I just make this all go away?*

Instead, her voice is low and grating as she huffs out, “what do you want, Olsen?”
“Crime statistics have been released for this quarter,” James says as she slides the papers he’d been holding in her direction. “Murder, thievery, arson, even grand theft auto—all up by two-hundred percent. The world has realized Supergirl has left them and is in a purge.”

"Really," Alex scoffs, arching her brow up at him. "You want to compare this to a cheap, poorly-made horror flick? I expected better."

"Say what you want," James says bitterly, nodding down at the papers. "But the math doesn't lie, Alex."

Alex reads over the reports, biting at her lip. “What has the NCPD thought about this?”

James barely reacts to the question. “They’re also wondering where their beloved hero has gone.”

"Excuse me?" Alex growls when she hears the unsaid words lingering in his question. She rises to her feet, reaching across the desk to grab at his collar. Even though he lumbers over her, Alex grabs him and pulls him close, her lips pulled back into a snarl as she hisses, "repeat that."

But yet, James hardly reacts again.

"I don't think I need to," he says coolly, brushing off her grip with a shrug. "Guardian can only do so much. I'm not Kryptonian, Danvers."

“Well you and the NCPD need to figure something else out,” Alex growls as she shoves the papers back and sits back down with a huff. “Because Supergirl isn’t here. We can’t let the streets run rampant with crime just because of one suited heroine. How'd we survive before?”

“Alex—”

“James,” Alex calmly interrupts. “I’m not answering where she is.”

“The world needs her, Goddamnit!” James shouts, jabbing at the papers. “People are dying out there, Alex, or do you just not care anymore? Have you lost so much of your mind that you’ve become blind?! There have been multiple reported sightings of those things popping up around the neighbourhood. They come in small batches, but they’re wreaking havoc on this city. We aren’t safe without her, Danvers.”

Alex looks back to the reports as James stands up straight and shakes his head in disappointment. “You need to talk to your sister, Danvers. Because this leave of absence is costing us. It’s enough that you hurt her, but the fact that you won’t even own up to what you’ve said…”

Alex stands up with a start, glaring daggers into the man.

“Don’t you ever dare mention my sister to me,” Alex snarls as she reaches forward to claw at his tie, tugging him closer once again. “Your city survived before Supergirl existed, and it will again. The world can’t rely on her to pick up their messes every time something happens.”

“Ha,” James chuckles sadistically. “Your city, you say, like you’re not part of it. Have you been out there, Alex? Have you seen what is happening? Or are you content to live in this protective bubble, unaware, and uncaring, of the suffering outside these walls? You’re deluded.”

Alex lets go of his tie and growls. “Get out, Olsen. Now.”

“Supergirl abandoned us,” James spits, “she abandoned you, Alex. The worst part? You brought this on yourself. You brought this on us.”
“Get out!” Alex roars menacingly, shoving the papers off her desk as she glares at him. “Now!”

“Chaos is already here,” James says ominously as he backs away. “War is knocking, Alex. When it comes, who will answer the door?”

Even when he finally leaves, the dread still doesn’t settle in Alex’s bones.

**October 1st, 2018**

Maggie is filing paperwork at her desk when the door to her office swings open. She’s about to scold the instigator when she looks up to see Alex’s face staring back at her, looking worse for wear.

“Alex?” Maggie asks, standing up. “What are you doing here? I haven't seen you since—”

“Is it true?” Alex interrupts with a low grunt, settling some papers on her desk. “These statistics; is it true that those things are back?” Maggie takes the papers from Alex’s hands and frowns as she reads over them. She reads through the reports, scouring through the information.

“I knew about the crime rate,” Maggie says as she flips through the booklet. “But not about the para-demons. Who gave you this report?”

Alex runs a hand through her hair. “James came to me. Mouthed me off, called me a selfish asshole. Handed me the booklet.”

“James?” Maggie asks, confused. “How’d he get his hands on this? He’s not even that high-ranking at CatCo or in the DEO.”

“That’s what I wanted to know,” Alex growls, frustrated. Maggie watches as she paces a line into the floorboards, growing angrier by the minute. “If these stupid para-demon things are back, then we need to prepare for war. I’ll call Bruce and Diana, Kate and Dick—”

“Stop,” Maggie says as she stands, placing her hand on Alex’s shoulders to stop her from pacing. “You’re panicking, Al. Breathe.”

“I read the news,” Alex says, ignoring Maggie’s attempts at calming her down. “They’re calling for an end to Supergirl. The city thinks she abandoned them, but they don’t know the whole story. They don’t fucking know what she’s sacrificed to save them, what she lost—”

“Alex,” Maggie cries out as Alex’s shoulders tremble under her hands. “Please, you need to just calm down for a second, okay?”

“Calm down?!” Alex yells, shoving Maggie away. “I’ve been ignorant. Negligent. I haven’t just turned my back on my sister, but on this city. The people are suffering out there, Maggie. They’re dying. My sister lost her powers but I was the one who sent her away, sent you away. I'm being groomed to take over the DEO and yet I have no idea that the city, my city, is being terrorized? People are dying, Maggie, and what did I do?!?”

“Alex, you can’t do anything about that,” Maggie says firmly, her heart breaking inside of her chest as she sees the pure turmoil and guilt festering in Alex. “You’re in the DEO, not in the FBI or the CIA—hell you’re not even a cop. You are not responsible for their safety, Alex.”

“But I was responsible for hers,” Alex grits out. Maggie blinks as Alex’s chest heaves and she
looks away, ashamed. “I was responsible for keeping her safe, and I failed. She’s lost because of me. If I hadn't been there, if I hadn't taken that risk, she wouldn't be powerless, Maggie.”

“Alex…”

“Coming here was a mistake,” Alex mutters as she shakes her head, blinking back tears. “I’m sorry, Maggie. I didn’t… I’m sorry.”

Before Maggie can offer a response, Alex runs out the door without another word.

* * *

October 3rd, 2018

“Incoming call from the DEO, Administrator Luthor.”

Lena frowns, looking up from where she’s sitting and reading the morning paper with her cup of tea still steaming. “Accept.”

Alex’s face pops up on the screen, looking drained. Lena startles at the sight of Alex looking distraught and damn-near frazzled.

“Agent Danvers—”

“Lena,” Alex says, cutting her off.

“Is Kara there?”

Lena shakes her head. “Kara’s gone on a run. She’ll be back soon.”

“Good,” Alex says, rubbing her face.

“I have bad news.”

“What is it?” Lena asks, setting her mug down. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine,” Alex says half-heartedly, “but the city isn’t. I just need you to keep Kara away from the news, okay? The people here aren’t particularly happy about her impromptu leave of absence. We’ve seen a monumental increase in crime and violence. Things are falling apart.”

The words are spat out angrily, and no doubt Lena understands where Alex is coming from. The protection in her voice convinces her to listen to the elder Danvers sibling, even if she still feels a degree of anger towards Alex’s inability to simply apologize and make up with her sister.

“Her powers?” Alex asks, moments later. “Any news?”

Lena swallows thickly, looking at the front porch. “No.”

Alex pauses, confused as she picks up on the avoidance in her voice. “Lena? What’s going on? Is Kara okay?”

“Alex,” Lena sighs, “I…”

Lena swallows, looking back up at her painfully, trying to convey her message without using words. Alex takes a moment, puzzled, but Lena can see that her eyes are focused for once, and she’s sober—painfully so if the hurt in her gaze is anything to go by. Alex’s shoulders droop tiredly, and she looks away, blinking back tears. Lena goes to open her mouth to question her state, but Alex beats her to the punch.

“So that’s it then,” Alex says, defeat in her voice. “She’s…”
“She told me to stop,” Lena replies softly, wishing she could be there to hold Alex through this. “She… she doesn’t… you know…”

“She doesn’t want to come back.”

Lena grits her teeth, swallowing hard as she feels her heart splinter apart in her chest at the dejection in Alex’s raw gaze.

“I mean, I wouldn’t blame her.” Alex coughs out the words hoarsely, the tears streaming down her cheeks as she tries to deflect. “I mean, what has this city done for her, anyways? Except cause her pain and misery and loneliness. It’s… it’s good she stays away. She doesn’t deserve this.”

“Alex,” Lena says sympathetically. “It’s not because of you.”

Alex just nods, but she knows her words fall on empty words. Lena doesn’t have to be standing right in front of her to know that this is what has broken Alex’s final wall. The agent isn’t even bothered to hide her tears anymore as she covers her mouth and sobs. The sounds are heartbreaking, bringing tears to Lena’s eyes. Alex doesn’t need to speak for Lena to know exactly what the elder Danvers sibling is thinking.

“She’s happy though,” Alex croaks between cries. “Right?”

“Yes,” Lena says, her voice cracking as she holds strong. “She’s happy, Alex. She’s… she’s finally found some peace. Coming here, away from the city—from the violence and loss and the pain—it’s changed her.” Alex’s lips tremble into a sad smile as she nods again, chuckling happily.

“Good,” Alex says, smiling proudly. “She deserves it.”

“Alex,” Lena says, “Kara—”

“I love her,” Alex interrupts, wiping at her tears as she breathes out a long and heavy breath. “All that has ever mattered to me is her happiness. She deserves more than the world, and I know that you can give it to her. Thank you, Lena, for loving her. For being… for…” Alex croaks on the words, unable to hold back her sob.

“Whatever happens here… can you promise me you’ll do what I couldn’t?” Alex asks, her voice growing scratchier with her tears. Lena wipes uselessly at her own cheeks as she nods. Alex swallows.

“Stay.”

* * *

October 10th, 2018

Kara jogs up to the front door of their house, wiping at the sweat pooling down her chest with the back of her hand. She feels refreshed, and she finally understands why humans enjoy running. In the open field, surrounded by the smell of the ocean only miles away, and the sounds of birds chirping and the breeze flowing—it’s something Kara had never taken the time to appreciate in Midvale.

It’s so tranquil and calm.

She opens the door and shucks off her running shoes, beaming from ear-to-ear as she strides through the living room. She's still huffing from the exertion, something she's still not used
to. As a Kryptonian, she never really sweat or got tired unless she solar-flared, but as a human, the newest addition of vulnerabilities make her feel more... alive. It still takes her by surprise sometimes, when she sees bruises on her neck in the morning from a vigorous love-making session, or feels a pleasant soreness between her thighs. She realizes that pain is a strange, beautiful thing. Her fascination with the sensation has left her girlfriend worried many times, but Kara assures her that she's not hurting herself purposely. Pain is just something that serves as a reminder of her humanity, of a life she had watched others live for years.

A life she is now living for herself.

Shaking away the thought, Kara bounds into the kitchen to see Lena still there, sitting with her cup of coffee. Kara sneaks behind her and drops a light kiss to her hair, grinning when Lena tenses. She can hear the whine tearing from her girlfriend's throat, obviously displeased.

Groaning, Lena shoves her away. “You *reek*, Kara.”

To add injury to insult, Kara sweeps her arms down and embraces Lena in a sweaty hug, pulling a groan from the older woman. Lena turns in her arms, still sitting on the chair as she looks up at Kara with an expression of love and pride—although she won't lie, she can see the slightest bit of annoyance in those opalescent eyes. Kara smiles down at her, reaching out to curl a stray hair behind her lover’s ear.

“What are you looking at me like that for?”

“I’m just realizing things,” Lena says as she stands, leaning forward so their noses brush. Kara grins cheekily, leaning back.

“Oh yeah?” She asks, pecking Lena’s jaw. “What’s that?”

Lena pauses, her throat bobbing as tears well in her eyes.

“That you’re a goof,” Lena mumbles, earning a poke in the side from Kara. “But also that I’m absolutely, irrevocably in love with you.”

Kara stills for a moment, her heart thudding in her chest as Lena reaches up and cups her cheeks, drawing her in for a deep kiss. Kara feels herself fall into it, moaning when Lena’s tongue sweeps across her bottom lip, requesting an entrance she eagerly grants.

Kara may not have her super-strength anymore, but she’s still strong enough to hoist Lena into her arms and settle her atop the dining table. She doesn’t break their languid, passionate kisses, but she does up the pace as Lena scrambles at her tank-top, clawing at her desperately.

“Off,” Lena gasps between kisses, “need to feel you.”

Kara doesn’t hesitate to fling the offending fabric, and the sports-bra underneath, off her body and somewhere in the kitchen. Lena’s hands clasp her breasts, squeezing and pulling her closer as Kara’s deft fingers work on the belt tying Lena’s robe together.

“Kara,” Lena pants into her ear, “make love to me. Please.”

Taken aback by the sudden vulnerability in Lena’s voice, Kara slows down the pace, taking her time to explore Lena’s body as she runs her hand down the woman’s chest, before her fingers nestle into the familiar wetness between the other woman’s legs. Lena gasps at the initial contact, her hips bucking up, seeking contact. Kara isn't one to deny Lena of anything, especially not while she's so open and pliant and *ready*. 
Kara pauses a moment to simply take in the sight, to remember what Lena had said to start all of this, before reattaching their lips.

“Lena Luthor,” she murmurs as her fingers find Lena’s clit. “I am absolutely, irrevocably in love with you, too.”

Lena gasps as she pushes inside, starting a steady rhythm as she lets the words hover between them, sealed by their kisses and heated skin. She feels Lena’s own hands dipping beneath her leggings and seeking her out. Kara gasps as Lena’s hands make contact, and she has to concentrate to keep them both together. They slide and grind against each other, their breaths hot and heavy as they both climb to the peak.

It doesn’t take long, but it’s no less glorious when they come together, gasping and panting declarations of love into each other’s mouths. Their hips buck and their noses brush, but eventually, both of them calm down and simply start laughing at the humanity in their love, the frailty and vulnerabilities. Lena feigns annoyance and claims that now they have to disinfect the table again, but Kara takes it all in with joy.

Most importantly, Kara takes in the domesticity.

It’s more than just finding love.

Kara has found a home.

* * *

October 14th, 2018

Sam is honestly really good friend.

What was once a one-night stand soon developed into something more. She’s supportive and sweet, and gives Alex the kind of optimism she needs to get through the day without reaching for more than five glasses of spirits—not that it’s much of an option anymore considering she’s now three months pregnant and very much aware that she’s never been sober for so long in her entire life. But yes, Sam is a great distraction.

But then there’s the sex.

Alex still hadn’t managed to come, but she felt more in the present when she would be engaging in the act with Sam. She’s more receptive to Sam’s needs, more willing to let Sam touch her, to make her feel some pleasure at the very least, until they’re exhausted. It’s not much improvement, but it gives Alex hope that maybe Sam was right, that maybe one day this would all hurt a little less, that things would be okay.

“You’re still stressing over these cases, huh?”

Alex blinks up from where Sam walks into her apartment, two bags of take-out in her hands as she kicks the door shut. Alex follows the other woman’s gaze to where she has papers and tablets strewn about on her kitchen table. Alex sighs, rubbing her head as she looks back down.

“Yeah, well, working for the FBI can a bitch sometimes.”

“Hmm,” Sam hums as she walks over to press a kiss to Alex’s lips, sweet and slow. “Wouldn’t want them to catch you saying that.”
"Oh?" Alex asks, arching her brow as she returns the kiss chastely. "Why not?"

"Treason," Sam giggles, "for one. And two, you love your job. Don't even deny it."

"I wouldn’t call starving over reports a true love."

*Wouldn’t call getting hundreds killed and tearing apart the only family you’ve ever known true love either.*

But Alex doesn’t say that.

"Alex," Sam mumbles as Alex kisses her deeper, trying to get her to change the subject. "Wait."

"What?" Alex hums, her hands tucking under Sam’s shirt. Sam smiles as Alex moves her lips to Sam’s neck, biting lightly at the skin.

"I wanted to ask you something," Sam giggles when Alex’s fingers trace the sensitive skin around her belly button. "About Ruby."

At that, Alex freezes. "Ruby? Is… is she okay?"

"She’s fine," Sam grins as she pecks Alex’s lips. "I just wanted to know if I could finally introduce you both. It’s been almost two weeks since we started doing… whatever this is. Ruby is important to me, and I don’t like keeping secrets from her."

Alex gulps at the proposition. "Sam, we’re not dating. I thought we made that clear. This is just… fun."

"I know," Sam says, pressing her palm into Alex’s midsection reassuringly. She turns them slightly so Alex's bum is resting against the table. Sam leans in, pecking her cheek. "I just wanted her to see you. But if you don’t want to meet her, that’s also okay. There’s no pressure, Alex."

"I don’t know," Alex says as she feels Sam’s lips on hers now. "I don’t want to make a bad impression on the kid."

Sam chuckles. "You're going to be a mom soon. You're gonna have to get over that fear, hon."

That sinks into her gut like a lead bomb.

Do you even know anything about parenting?

"Sorry," Sam says, retracting at the pained look on Alex’s face. "I shouldn’t have said that. I just… Ruby is everything to me, Alex."

"Fine," Alex says, leaning forward to peck Sam’s lips. "When do you want us to meet?" Sam grins, beaming at the acknowledgment.

"What about tomorrow? Or is that too soon?"

It’s too soon, but Alex can’t destroy Sam’s smile.

"Sure, tomorrow is fine."

* * *

After returning back from Alex’s apartment Sam walks into her own to find Ruby staring back at
her with a displeased expression on her face. Her teenaged daughter is brooding on the couch, twirling something between her fingers absently. Sam can feel her eyes judging her silently.

“What?” Sam asks, looking behind her, “did I do something wrong, Rubes?”

Ruby only rolls her eyes and chuckles. “You have hiccups. Again.”

Sam blushes, her hand reaching up to cup at her neck. “Oh.”

“Gross,” Ruby mutters as she pats at the couch. “Are you gonna sit or not, Mom?” Sam smiles at the exaggeration and nods, taking a seat before pulling her daughter into her arms. She squeezes her tightly, chuckling when Ruby grumbles and tries to shove her off.

Sam lets her go with a smirk. “You miss me, kid?”

Ruby rolls her eyes. “Did you shower before you come over?”

“Of course, I did! What do you take me for? A barbarian?”

“How about a human?”

Sam chuckles at the way Ruby’s lip slowly curls into a smirk. She leans against her mother, reaching up to twirl at some of her hair.

“You didn’t develop an attachment to her, did you?”

Sam chuckles and smiles. “No.”

Ruby only grins, her eyes flashing as the two of them look towards the floating black veil across their living room. Inside of it, the black piece of rock glows bright, burning hotter than Eta Carinae. The veil barely contains the sweltering blaze from them. Ruby’s free hand opens up to reveal the small chip inside of her hand. Sam glances down at it before looking back up at her daughter with a knowing expression.

Sam looks back to her daughter. “And you are certain she’s the one?”

Ruby nods, her lips curling into a wicked grin.

“Yes Reign,” she says sinisterly, “she’s the one.”

Chapter End Notes

things are about to get REALLY real.
Champion

Chapter Summary

A life-changing event strikes National City.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warnings: Graphic Depictions of Violence

October 15th, 2018

Kara watches as the sunrise spills over Lena’s sleeping frame, bathing her pale skin in a beautiful array of oranges and pinks. She inches closer, curling her body around the older woman, before leaning down to peck Lena’s shoulder. She rests her head on the flat of Lena’s back, listening to the steady rhythm of her heartbeat in her ear. It’s not as amplified as it once was when she’s still had her powers, but Kara doesn’t care. It’s there.

That’s all that matters.

“Mm,” Lena mumbles, stirring awake. “You’re up early.”

“The sunrise woke me up,” Kara chuckles. “We forgot to close the blinds last night, when we… you know. Paid for it this morning.”

“Hmm,” Lena murmurs again, still sleepy. “Let it rise.”

Kara beams down at her, smiling as she pulls Lena tighter against her chest. “I can’t believe we’ve been here almost four months.”

Lena sighs and gives herself a good stretch against Kara’s bare front before she turns fully so they’re eye-to-eye. “Do you want to go back?” Lena asks, reaching up to trace Kara’s sharp jaw.

Kara looks away guiltily. “Would it be bad if I said no?”

Lena smiles, shaking her head. “No, it wouldn’t. We can stay here.”

“But L-Corp—”

“Can be managed remotely,” Lena assures her, kissing her throat. “I don’t need to be there to run it. Besides, I like it here, too.”

“It’s nice, isn’t it?” Kara sighs as she wraps her arms tighter around Lena’s frame, resting her head on the familiar plane of her chest. “It’s like the rest of the world doesn’t exist. It’s just us. It isn’t even lonely, either. The town here is so sweet. So… normal. It just feels good to feel normal, I guess.” Kara smiles against Lena’s skin, enjoying the light threading of Lena’s fingers through her hair as she bathes in the brilliance of her warmth.
“I always imagined life on Krypton to be like this,” Kara continues as she traces a beauty mark on Lena’s ribs. “Quiet. Peaceful.”

Lena pecks her hair gently. “I’m glad you like it here, Kara.”

“Lena,” Kara says as she looks up, biting her lip. “Can... can I call Alex? Not... not right now, but maybe later, when she’s free?”

Lena smiles, nodding. “Of course. I’ll ask her when she’s free.”

“If... if she has time,” Kara stammers on the words, “I’d like for her to come here, to see the farm and the cliffs. Maybe it could do the same for her as it did for me.” She closes her eyes and thinks of her sister, of being able to help ease the pain and hurt which had encased her mind for far too long. Lena kisses her again.

“I can arrange it,” Lena tells her gently. “When she’s ready.”

“Yeah,” Kara muses wistfully—hopeful for the first time in a long, long time. “And maybe, when she’s ready... maybe she’ll even stay?”

Lena just smiles down at her, bittersweet and soft.

“Yeah, Kara. Maybe one day.”

* * *

Alex gets the notification of a new portal a few minutes ago, and she's racing through the streets to trace it down.

She can hear screaming and quaking in the distance, so she knows she must be getting close. She floors her bike and speeds through the new cases of rubble and dust, keeping an eyes on her GPS at the same time.

“Vasquez, give me an update.”

“There’s about ten bogeys, all hostile. It’s those things.”

“Have we got aerial support?”

There’s some static on the line before Vasquez replies, “negative. One of the hostiles just took out our chopper. You’re going in blind. I’ve radioed in Superman and Batman, but they’re busy.”

“It’s fine, I’ll manage.”

“Alex,” Vasquez says. “It’s too dangerous.”

“I said, I will handle it.”

There’s a pause before Vasquez calmly replies, “fine.”

“I’ll keep in radio contact. Danvers out.”

She slows her bike down to a halt outside of the thick cloud of dust obscuring her vision. She knows better than to ride in zero visibility, so she parks her bike and takes off her helmet. Strapping her gun to her back, Alex unsheathe the Kryptonite sword she had holstered to the back of the bike before stepping into the dust cloud. She covers her mouth and stays focused on each
step.
But it’s quiet.
Too quiet.
Alex keeps walking forward, her sword glowing and extended as she further disappears into the cloud of dust. Vasquez said at least ten enemies, but she wonders if her agent made a mistake. She frees her arm from her mouth to reach for her radio, clicking down.

“Vasquez,” Alex hisses. “Your intel was shit. No one’s here.”
Nothing but static sounds over the receiver. Alex frowns.

“Vasquez,” she tries again. “Do you read?”
Again, static.
Sucking in a deep breath, Alex resigns herself to realizing something or someone was blocking her reception. She pockets her radio and trudges forward, desperate to look for survivors at least. She coughs as dust filters into her nose, choking her.

“Hello?” Alex cries out into the unknown. “Is anyone there?”
Silence.

“Great,” Alex mutters as she comes to a stop. “Just great.”

“Not satisfied, Alex?”
Alex turns and spins at the sound of a familiar voice. She sees Sam standing in front of her, dressed in a plain white dress, looking out of place amongst the dust and rubble around them.

“Sam?” Alex asks, lowering her sword. “Are you okay?”
Sam only laughs, chuckling lowly, “aren’t you a caring one?”
Alex’s heart sinks as she feels her nerves increase. “You…”
“I told you I wanted you to meet Ruby today. Here she is.”
Alex barely has time to react before she is thrown across the small clearing, her back colliding with an upturned piece of concrete. Growling in frustration, she turns her head to see a teenager approaching her, eyes red and flames growing in her fists as she hovers over towards her. Alex swallows the pit in her throat.

“What… what is this…?” Alex asks, looking back to Sam.

“Chaos is here,” Ruby mutters ominously. “War is knocking.”
Alex’s heart snaps inside her chest. “James—”
Ruby grins, her teeth splitting to reveal purple gums. “Is dead.”

“How…?”
“Allow me to show you,” Ruby calmly says as she stiffens. Alex watches in horror as the
teenager’s bones crack and her limbs shift into the form of Jimmy Olsen. Her eyes remain red and daring, the fire still flickering in her palm as she steps onto the ground.

“You see,” Sam says as she steps beside Ruby’s, “we’ve been watching you for some time, Alex Danvers, sister of Kara Zor-El.”

Alex tenses, leaping to her feet and extending her sword.

“Who are you?” She growls, shoving the blade outwards. Ruby shifts back into the teenager’s body and chuckles at the blade.

“You think Kryptonite can stop us?” Ruby asks, cocking her head. “How naïve must you be, Agent Danvers, to think such a thought?”

Alex breathes heavily as Sam steps closer, her hand extending outwards to grip the blade in her hands. Alex watches in horror as the green melts under her palm, until the entire thing pools into nothing at her feet. Alex drops the handle and gasps in shock.

“What…,” Alex pants, truly terrified now. “What are you?”

“Your people have many types of names for us,” Sam croons as she walks around Alex, her fingers gently caressing Alex’s shoulders. “Some call us demons, others, monsters. But we are more than that.”

“We are the end,” Ruby says, “we are world-killers.”

“Like… Darkseid?” Alex tries, furrowing her brow in confusion.

Sam growls in frustration shoving her fist outwards to punch Alex hard enough to send her flying across the destroyed courtyard once again. “Fool!” Sam snarls viciously. “You do not speak his name.”

“Guess you don’t get along then,” Alex mutters, rubbing her jaw as she stumbles back to her feet. “Did I hit a sore spot, Sam?”

“My name is not Sam,” Sam says, her voice shifting to something more demonic and eerie as her limbs tense and convulse. Alex’s eyes widen as the woman shifts until her form is grotesque, bones bopping out of her shoulders and her mouth widening to form a sleek row of sharpened teeth. A mask falls over her eyes and nose as she struts forward, her fingers extending into razor-sharp claws.

Sam’s lips curl into a grin as she says, “my name is Reign.”

“Today, you will serve the Other Worlds,” Ruby crows as the two of them step forward, closing Alex in. “You will be our Champion.”

“Not a chance in hell,” Alex growls as she lunges forwards, throwing a punch in Reign’s direction.

Reign deflects the punch but isn’t prepared for when Alex’s hand grabs and her wrist and her body twists mid-air, landing a two-footed kick into the world-killer’s chest. Reign cries out as Alex takes her trapped arm between her knees and twists violently.

“Petulant human!” Reign’s demonic voice cries out. “Your fight is in vain!” Alex barely has the time to react before she’s thrown off Reign’s body and catapulted into another wall by Ruby.
“Give in, Agent Danvers. Submit,” Ruby growls as she shoots a blast of fire in Alex’s direction, who barely ducks the attack. “Submit to us now and you will not face peril in your exaltation.”

“Fuck you,” Alex growls as she wipes blood from her lip. “I would rather die than submit to you!” Ruby cocks her head and smirks as she looks down to Alex’s abdomen knowingly. Alex gulps in fear.

Ruby only chuckles. “So be it, then.”

Alex gasps as Ruby flies forward and smashes into her chest, sending them both hurtling back into the bottom of one of the towers. Alex can’t breathe as Ruby flies backwards, leaving her crumpled from the force of the blow. Her vision blackens as she feels her body collapse under itself. She lands on her stomach, choking to inhale air as her lungs and ribs burn up violently.

“You suffer for nothing, Alex,” Reign says as she flies over to where Ruby is standing. “Your pain means nothing to the process.”

Alex grits her teeth and pushes past the pain as she stumbles to her feet, ignoring the protest of her ribs, back, and shoulders.

Ruby arches her brow, growling. “You wish to still fight, human?”

Alex spits out a wad of blood before she raises her fists.

“Bring it on, bitch.”

* * *

Something didn’t feel right.

Kara had felt off the entire day, but now she felt sick.

Scratch that, she is going to be sick.

She barely makes it to the bathroom before she’s hurling into the porcelain lid of the toilet, spewing out the contents of her dinner violently. She grips the toilet seat as she continues to heave.

“Kara? Kara, are you alright?”

Kara only continues to retch as she empties whatever was left of her meal into the bowl. When it’s finally down, she lumps against the lid, sweat pooling down her brow as she tries to catch her breath. She hears Lena’s footsteps as she swats at the flush.

“Kara, what happened?” Lena asks, leaning down to place the flat of her knuckles against Kara’s forehead. “You’re burning up, baby.”

“Something’s wrong,” Kara gasps as she clings to Lena. “My chest… Lena it hurts so bad.” She can feel something burning inside of her, but she can’t figure out the source of the pain. Lena scrambles at her shirt, lifting it to see if something’s there, but nothing but Kara’s pale, clammy skin is glinting back at her.

But then the pain increases again, and Kara screams out as she claws into Lena’s shoulders desperately. “Stop… please… make it stop.” Lena just holds her through it, ignoring the blood bubbling under Kara’s nails. She rubs her girlfriend’s back and hushes her.

“Stop it, Kara, you’re going to pass out.”
But Kara couldn’t breathe, because all of the sudden, she could hear everything. She felt an insurmountable pain rip through every limb, as if she was physically being torn apart, muscle by muscle. She can’t stop screaming, can’t stop the blood rushing in her ears.

She hears people everywhere, children crying, people yelling, dogs barking, wolves’ howling—she hears the crashing of the waves against the cliffside, she hears the beeping of car horns, the monotonous drawl of a jet engine. She hears everything and it’s too much. She can feel her strength regaining, her hands burning.

It’s all coming back all at once, and Kara can’t control it.

***

It’s not a fair fight, not in the slightest.

She never expected to win, she never would have, but Alex fights until she can no longer stand, until she’s brought to her knees by these two super-humans. She’s more broken bone and torn flesh by the time it’s over, and she can’t even find the energy to breathe.

One final kick to her ribs has Alex flying into a concrete slab, before she collapses to the ground with a weakened huff. For a moment, Alex wishes Kara had her powers, that she could sense that she’s in danger, but at the same time, she’s relieved. Kara does not need to be brought into this world again, does not need to see death as often as she had once before. Kara deserves peace.

Hang on, she thinks to herself, winding her arm around her stomach. You have to hold on for the baby. You have to protect her, Alex.

Alex’s mouth pools with blood as she looks up at Reign and Ruby standing over her, and she finds herself cracking a faint smile.

“F-fuck… f-uck… you…”

Reign only sighs as she kneels, cupping Alex’s cheek in her hand as she cocks her head. “Your fate, Alex Danvers, has been written in the stars long before you were even conceived. Every Kryptonian has their counterpart. You were bound to this role. It is destiny.”

Alex gurgles as she swallows more blood. “Y-You w-won’t—”

“New world order is upon us,” Reign whispers as she leans down to press her lips against Alex’s, smiling into the kiss before pulling away. “You will shepherd our children to victory, Alex Danvers.”

Alex watches as Reign moves aside to reveal Ruby floating into view, a large black stone hovering in her grasp. The heat of the rock can be felt from miles away, but Alex does not cower in its wake. She stares them both down, refusing to die without a fight.

“Welcome,” Ruby says with a grin, “to the Apocalypse.”

Alex can barely react as Ruby juts her fist out and the stone hurdles into her chest, right between her ribs. Alex can feel the heat of the rock piercing into her heart, tearing it apart. The stone splinters apart, drawing another agonizing scream out of Alex’s lips. She convulses on the ground as the stone digs in deeper to her flesh, fusing with muscles and tissues.

“Yes,” Reign growls in joy, “submit, Champion! Meet your glory!”
Alex feels a tingling up the base of her neck, and before she knows it, her brain is consumed in the inferno. Her body is imploding from the inside out, she can feel it. But she does not die. She doesn’t collapse or black out. No, she endures every agonizing second, no matter the pain. Alex screams as she feels the fire running down her arms and into her fingertips and to her toes.

But the heat soon cools, and the pain reduces to numbness.

And then, silence.

* * *

Lena struggles with Kara. “I’ll call for a doctor, just hang on—”

But then Kara screams again and this time the entire bathroom shakes. Lena pauses and moves her head back in disbelief to look into Kara’s eyes, only to see them glowing deep red and burning.

That’s about all the warning Lena gets before she Kara screams once more, and Lena has the best sense to duck as the red filters out of her eyes and she burns a hole through the bathroom wall with her laser vision. The heat is scalding as Lena clings to Kara’s chest, trying to stop the anger and rage simmering there.

“Kara!” Lena shouts above the ringing and Kara’s screams. “Stop it, Kara, you’re safe—you’re safe here with me… stop it, baby.”

Eventually the lasers cut out and Kara gasps.

“Kara,” Lena pants as she fumbles for Kara’s jaw. “Baby?”

“Lena,” Kara chokes out, “Lena… my powers… they’re…”

“I know,” Lena says as she draws Kara’s head into her chest, trying hard to not break under the force of Kara’s sobs. “I know, baby, I know. It’s okay, we’ll figure this out. We’ll figure it out.”

“Lena,” Kara wheezes as she feels herself growing weaker in her lover’s embrace. “I think something’s wrong… with Alex.”

Lena freezes and Kara just cries harder. “Why, Kara?”

“I can’t hear it,” Kara sobs, “I can’t hear her heartbeat.”

* * *

“Champion,” Reign beams as she extends her hands out. “Rise.”

The Champion stumbles to her feet, her bloodshot eyes looking down and up at her injured limbs and black-veins. Her eyes, once a deep brown, have turned near black. Reign smiles at the transformation, her only wish being that it hadn’t had to be so arduous. While the Champion was human, her body wouldn’t be able to regenerate like a natural-born Kryptonian, even with the effects of the stone.

“You will heal,” Reign says with a smirk. “Eventually.”

“The effects of Black Kryptonite have not been documented with humans before,” Ruby grins as she reaches up to touch the Champion’s skin. “Fascinating. Her structure remains the same.”

“Come,” Reign says as she turns around. “We have much to do.”
Just as they go to move, the Champion’s voice interrupts them.

“No.”

Reign freeze’s mid-step, turning around in confusion.

“What did you say?” Reign demands, stepping into the Champion’s face. “You dare disobey me, Champion? After what we gifted you?”

But then, the Champion’s irises shift from black back to brown.

Reign’s face twists in surprise. “What—”

Before she can finish her sentence, the Champion throws her fist forward, burrowing it into Reign’s chest. Her breath catches on her lungs as she feels the Champion’s hand slide right between her ribs, clutch at her heart, before penetrating out of her back.

Reign is suspended, impaled by the Champion’s arm as she looks blankly into those brown eyes. Her heart is disconnected, but her brain still functions, but only for the last few moments as she connects her gaze to the Ruby, only to gasp in shock at the sight.

Ruby’s head is clasped in the Champion’s grip, torn clean from her body. Blood drips down onto the pavement beside her mutilated corpse. Reign can’t even cry out in pain as her brain starts to cease its functioning. She can only glance back up at her creation.

The Champion leans in, so their eyes are only millimetres apart.

“I said,” she growls menacingly, “no.”
Heart

Chapter Summary

The fate of the world slowly begins to unravel.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: Mentions of Gore.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

October 15th, 2018

Maggie scours through the debris of National City's latest portal explosion, coughing as the dust billows up around her. She'd been given a tip about some sort of commotion in the city's financial district, about the potential existence of super-beings wreaking havoc. A nervous, queasy feeling settles in her gut as she clammers over some of the overturned rock and smouldering rubble with a few of her officers. The last thing the city needs while its' resident superhero was out of the fight was a force that only a Kryptonian could handle. Deciding to ignore the possibility, Maggie continues forward.

"Sawyer!" She hears one of the men ahead call out to her in wavering voice. "You gotta see this."

Maggie adjusts the small mask on her mouth as she follows the sound of his voice, her feet crunching over broken glass and concrete.

But then, she hears something splash lightly.

Frowning, Maggie looks down, only to feel her heart drop into her stomach.

Blood.

"Seriously," the officer calls again, and Maggie can see his back from where she stands. "You need to get here now, Maggie."

Noting the seriousness in his tone, Maggie leaps forward, careful not to trip over any other debris as she makes her way to her officer. The blood is thicker now, coating the underside of her boots as she sees her officer take a step back, his face green with nerves and disbelief. Maggie growls.

"What the Hell was so important that you—"

She can't finish her statement, because when she looks down to the ground, she realizes just what caused his attention.

Maggie almost gags at the sight of the two mutilated bodies, ripped nearly to shreds. The woman—considering the other body is that of what Maggie assumes to be a teenager—has her eyes open, glassy and dull as they stare up at the sky. A gaping hole protrudes from her chest, revealing a
mangled mess of organs, flesh, and broken bones. Maggie stumbles backwards in horror as she takes in the sight of a blackened heart a few millimetres away.

"What the fuck happened here?" Maggie asks, turning to the decapitated teenager next. "Who could do this?"

"D-Do… do you think…," the officer stammers nervously. "Was it her?"

"K-Supergirl?!" Maggie guffaws, catching herself just in time before she said her ex sister-in-law's name instead of her guise. "Never."

"Remember when she went crazy a few years ago?" One of the other officers behind her murmurs. "It could happen again…"

Even if the Red Kryptonite was back, Maggie knew that if Kara had the self-control back then to not kill anyone, then she certainly would not kill anyone now. But now, she thinks as she looks to the dead bodies, Kara had lost her powers. Last she heard, nothing had changed on that front. Unless…

"Do you have a video feed?" Maggie asks, looking up to the officers. "Anything from the resounding area?"

"Are you kidding?" The officer balks at the question. "The whole place is destroyed! There's no way we'd get anything."

"Try," Maggie says, her voice softer as she sighs, hanging her head. "I need to know what happened, before it's too late."

The officer in front of her frowns. "Too late?"

"Let's just say," Maggie mumbles as she looks up at him worriedly. "A rogue Supergirl is the least of our concerns right now."

* * *

"Administrator Luthor, the person you are trying to call is unavailable right now. Would you like to leave a message?"

Lena ignores the panic settling in her bones as she shakes her head. She looks over to where Kara is pacing nervously, texting everyone Alex had previous contact with, from her mother to Maggie. Her heart aches at the sight of her girlfriend looking so distraught. Usually Alex would reply to her by now, especially considering the number of calls and texts Lena and Kara had respectively left on both her work and home number. Lena forces herself to ignore the possibility that Kara’s premonition and the absence of Alex’s supposed heartbeat to be signs of something far more destructive.

"No," Lena says as she looks back to the computer. "No, it's fine. She's not there."

There’s a pause before the computer chimes again. “Administrator Luthor, what is your query?"

“I need you to get me a read on Agent Danvers’ vitals.”

Kara pauses her pacing, her face ashen as Lena commands the words. There is a pause, before the screen pulls up Alex’s body scans.
And immediately, the screen flashes red.

“System error,” the computer replies. “Match not found.”

“What?” Kara asks, putting away her phone as she steps up beside Lena. “That can’t be right—even if Alex were hurt, she would still show up on the scans. The chip for her vitals is in her brain. Remember? After Rick, we all got chips implanted so then we could keep a track of our vitals. Lena?”

Lena takes a deep breath. “Show me Agent Danvers’ last vitals.”

Again, the computer replies, “system error, match not found.”

“No,” Kara growls as she slams her hand down on the desk. The wood splinters slightly underneath the force of her strength, and Lena winces at the slight bubble of blood which shines on the ruined mahogany. “I need to find her. Please… please show me anything… I can’t lose her. Lena, I can’t…”

“Kara,” Lena says as she reaches over to gently rub at her lover’s arm. “We’ll find her. Maybe something happened in National City and the comm grids are offline. It might be why you can’t reach anyone, and neither can I. We have to be patient. Let me try the DEO again and see if anyone picks up.”

“I can’t wait for that,” Kara says determinedly as she rushes out of the lab and towards their living room. “Where’s my suit, Lena?”

“Kara,” Lena warns as she darts after her, “your powers keep fluctuating. You can’t fly in this state, it’s too dangerous.”

“Alex is in trouble—”

“I know,” Lena says as she reaches out to tug Kara into her arms. She can see the fear dancing in Kara's blue eyes, frantic and unknowing of what's happening. “I know, baby, but rushing into this headfirst without thinking isn’t going to solve the problem. Please, you have to calm down.”

Kara shakes her head angrily, pulling away from Lena as she slips on her suit and flexes her hands. The blood has now dried, but Lena can make out the slight tinge of a scrape. Her girlfriend's eyes are glowing mixture of red and blue, and Lena isn’t quick enough to stop her from heading to the door. Kara swings it open with more force than necessary, before she starts running through the field, jumping up to gain momentum so she can fly.

“Kara!” Lena screams as she chases after her. “Don’t! Please!”

But her plea falls on silent ears as Kara shoots up into the sky with a resounding boom.

* * *

A Few Hours Earlier…

Everything is wrong.

Alex looks to the mutilated bodies of Reign and Ruby and wheezes. Her chest is on fire and she can still hear a dull ringing in the back of her head. She looks to her bloodied palms, and to the heart which is still gripped tightly in one of her fists. The sight should make her gag, but Alex looks at it and only feels numb. Her body feels like it’s no longer her own, like she’s floating
outside and watching the world spin around her. Nausea swells in her gut, but she swallows it down as she looks up to the ashen, dusty sky. Warm blood crusts her hands, making them sticky and cracked as she flexes them.

Alex’s gaze then shifts down to the protruding rock jutting out of her chest, glowing and blazing an onyx black as her breathing gets progressively worse. The dizziness intensifies as Alex feels herself crumble to her knee. Gasping, she looks back up at the dust around her, her eyes blackening.

Her hand releases the heart before hovering over the stone.

And then she remembers.

The fight.

The way Ruby thrust the stone deep into her chest.

Oh God… her baby.

Alex winds an arm around her stomach and sobs. She can feel something is wrong, but she can’t admit it, not yet. She won’t grieve until she knows. And right now, Alex can’t focus on her baby. She needs to focus on getting out of here, getting to safety.

So, she looks down to the stone again before grabbing it.

An agonizing screech tears past her lips as she touches the sweltering rock, and Alex can’t breathe as she coughs and splutters. She releases the stone and falls forward, grappling at the rubble to try and divert her pain, but it’s no use.

This must be what it feels like to be dying.

Another dizzying spell of burning pain sweeps over her as Alex keels over, dry heaving as she feels the fire spread through her bones. Her limbs are pulling and stretching, and Alex can’t take it anymore. She feels like her limbs are shifting. She forces herself to try and pass out, but it doesn’t work.

“Come on,” Alex pleads as she curls into herself. “Stop it.”

But it doesn’t stop, and Alex knows she needs to make a decision.

“Fuck,” she growls as she stumbles to her feet, her arm clasped under the rock to wind around her waist. She shuffles forwards and finds an abandoned truck. Alex hisses as she punches through the glass, ignoring how easy it is to break, and opens the door. She scrummages under the steering wheel.

It takes a few more minutes than usual for Alex to hot-wire the machine before she finally hears the engine splutter to life.

Without looking back, Alex takes off into the dust.

* * *

As soon as she’s flown up a few metres, Kara falls back down.

A frustrated yell escapes her lips as she crashes back into the long grass, tumbling over herself until she comes to a halt. Her lower back aches at the fall, but she shakes her head and stands back up. She can feel her bones snapping under the pressure and then re-healing at rate slower than what
she's used to. She can still hear Lena calling her name, and Kara turns her head to see her lover’s eyes wide with terror metres away. She knows, deep down, that Lena is right. Given the weakness she feels right now, and the draining headache creeping up on her, she knows her powers aren't back.

But she can't let that stop her.

Alex didn't have powers, and she still found a way to save her.


There's no way Kara is giving up so easily.

“No,” Kara says determinedly, glancing back to the sky. “I can't stop now, Alex. I’m coming for you. Hold on. I can do this, I swear…”

Kara stumbles forward, breaking back into a hobbling run before she jumps again. The height isn't as far as she'd like, but Kara keeps pushing through the burn in her spine. She manages to get a bit of air on the second jump, but then she’s falling back again with a thump. She tries again, and again, and then once again. She crashes and tumbles, but she gets back up. But before she knows it, Kara is just jumping up to a normal, human, height.

“No,” Kara cries out as she tries again, but she can’t even make it past a foot. “No, I just got them back… I can’t…”

Kara tries to zone in her hearing, to heat her vision, but nothing works. She falls to her knees and cries, sobbing in distress.

“No,” she repeats again, between hiccupped breaths, “Alex…”

Thunder cackles overhead, and Kara feels the first drops of rain spit against her cheeks. It’s an insult to injury, like the Gods themselves are pissing on her for her insolence. Kara just remains slouched, her head defeatedly pressed into her chest as the light rain soon delves into a torrential downpour. Lightning flashes in the distance, and before she knows it, Kara is soaked to the bone. The rain mats her hair to her face and masks her tears.

“Kara,” she hears Lena’s voice again, closer now. “Kara, are you okay?”

Kara can’t turn around, however. She doesn’t react when she feels Lena’s arms wrap around her shoulders and pull her to rest in the older woman’s chest. She doesn’t hear Lena’s soft words. She can’t feel Lena’s body trembling as she tries to pull Kara out of the festering thoughts in her head.

All she feels, hears, and sees, is her own failure.

* * *

Alex barely has the energy to park the car and turn the engine off as she stumbles into the secret lab beneath L-Corp. She knew that if she went to the DEO she’d be raising questions she couldn’t answer, and for once, she was grateful Lena Luthor could be just as secretive as her lucrative family.

The lab is only reserved for Lena and Alex, after they’d collaborated together on a few projects relating to an alien drug bust. Lena had let her in on the location and provided her access to the space, knowing she would need it in case things at the DEO wouldn’t pull through depending on
the circumstances of her cases. Not only that, but Alex always knew there could be a possibility of an infiltration at headquarters, so the lab was a back-up.

A really fancy, multi-million dollar back-up.

Alex shoves aside the papers and markers on the computer desktop, gasping as her breathing starts to wane. Everything is starting to blur, now. She grips onto the edge of the table before she hits the power button, illuminating the lab in a hue of blue and green lights. Alex slumps over, tired.

“Authorized entry detected. Greetings, Agent Alex Danvers. What is your query?” Alex gasps as the stone pulses deep within her.

“I need scans,” Alex growls as she clenches her fist to ward off the pain. She can hear something cracking beneath her palm, but she ignores the sound to hiss again. “I also need you to get me all information on Black Kryptonite. And kill the security footage—I want this area under complete blackout.”

“Request granted. Security measures are offline. Recording systems are offline. Database search in progress… estimated time of completion: ten seconds. Multi-scanning tool selected; scanning in progress, please do not move while the system is updated.”

Alex holds still as the series of red lasers screen her body.

But then an alarm sounds, startling her into a panic. Alex glances up to see her body scans displaying a startling amount of highlighted red over every inch, but especially clustered to her chest. The area is so clustered, the screen shows it to be black.

But Alex isn’t drawn to any of that.

Instead, she looks to the area around her uterus and cervix.

More importantly, she looks to what isn’t there.

“Multiple warnings detected,” the computer states monotonously. “Warning, blood oxygen levels below healthy amount. Warning, major contusions detected. Warning, brain activity hyper-activating. Warning, tissue and critical haemorrhaging in uterus detected. Warning…”

Alex just ignores the warnings.

The baby.

*Her* baby.

Her Little Bean.

*Gone.*

But Alex doesn’t have time to grieve over the loss, not when her entire body is practically on fire. The physical pain is nothing compared to the war in her mind, but Alex knows that she has to keep moving. She can’t let herself get lost in the deep of it. The burn is spreading now, lighting her nerves.

"Fuck," Alex snarls as she grips the counter harder again, "God… shit…"

“Warning,” the computer states again, “*heart-rate accelerating.*”
“Okay,” Alex breathes deeply, “you’re a doctor and a bioengineer. You just have to stabilize the base reaction. You can do this.”

“Warning,” the computer sounds again, “blood pressure low.”

“Blood loss,” Alex mutters as she feels her heart-rate decreasing. She fumbles through the drawers until she finds the epinephrine.

Alex bites the cap off with her teeth before she jabs the needle into her neck and depresses the contents. She feels an instant shot of energy course through her, followed by an inferno of pain. Her body spasms, and for a moment Alex believes she feels the telltale sign of an aura, but there is no seizure that follows. Instead, she feels herself fall prey to an awful loop of spasms and contractions. Every single cell in her body is in agony.

“Warning,” the computer blares, distracting her from the worst pain she's felt in her entire life. “Body temperature near critical level. Recommending instant cooling procedures.” Alex gasps as she writhes around on the floor, her eyes rolling to the back of her head as she feels her body tensing.

But then the computer’s final warning leaves Alex frozen.

“Warning,” it warns, “class ten radiation exposure detected.”

“Fuck,” Alex seethes as she looks back up to the screen to the computer tracking the spread of the Kryptonite through her system. “Okay, okay, you’ve got to stabilize the initial reaction. Fuck… what is the chemical compound which neutralizes the effects of this shit? What the fuck is it, anyways?”

Alex scours her fever-addled brain for the solution. She's sweating through her clothes now, trying to think clearly as her brain starts turning to mush. She crawls to her feet, spitting out wads of blood and black gunk as she leans herself over Lena’s work top shakily. She glances up to the screen.

Then the computer dings. “Agent Danvers, your search has been completed. Black Kryptonite is now available in your local files.”

Alex grits her teeth through another wave of pain. “Get me the chemical formula, now.”

“Accessing database,” the computer says, before a slew of diagrams, files, and pictures appear on the screen. “Fifteen results fit your query. Black Kryptonite consists of a 28.9% plutonium, 16.5% mercury, 10.1% promethium, 25% uranium, and 19.5% unknown substance.” Alex runs the figures and compounds through her head, trying to figure out how to counterbalance the effects of it on her body. She swipes the files, but information is limited.

“Okay,” Alex says bleakly as she nods, gulping down nausea as her head continues to swim. She looks up and swipes at the screen to get back access to her body’s scans. She zooms in on her chest, only to nearly collapse in horror at what she sees on the picture.

Half of her heart is encroached by the stone.

“Computer,” Alex whispers, “analyze current cardiac functions.”

“Analyzing. Cardiac functioning is at less than 10% capacity.”

“Why… why am I still alive?” Alex asks, dumbfounded. “How…?”
“Analysis of tissue structure indicates partially successful melding of Black Kryptonite to respiratory and cardiac systems.” Alex blinks as she looks back to the stone jutting from her chest.

“It’s killing me,” Alex says, confused. The computer beeps.

“This statement is both incorrect and correct.”

“What?” Alex chokes, looking up. “I’m infected. I’m going to die. I should be dead. How the fuck am I not dead?”

There is a whirring noise before a few more images show up on the screen. Alex watches as the computer shows her a simulated view of her heart, infected by the stone, still pumping blood to her system. Even her lungs, which are nearly back, still function.

“Further analysis shows the stone’s power source as aiding in your recovery,” the computer says. “Removing the stone would result in a 100% chance of death.” Alex gulps, wiping at her forehead. The fever is rising now, and she can feel not only her vision waning, but also her hearing. It's getting worse.

“And leaving it in?”

“Calculating. Analysis reveals an 8% chance of survival.”

Alex slumps back to the ground, feeling blackness creep up around her vision. There are still multiple alarms ringing out, and she can see her vitals are beginning to crash once more. Alex looks back down to the stone sticking out from her chest at an awkward angle, swallowing the blood creeping up in the back of her throat as she reaches out to it with shaky hands. She can feel the heat pulsing off of it, but she can't help but test her own hypothesis.

When she places her hands around it, the stone nearly burns through her skin. She lets go and heaves, staring desperately at the results.

“And… and if it’s stabilized?”

“Re-calculting. If compound is stabilized, chances of survival increase by 60.45%. But, half-life structure of Black Kryptonite indicates that these effects will be diminished within two years.”

Alex swallows and nods, before she rises back to her feet. After running through all possible scenarios in her head, she knows there is only one possible way to stabilize the reaction within her.

“I need access to folder: Project X”

“Request received,” the computer says as it scans the database. “Warning, request to folder is denied. Administrator permission is required. Please input Administrator password for clearance.”

Alex stumble over to the keyboard and types in the password, mentally apologizing to Lena for hacking into the most confidential project in the system. The computer beeps, and the folder opens.

“Open vault two-forty-four.” Alex demands, limping past the table towards the series of vaults on the other end. A clicking sound breaks the silence before one of the vault doors swing open with a hiss. Smoke billows out as the tray is rolled forward, on it, a pen-sized apparatus with a platinum tip. Alex swallows thickly.

“Set it up and prepare the synthesis procedure.”
“Warning,” the computer replies, “The UHEN tool has been untested and yields a high chance of failure. Using the tool can result in catastrophic destruction to cell tissue and poses a critical risk for death. Do you wish to continue, Agent Danvers?”

Alex watches as the small device hums to life, glowing bright red as it powers up. She grabs at it with trembling hands before she stumbles her way over to the examination table. It takes a load of effort on her part, but eventually she manages to clamber atop it.

“Yes,” Alex hisses as she sets the tool into the slot beside her. “Initiate chemical neutralization in t-minus thirty seconds.”

Alex watches as the machine above her swivels, moving the device with the robotic arm until the tip of the UHEN tool is hovering directly above the stone. Alex takes a deep breath and closes her eyes while the computer counts down the time to the stabilization.

She thinks of Maggie, of Lena, of Kara.

She thinks of her Little Bean, of the love she never got to meet.

“I’m sorry,” she whispers as she feels her eyelids slowly close shut, her body finally worn down by her injuries. “I’m so sorry.”

“Five, four, three, two, one… initiating procedure.”

The minute the laser connects with the stone, Alex’s eyes shoot open and widen, a blood-curdling scream tearing through her throat.

The entire time the stone is chiseled down, Alex doesn’t pass out.

Only when it’s over, does she finally get to close her eyes.

* * *

**October 16th, 2018**

Lena wakes up to screaming.

She jolts from her bed to see Kara keeled over in the corner of the room, clutching at her chest as she rocks herself violently.

“Kara!” Lena exclaims, jolting from her bed and in the direction of the younger Danvers. “Baby, is it happening again? Kara!”

Kara just continues to yell and scrabble at her chest. Lena pulls her into her arms and holds her close, kissing at her clammy skin desperately. She holds onto Kara’s wrists, noting their lack of strength. Kara’s powers didn’t seem to be back, but she is in pain. Lena carries her through it until Kara eventually slumps.

Lena lets out a sigh of relief as she cradles Kara’s unconscious body into her arms, rocking them both back and forth as she focuses on the steady breaths leaving Kara’s chapped, parted lips. Eventually, she manages to stand, carrying Kara back to the bed on shaking knees. She settles her amongst the sheets before leaning down to peck her forehead. Kara barely stirs at the contact.

Sighing, Lena looks outside the window to the pale moonlight.

Knowing she isn’t going back to sleep, Lena pads over to her closet and throws on her robe before
she heads out towards her kitchen. She flicks on the light and rubs at her face as she patters around, gathering the necessary supplies to make a cup of tea. She’s in the middle of boiling the water when the computer dings.

“Administrator Luthor,” the computer says, “authorized access has been once again reverted to folder: Project X. Location: L-Corp basement lab. Prior access was authorized 10:18pm Eastern Time.”

Lena nearly drops the mug in her hand. She whirls around and swipes at the screen in confusion. “What? I didn’t authorize that.”

No one knew the authorization code, not even Alex. “Relay previous search queries since authorization,” she demands firmly. There is a pause, before a number of files pop up on the screen.

Lena frowns. “What is Black Kryptonite?”

“Black Kryptonite is the potent varietal of pure Kryptonite,” the computer reads off the screen. “The allow has been used to split Kryptonians into two separate beings, one of evil, other of good.”

“Who accessed this information?” Lena asks, dumbfounded.

“Error,” the computer says, “access restricted.”

“Restricted?” Lena says, confused. “I’m the administrator.”

“Security measures were locked down upon arrival. All recordings have been terminated. Would you like to override these settings?”

“Yes,” Lena says, “get me access to the lab’s video feed.”

“Access granted. Live feed is on your screen.”

Lena stands up and gasps at the sight of blood and scattered paper around the lab. There’s a dent in one of the steel walls. Lena feels her heart racing in horror as she takes in the state of her lab, unsure of how to feel as she looks at the vile destruction.

“What happened?” She gasps, tears welling in her eyes.

“Error,” the computer says again, “access restricted.”

“Why was Project X opened?” Lena asks instead, ignoring the same warning being given to her again. “What was taken?”

“Project X was opened four hours and fifteen minutes ago by Administrator Luthor. Extracted from vault two-forty-four was the Ultra-High Energy Neutrino tool. Tool replaced one hour ago.”

“Give me all the search queries in the past day.”

“Past search inquiries only include Black Kryptonite.”

Lena frowns. “Patch me through to Agent Danvers.”

A ringing fills the room as Lena’s heart thuds out of control. The UHEN was specifically designed to combat nuclear weaponry, but it could be used for far worse destruction in the wrong hands.
Even though the tool was placed back into the vault, Lena worries that it might be too late to stop whatever hell is about to break loose.

“Come on, come on,” Lena mutters under her breath, “you better fucking pick up.”

Finally, the screen stops ringing, and the call is accepted.

Only, Alex is not the one to answer it.

“Maggie?” Lena asks in disbelief, taking in the tired face of the detective. She can see DEO agents running and shouting in the background. It looks a mess. The sight only further serves to unravel the nerves that had been pulled taut in her chest. Lena gulps. “What’s going on? Where’s Alex?”

“I don’t know,” Maggie replies, blinking back tears as she swallows thickly. “Apparently a portal opened up yesterday and some of those demon things came back. Vasquez says that she gave Alex the intel of their location, but when I saw her today, she doesn’t remember what she said. When we arrived, there was no sign of any of those demons or a portal. We think there’s been a compromise in the DEO. All agents are being investigated.”

“What?” Lena chokes out, stumbling to her seat. “The city…”

Maggie shakes her head bitterly. “It’s in the middle of a crisis, Lena. People are losing it.”

“Shit,” Lena swears, shaking her head. “Kara… yesterday, her powers came back. She… she said she couldn’t hear her heartbeat.” Maggie’s head bows and Lena doesn’t have to be there to know she’s breaking.

“I haven’t seen Alex since she came to me a few weeks ago,” Maggie croaks as she looks back up, swiping uselessly at her tears. “We’ve swept the portal’s area, and we found something really disturbing.”

“What is it?” Lena asks, furrowing her brow. Maggie sighs.

“Two Kryptonians,” Maggie says nervously. “Dead Kryptonians.”

Lena’s heart shudders inside her chest. “How were they killed?”

“I don’t know,” Maggie whispers, her voice quivering. “It… it was so gruesome. One was a teenager, and her head was decapitated. The other was an adult woman. Her heart was ripped from her chest. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything so horrifying and grotesque in my life before.”

“Not even Kara could do that if she tried,” Lena says, rubbing at her forehead as she digests the information with a shiver. “What killed them?”

“We don’t know,” Maggie gulps. “But whatever it is, it’s more powerful than anything we’ve ever seen, including Clark and Kara.”

“I should come back—”

“No,” Maggie interrupts. “If Kara doesn’t have full control of her powers it’s not safe for either of you here. Stay in Ireland.”

“That doesn’t matter anymore,” Lena chuckles sadly. She types at her computer screen, sending the files over a direct and secure link to Maggie’s personal device. “I received a notification that my lab was infiltrated last night.” Maggie frowns, typing at her keyboard before glancing back at
Lena.

“L-Corp security didn’t notify us of a break-in.”

“Because it didn’t happen in L-Corp,” Lena mutters, leaning back. “It happened in my private lab in the basement of the building.”

Maggie frowns, brow arched. “You have a private lab?”

“It’s only for me,” Lena explains, blushing. “After what happened with my brother and mother, I had to make sure I had a safe area to research without it getting compromised… so much for that.” Maggie looks uncertain, but she can see the older woman pouring over the evidence from the break-in.

“Okay, well if no one knows about this lab, how was it breached?”

Lena swallows. “Only one other person knows about the lab.”

“Who?” Maggie asks, frowning as she looks up at her worriedly. “Lena?”

Lena sighs, looking behind her to where her bedroom door is closed and Kara is still sleeping inside, before grimly turning back to Maggie.

“It’s… Alex.”

Chapter End Notes

Alex does grieve over her child, don't worry. This isn't the end of it.

Sorry for the angst! But I swear, this has a very happy ending I promise.
When Alex wakes up, she’s in her apartment. The burning which had previously threatened to tide her over is now reduced to a dull throb, and her pain from the previous day is mostly gone. Alex sucks in a deep breath, ignoring her protesting ribs as she slowly sits up, leaning against her bed’s backboard. She tries to jog her memory, to figure out how she managed to come home. Things come back in bits and pieces, from the battle of National City, to Lena’s lab and the stabilization of the Black Kryptonite. She looks down at her chest and grimaces at the sight.

"Fuck," she mutters as her head begins to pulse, "what happened?"

She goes to rub her eyes when she feels something in her hand. She unfurls her palm, revealing a small chip. She stares at it in confusion, not knowing what it is—and yet it calls to her like she’s meant to be connected with it. Shivering, Alex turns away, trying to escape the weird pull she feels towards the device in her hand. She tries to let it go, but she can't manage to let her hand uncurl.

Glancing down, Alex notices that her shirt is ripped to shreds and her pants are singed up to her mid-thigh. Her skin is still pale, mottled with bruises and cuts, but considering the damage she knows Reign and Ruby had inflicted yesterday, it doesn't make sense that she isn't more heavily injured. Or, Alex thinks, maybe I'm just misremembering it. Maybe it hadn't been as bad as I thought it was.

Either way, Alex chooses not to dwell on it. Aside from the odd ache and pain, she doesn't seem to be in grave danger. Alex looks to her hands then, looking them over as she notices them wiped clean of blood. She flexes them, testing her grip, before letting them settle back down on the sheets. She sits up, swallowing down the dizziness that comes with the motion before taking a deep breath.

Finally, she looks to her chest.

The protruding rock that had once stuck out like an eye-sore was now shaved down to a barely-there bump between her breasts. It still glows and flares with the beat of her heart, but the heat from before is now tempered. Alex reaches up with one of her hands and gently presses her fingers
against the surface, surprised when she’s met with the smooth surface pulsing against her fingertips.

Swallowing thickly, Alex swings her legs over the bedside and places her feet flat on the ground. She rises with a soft hiss, before padding towards the direction of her bathroom. She stumbles inside, avoiding the mirror as she turns on the faucet and lets the cool water rush against her palms. She gathers some in her hands before she splashes her face, rubbing at her skin tiredly.

Finally, after a few more splashes, she looks up.

Her reflection hasn’t changed. She still looks… human. Her eyes are back to their normal brown colour, but she can see the odd flecks of onyx burning in her gaze. Her skin is still pale, but aside from the odd bruises and cuts, she looks unharmed. But, now when she looks to her shoulders and biceps, she can see a muscular definition that she’d never had before. Alex rakes over the sloping plane of her collarbones, taking in the new muscles on her shoulders and neck, toned and defined, flexing with each breath that she draws.

Then, her brow furrows as she steps backwards slightly.

Is she… taller?

"This has to be some weird fucked-up dream," she mutters as she looks down to her hands, noticing they’re also a bit more defined. Her thighs and calves were equally as toned, but other than the slight change in her musculature and height, nothing else has changed.

Sighing, Alex looks up at herself tiredly, taking in her bloodshot and tired eyes with a confused expression.

Yesterday, she was dying.

Today, she is alive, and hardly a scratch on her.

She’s alive and it finally hits her.

The sharp realization of her life is enough to cause Alex to heave, and she collapses to her knees in front of her toilet, spewing out nothing but bile into the bowl. Her chest contracts as she gasps and splutters, her throat burning as more acid spews from her throat. She reaches back to the edge of the sink for grip, but the sound of concrete shattering draws Alex’s attention away for a second.

She looks to the destroyed edge of her sink with a wide-eyed look.

“What the fuck?” She whispers as she stumbles back onto her ass, looking at her palms. “What’s happened to me? What is this?”

Alex gulps as she looks to the metal railing next to the sink. She clambers back to her feet as she reaches out, gently wrapping her fingers around the cold steel. She grips it, taking a breath. She prays under her breath for her hypothesis to not be true before moving.

With a barely-there yank, she wrenches it free from its' place on the wall like it's nothing.

Alex lets go of the railing, shocked to see her fingers' imprints on the metal as if it were made out of clay rather than steel. Alex looks to her hand in a mixture of awe and shock, and a bit of fear. She keeps staring at her palm as if it’s a new extension of her body.

But then, Alex is reminded—once again—that she doesn’t remember getting home.
The last thing she remembered seeing was the laser drilling into her chest, the sounds of her own scream, the taste of bile on her lips. She doesn’t remember leaving the lab, let alone coming here. She remembers blood and pain and chemical formulas and fire…

Alex moves out of the bathroom and scours through her apartment, looking at the destruction of broken glass bottles and upheaved furniture. Alex walks around in a daze, unable to recognize the contents of her overturned living room. She sees dents in her walls, scratches on her tiles, and she feels herself getting dizzy as she realizes that something is incredibly, terribly wrong.

Did she do this?

But more importantly, she thinks as she looks back down to her palms, what else can she do?

* * *

"Baby, to the left, yes, oh fuck—"

Maggie grips Darla's thighs tighter as she licks into her ex-girlfriend. Darla thrashes beneath her, hands clawing at the sheets as Maggie swipes her tongue over her clit, thrashing it with harsh licks and strokes until the other woman unravels with a euphoric shout.

"Damn, Sawyer, that was… fuck…"

"Ssh," Maggie mutters as she crawls up to kiss her ex-girlfriend, "don't speak."

Maggie gives her another smouldering kiss before reaching beside her for the strap-on they'd tossed aside earlier in the night. The fuel of alcohol is the only thing keeping her from thinking, from acknowledging the worries pouring through her mind. Darla had taken sorry on her somewhat drunken ass and said that maybe she could benefit from being outside of her mind for a few hours. While Maggie had sworn off casual sex since she and Alex had split, given the toil of the past few hours—as well as the three fingers of whiskey settling in her liver—that maybe Darla had a point, which is how she finds herself now, sweaty and prepping herself for Darla.

"Do you need lube?" Maggie asks, fitting a condom over the dildo. Darla only scoffs.

"You really need to ask me that after I came in your mouth twice?"

Maggie offers up a half-smirk, though she hardly means it. "Fair point."

"Ugh," Darla mutters as she wipes some sweat from her brow. "Get to it, Sawyer. Put your money where your cock—"

Before Darla can finish whatever she's meaning to say, Maggie snaps her hips forward, burying herself into her ex with one solid stroke. Darla gasps and claws down her back, mumbling something incoherent as Maggie gives her a second to adjust before thrusting steadily. She claws one hand into the pillow beside Darla's head, while the other holds up Darla's quivering thigh, bringing them closer.

"Fuck," Darla swears again, and with each stroke Maggie can feel the alcoholic fog lifting. "Right there… so good…"

Her hips falter as she pictures Alex beneath her instead, and she feels herself crawling back into the hole she'd burrowed herself in since their fallout. She remembers Alex beneath her, clawing into her, kissing her fervently, begging her for more, to be harder…
To love her.

Somehow, it isn't Maggie that snaps herself from her vision, but her cellphone.

"Seriously?" Darla growls at the offending object as Maggie slows her thrusts. "You weren't kidding when you said you're married to your work. It looks like almost having a wife didn't even change that, did it?" Maggie winces at the low blow, but snatches her phone.

Her eyes bug out when she sees the caller identification.

Without hesitating, Maggie swipes the accept button and holds the phone to her ear.

"Kara?"

There's some static on the line before Maggie hears sniffles and a croaked response, "hey, Maggie."

Ignoring Darla's protests, Maggie somehow manages to undo the harness with one hand before casting it aside. She rummages around for her boxers and a shirt in the pale light of the moon as she response back to the distressed-sounding Kryptonian calmly.

"Hey, kid. Everything okay?"

Ditching the woman in the bed, Maggie makes her way over to her kitchen, setting up the kettle. Kara sniffles again, and Maggie can feel her heart breaking inside her chest at the sounds of Kara's pain through the receiver. It takes some time, but Maggie is patient.

"H- Have you found Alex yet?"

Maggie winces, hanging her head guiltily. "No, Kara, I haven't. We… we looked all over the site, but there's no sign of her."

Kara whimpers and Maggie honestly wishes she could die on the spot.

"A-And the blood?"

Swallowing thickly, Maggie closes her eyes. "It… it was hers."

There's a pause, before Kara quietly mumbles, "oh."

"It could mean a lot of things, okay?" Maggie says softly, trying to not only reassure her pseudo-sibling, but also herself. "Alex is a fighter. Just because she's not answered our calls or has shown up since the incident doesn't mean she's… you know. Give it a few days, I am sure she'll turn up. John said that James went to check out her apartment, but he didn't find anything there. I'll go again soon to follow-up on it."

She can tell by the static on the phone that Kara's nodding. Maggie smiles as she imagines the younger Danvers' determined face, and suddenly she feels like she's back at the DEO with Rick, watching Supergirl defended her missing sister against his leering taunts.

"We're not going to stop looking," Maggie assures her softly, "I would never give up on her, even if she's no longer mine."

Kara sniffles again. "You love her?"

"Yeah," Maggie sighs as she looks up to where Darla is now putting her clothes on in frustration. "I do."
“She loves you too,” Kara replies quietly. “She regrets what happened, I know. She's just being stubborn.”

"Reminds me of someone else I know," Maggie jabs lightly as she turns her attention to her kettle. She hears Kara's soft, indignant scoff on the other end but she ignores it as she starts fumbling for the tea bag as the water heats. "How are you holding up, Little Danvers?"

"I miss you guys," Kara says, her voice timid and low. "I miss Alex. If... if she... I... I never got a chance to say I love her."

"She's not," Maggie assures her again, firmer this time. "And Kara? Alex always knows. No matter what fights or spats you may end up getting into, Alex always knows that you love her, just as she loves you. I'm here for you and I love you, too. You know that right?"

"Of course," Kara says, though it's a bit more shy than before. "I love you too, Maggie. You're still my big sis."

Maggie smiles at the warmth in her voice. "And don't you ever forget it, kid."

* * *

October 18th, 2018

“Kara, why won’t you play with us today?”

Kara blinks down at the little boy tugging at her sleeve. Her heart sinks at the pleading in his tone, so she musters up a half-hearted smile as she kneels and reaches out to gently stroke his cheeks.

“Sorry, little one. I was lost in my own thoughts.”

“Like a space cadet?” The boy asks, grinning toothily.

Kara only smiles at his innocence. “Yes, like a space cadet.”

“I want to go to space one day,” the boy sighs as he tucks himself into her embrace. “Daddy used to tell me the stars are really pretty.”

“They are,” Kara whispers, rubbing his back. “They burn bright in the darkness of the sky. It’s like a million fireworks.” The boy gushes at her explanation, taking each word with awe-filled eyes.

“Have you been to space?” He asks, cocking his head thoughtfully.

Kara sighs, looking up to the sky. “Not for a long time.”

The boy frowns. “Will you go again?”

“I don’t know.”

* * *

"How was it?" Lena asks as Kara settles into the front seat of her Rover. "The kids seemed… quieter."

Kara just shrugs, keeping her gaze glued to the window as Lena pulls away from the orphanage. The tires growl underneath the gravel as they pull out of the lot and down onto the country road towards the Luthor estate. Lena can tell that her girlfriend isn't in the mood for talking, so she
instead reaches up towards the stereo and presses play on the mix she'd created for them both. The soft sound of guitar floats through the stereo system. Lena swallows, turning her gaze ahead as rain starts to patter against the windows.

*Sleep don't weep, my sweet love.*

*Your face so wet, and your day is rough.*

Lena tries to keep her gaze steady as she hears Kara sniffle from beside her as Damien Rice’s soft voice fills the space between them.

*So do what you must do, to find yourself.*

*Wear another shoe, paint my shelf.*

*There's times that I was broke, and you stood strong.*

*I think I've found a place where I...*

Lena swallows as the chorus tides over them, the raining picking up against the windscreen as they continue travelling through the beautiful hills and countryside. Kara curls up further in her seat, humming along to the chorus as her eyes trace the raindrops.

Meanwhile, Lena tries desperately to blink away the tears burning in her eyes as she continues to drive.

"Lena?"

Kara's voice cuts through the instrumental break of the song, drawing Lena's attention back to her girlfriend.

She smiles half-heartedly as she swallows the pit in her throat. "Yeah, baby?"

"I...,” Kara whispers softly, "I need to go back... I... I want to go home."

Lena hears the crack in her voice, and even if she knows it's maybe not the best idea, she finds herself nodding along.

"Of course," Lena says back, reaching down to squeeze her hand. "We'll go home, Kara. Together."

* * *

**October 19th, 2018**

“What do you see?”

“About a million dollars-worth of damage,” Maggie grimaces as she walks around the rubble of the nearly-destroyed lab. “You should probably get your financial team to take a look at this, Luthor. I am not sure how well this whole ‘destroyed secret lab’ will go over.”

“When I get there, I'll deal with it. I’m still trying to contact my pilot.”

“I told you, you shouldn’t be coming. It’s too dangerous.”

“If I don’t come, it will be more dangerous.”
Maggie sighs, stepping over some scattered papers as she looks around at the lab. “Well, you know this shit better than anyone.”

“Thanks,” Lena replies tersely. “Now what can you see, Detective?”

“There’s bloodstains,” Maggie says as she crouches next to a dried pool of crimson and back. “But they don’t look like human blood.”

Maggie reaches into her back pocket for a swab and lightly dabs it through the flaky substance before walking over to the computer. The screen pops to life, crackling and fuzzy, but still working. Maggie inserts the swab into the input on the side and waits.

“Analyzing,” the computer reads as the images flash on the screen. “Error, no subject trace available. Sample does not match any previous records. Would you like to create a new record?” Maggie arches her brow in confusion, looking over to Lena on her phone.

“Didn’t this thing have the entire world’s data on it?”

Lena frowns. “Yes, it should. It also contains the data of all known aliens, Kryptonian or otherwise. This is someone or something new.”

“I don’t know much about biology, but doesn’t this genetic sequencing look a bit… familiar?” Maggie asks, looking at the DNA strands in the final result on the screen. “It just looks slightly mutated, but the structure is very similar to a human’s, is it not?”

“Hmm,” Lena sighs over the connection, no doubt reading into her own copy of the results on the tablet. “You’re right. It looks like a blend of human and something more. But it doesn’t make sense, because the blood in the sample is eerily similar to Kara’s DNA.”

“But Kara—”

Maggie is about to finish her reply when she hears the crunching of glass from behind her. She whirls around immediately, whipping her gun out, only to see J’onn walking through the destroyed lab with a grimace on his face. Maggie exhales, lowering her gun as she shakes her head at the man.

“You scared me,” she mutters as she turns back to the ruined drawers. “I didn’t know you were coming down to investigate.”

“Lena informed me of the break in,” J’onn says calmly, looking around at the room. “Do you have any ideas, Detective Sawyer?”

“None,” Maggie mutters as she looks to an empty syringe on the floor. She kneels, pulls on a glove, and then reaches for it.

“Epinephrine?” Maggie asks, bewildered. “Does that even work on aliens? I mean, last I checked, isn’t this hormone specific to humans only?” J’onn comes to squat beside her, gazing at the syringe inquisitively. His eyes flash red, before he mutters something.

“You’re correct. Both Kryptonians and Martians do not have either of these hormones,” J’onn muses as he stands back up, looking around the destroyed lab. “Whoever used this was human. As far as I know, no other documented species would be able to metabolize it.”

Maggie furrows her brow. “Maybe someone was hurt trying to stop it?”
“It doesn’t look like there was a struggle,” J’onn says as he looks around, scanning the room. “Or that there was more than one person.”

On the phone, Lena’s face is screwed up in confusion. “Are you suggesting a human was here?”

J’onn worries his bottom lip. “I’m not sure.”

“None of this adds up,” Maggie says as she stands back up and leans against the counter of the desk. “No human could cause this much damage… unless…” Maggie looks back to Lena with a startled look.

“Unless they started as a human,” Lena finishes. J’onn looks between them contemplating the suggestion. Maggie shivers.

“Someone could have used the Black Kryptonite to create a metahuman; a Kryptonian-Human hybrid judging by the DNA sample we obtained?” Maggie asks, looking to J’onn. The man only crosses his arms, before shaking his head as his brow furrows in confusion.

“Green Kryptonite is poisonous enough to both humans and especially to Kryptonians, but Black Kryptonite is even more dangerous. No human could withstand that sort of transformation,” J’onn says with a grim expression. “Only a true, pure Kryptonian might be able to absorb the power of the stone. Others would perish. Given their time spent on Earth, neither Kal nor Kara could even endure this.”

“What about a White Martian?” Maggie asks curiously. J’onn hums, but eventually shakes his head. Maggie sighs, rubbing her brow as she looks back at the screen and tries to piece it all together. Yet, her mind draws a blank as she keeps staring.

God, she wishes Alex were here.

Aside from Lena Luthor, Alex is the only other person with a mind robust enough to run a differential on the sample she’d conducted. For a moment, she considers contacting Eliza, but until they know more about Alex’s whereabouts, Maggie knows she best not pester the Danvers matriarch before things spiral.

“Then I guess we have no leads,” Maggie says, frustrated as she runs her hands through her hair. “There’s a some sort of mega-Kryptonian monster on the loose, and based on what I’m seeing here, it’s more powerful than anything we’ve ever faced before. You don’t think this about Darkseid, do you? Could this… thing… be him?” Maggie looks over to J’onn worriedly, unsure and afraid.

J’onn only grunts. “Not sure, but we can’t rule it out. Based on what I know, Darkseid is neither Kryptonian nor human, so this DNA structure makes no sense.”

“There’s no point in worrying about it now,” Lena says from over the phone in a determined voice. “We don’t know if this thing is friendly or not, but we need to prepare adequate countermeasures. I’ll gather what I can from here and figure something out. Until I’m ready, Kara and I will stay here. I’ll see if I can figure out how to help her regain her powers while we wait, if she’s still willing to try.”

“Please,” Maggie says quietly. “We need her now, more than ever.”

* * *

She feels… mindless… almost.
Everything passes by in a haze. One minute she was in her living room, and now—days later, she had realized when she’d looked at her watch minutes ago—Alex is rummaging through her storage locker, pulling out her old computers and a few wires. She shoves the entire thing into a box before grabbing at some spare hard drives and her toolkit. It had been years since she’d done anything remotely close to engineering or computer science, but she needed information.

It's impulsive... almost obsessive.

Lugging the multiple heavy boxes upstairs—something that she would never be able to do before —Alex is careful not to grip too harshly as she shoulders her way through her banged-up front door. The wooden frame is barely clinging onto the bolts from her attempt to open the door like a regular person. The past few days have given her a new appreciation for Kara's impressive control. She quickly sets down the box alongside the other important gadgets she'd found around her apartment. She sorts them into a pile and then gets to work, her attention hyper-focused on the task at hand. Her hands work faster than her mind can even process thoughts.

It takes her maybe four hours (a feat, really, but maybe that also had something to do with her newfound powers) to build a super-computer to rival that of L-Corp’s own design. In fact, Alex would argue, it is even better considering the interface was built upon scraps. She hooks up the final wires before she leans back and runs a hand through her hair, puffing out a breath of apprehension.

Pausing, Alex looks down to her chest. Without thinking, she opens the two buttons on her shirt and stares at the pulsing black orb caught between her breasts. She looks back to the computer, before she reaches down for the chip she had found this morning. It’s bizarre, something she’s never seen before, but she can’t stop her hands as she lifts it and places it against the Black Kryptonite.

The entire room buzzes with energy as the wire’s cables dissolve, and the chip it was connected to is absorbed into the rock. Alex gasps, feeling the slight sting of pain, before it is gone. She waits a few moments, swallowing her nerves before she looks down.

“Okay,” Alex breathes out, “time to test this shit.”

Alex reaches over and presses a button on the side. A beeping sound activates, before the power wavers in her apartment. Alex looks to the flickering lights in worry, but before she can move, the screen in front of her lights up with the LED-dotted face of a man.

“Greetings, Alexandra Danvers, DEO Agent.”

“Who are you?” Alex asks, swallowing hard. “What have I built?”

The man's face screws up in what Alex can only assume is confusion. “You were not conscious when you put me together?”

“I was,” Alex says, struggling to comprehend the fact that she's talking to a computer—an AI, no less—in her apartment, “but it was like I was on autopilot. I wasn’t even thinking; I don’t even know what half of the stuff I did is. What is the purpose of the chip in my chest?”

“You have many questions, Alex.” The computer almost chuckles.

“You’re... you’re not just a computer, are you?” Alex breathes out.

The face’s lips twitch into a faint smile. “No, I am not.”
“Okay,” Alex chuckles, shaking her head. “Am I seriously about to believe that I built a fully-functioning AI? With some scrap?”

The computer only smiles. “You may believe what you may, Alex.”

“Who are you?” Alex asks nervously. “How are you so… human?”

“My name is Kelex,” the device answers. “But you may change this.”

“Kelex,” Alex tests the name on her lips. “Okay, that’s fine. Just… what are you, exactly? Because Earth does not have as finely-tuned AIs as you, and judging by your name, I’m assuming you’re not human.” The computer face only smiles and patiently takes her in.

“I am the computerized matrix from Krypton,” Kalex says. “I was built into every Kryptonian ship and station. Only those with Kryptonian blood can access my drives, but you seem to be an exception.” Alex swallows as she looks to her hands, and the stone.

“Black Kryptonite has fused with your cellular structure,” Kelex explains. “Due to the nature of your injuries following the fight with Reign and Ruby, your heart would no longer sustain you. The Black Kryptonite fused with your tissue to repair this anomaly.”

Alex shakes her head. “So… this stone… this Black Kryptonite… is a power source?”

Kelex pauses, before he nods. “That would be the human equivalent, yes.”

“Let me get this straight,” Alex says as she stands up and paces around the room. “I can’t take this thing out of me or else I’ll die?” Alex knows this, she remembers Lena’s computer saying something similar, but she needs confirmation. She needs reality… stability.

“Yes,” Kelex replies. “The Black Kryptonite is keeping you alive.”

Alex nods, chuckling airily. “That’s fucked up on so many levels.”

“I do not think you understand the gravity of the situation,” Kelex says as the lights flicker around them. “You possess a power only the Ancients once had. Your strength and courage rivals that of the Gods. Not even Krypton’s finest champion could defeat you now.”

Alex pauses in her pacing, looking back to Kelex. “What about Kara Zor-El? Bruce told me that Kara’s genetic structure is the strongest version of a Kryptonian he’s ever seen, stronger than Kal-El. What about the two of them, compared to me?”

Kelex blinks, digesting. “Kara Zor-El and Kal-El are Krypton’s strongest creations, this is true. One would even consider them both to be champions. But due to their weakness to Kryptonite as a result of growing up on a planet other than Krypton, they would fall in a single battle against you,” Kelex explains, “but that does not mean you are not invincible, Alex. Your human composition does not lend to regeneration, and as a result, should you be injured, the Black Kryptonite might not be able to save you.” Alex looks down to her wrist, biting her lip.

“So, if I’m hurt, I will still bleed?”

Kelex eyes her carefully. “Yes. You will.”

“Which means that I’m not impenetrable,” Alex concludes blankly. “That’s just wonderful.”

Kelex doesn’t react except to blink again. “No, you are not impenetrable, Alex, neither are you
“immortal. In fact, your lifespan unfortunately withers on entirely the opposite.”

Alex swallows. “What does that mean?”

“The longer the Black Kryptonite stays inside you, the more your cells will degenerate, and eventually, you will be more Kryptonite than human,” Kelex explains calmly. “At this point, your body will shut down with rapid progression. First your kidneys and liver will fail, and when they do, the Black Kryptonite will secrete through your waste and pores and infect your body like a parasite. It will leech back into your system with a far more dangerous level of toxicity to target your respiratory and cardiac systems. Your brain and heart will cease to cope but you will likely die from the pain.”

Alex grimaces at the imagery. “Brilliant. So I’m a time-bomb?”

“I am unfamiliar with this phrase,” Kelex says uneasily, “but if that is to mean that your lifespan is drastically short, then yes.”

Alex hangs her head, nodding as she digests everything. “How long until the Kryptonite takes over my body and mind completely?”

Kelex pauses, before replying. “Approximately two Earth-years.”

“And what happens?” Alex asks, looking up worriedly. “When I die? What happens to the Black Kryptonite inside my chest?” Kelex gazes over at her as the power eventually flickers to nothing, leaving Alex in the room with nothing but the AI and his blue, glowing face.

“Black Kryptonite is the most lethal variant of its source,” Kelex says slowly. “By the time your body degenerates, it will approach its’ half-life. Unlike Earth compounds, which decrease their effects as they go through a half-life, Kryptonite becomes more potent each time it approaches the half-life.” Alex growls, frustrated as she slams her hand down on the table, shattering it into pieces instantly.

“I asked,” Alex seethes impatiently, “what happens?”

Kelex pauses. “Without a stable host, it will implode. The radiation exposure would kill all those within two-thousand miles and would affect those within an additional five-thousand miles. Essentially, the cost of the implosion would result in a widespread, catastrophic nuclear disaster. No one would be safe.”

Alex stumbles back to the couch in disbelief. “So, you’re saying I could kill everyone around me when I die?” Kelex nods, mute.

“Great,” Alex mutters, hanging her head. “Just great.”

“But this is only if your body degenerates to the point of the half-life,” Kelex adds lightly. “If you are to perish before the completion of its atomic duration, it will not be as dangerous to those surrounding you. Instead, the chemicals would neutralize and grow moot.”

Alex mulls it over before looking up. “So… are you suggesting I should kill myself?”

Kelex, once again, shows no reaction. “It is not for me to decide, Alex. You have been blessed with a great power—however you choose to use it. This strength resides within your palms. You have the chance to change the world, to bring justice to those less able. You can stop the fate which befalls this planet. You can alter the path of the incoming apocalypse, should you accept that responsibility.”
Alex looks back to her wrists again, clearly in despair. “I… I don’t know what to do, honestly. I’m so confused, so lost, so…”

 Alone.

“Kelex?” Alex asks, her voice hoarse as her arm curls around her belly. “Before the… incident… I… I was…”

“Pregnant.”

Alex’s head juts up, tears welling in her eyes as she looks to the robot. She can’t form the words, but Kelex seems to understand.

“Your child took the brunt of the impact at the fight,” Kelex explains softly. “The reason you still breathe is because of it.”

Alex stumbles to her knees, looking down to her stomach as she feels it flip. Kelex remains quiet as Alex lets the information digest. She closes her eyes, imagining her Little Bean, her child, protecting their mother before they had even taken their first breath. She sobs into herself, clutching her stomach harder. It had been a pipe dream, to imagine being a mother, to imagine a life with a family.

Maybe her mother had been right all along.

“I understand you to be grieving, Alex, but there was no other way to save you,” Kelex explains. “But unfortunately, there is no way to bring your child back. There is a part in the codex on loss I would be able to refer you to if you need help with your emotions—”

“No,” Alex growls as she glares up at the robot. “Don’t.”

Kelex keeps his mouth shut, nodding. “I… apologize, Alex.”

But the apology falls on deaf ears as the realization finally settles in like a pit in her gut. She sobs, holding her head in her hands as she leans her back against the wall. She’d been nearly torn, limb from limb, had a radioactive stone thrust into her chest, but the pain of losing her child, her only hope—this pain hurt more than any amount of mutilation or torture ever could.

Like she’s always done in her life, Alex failed.

“I’m sorry,” she whispers to her stomach, mourning the loss of someone she never knew, and yet knew the whole world about. “I’m sorry I couldn’t protect you, Little Bean. I’m so, so sorry.” Her tears are hot as they slide down her cheeks and to the hardwood.

For a moment, Alex wishes Kara was there to come and comfort her, to wrap her into her strong arms and to tell her that everything will be okay. She wishes to hear the strong, steady beat of her younger sister’s heart, to remind herself that she’s not all lost.

But Kara is in Ireland, powerless, and that’s also her fault.

And now, as she looks to herself, Alex feels herself paying the price for her mistakes. The pain is nothing compared to the ache in her soul where her family once resided. The pain is nothing compared to the loss of her love, of her sister, of her child…

 No, Alex thinks, no pain could ever compare to this right here.
For the first time in her life, Alex realizes what it must have felt like for Kara when she had landed on the Earth all those years ago. She looks to the stone and can’t stop the tears from falling. She curls into herself further, wishing she could just disappear into nothing.

“The world needs a new hero,” Kelex says, interrupting her self-deprecating thoughts. “Perhaps it is you.”

* * *

Kara throws some more hay over the side of the pig pen before she steps back, ignoring the burning sensation in her biceps from the heavy-lifting. Lena had warned her to take it easy, but she couldn’t rest, not while there was still no news of Alex or her own powers coming back. She looks to her hands with disgust, feeling so useless as she leans over the wooden post to glance at the hungry pigs.

“I never enjoyed doing it, either.”

Kara turns at the sound of a familiar deep voice.

“Kal?”

“Hi,” Clark says as he steps forward, dressed in his suit. The gold and red of the symbol of hope glares at her from where it is emblazoned on his chest. She tries to smile at him, but it falters, and she looks away, ashamed. Her attention remains on the pigs.

“You do not need to be embarrassed, Kara.”

“Embarrassed is the least of my concerns,” Kara grits out as she glares up at her cousin. She throws her hands up in the air in exasperation, her voice cracking. “I can’t do anything, Kal! Look at me! I’m throwing hay into a pig pen while the world prepares for war.”

Clark doesn’t react, other than to step forward. “Kara—”

“I’m not… I’m not strong anymore,” Kara whispers, croaking as she breaks down. “I thought… I thought I was happy here, without my powers. When it was just me and Lena, I thought I was happy. I couldn’t hear the screaming; I couldn’t feel their pain. I was at peace, but now… it’s all too much and I can’t stop any of it. And my family? What family? I haven't spoken to Alex in weeks, and I don't even think Eliza could stand to look at me right now. If I hadn't been so stupid, so stubborn, maybe Alex would still be here and I…”

Clark stays quiet as Kara mumbles, “I just… I don’t know who I am anymore, Kal.”

“Your powers do not define you,” Clark tells her as he reaches out to place his palm on her shoulder. “Whether or not you have them does not prevent you from living an authentic life, filled with love and happiness. You have sacrificed much, Kara. You have saved this world, even if it is not your own. You’ve saved me, too. And I know, I know that I’ve not been the best mentor. I should have been there for you when you first arrived. You were scared and alone, and I abandoned you.” Kara's eyes water as Clark shrugs sadly.

"The only good thing I did was give you to the Danvers," Clark says as she looks to her with a half-smile. "You may be my cousin, but they are more of a family than I have ever been to you, Kara. And I know things are rough with Alex right now, but she loves you."

Kara flings herself into his chest, sobbing as he holds her. “I feel so alone… without Alex… I’m lost, Kal. I’m so damned lost.”
“Alex is out there, Kara. I’m sure of it,” Clark hums as he pecks the top of her head, holding her tightly—but not too tightly, Kara realizes as she burrows into him. “You just have to hold on hope. It’s what we Kryptonians, and even the Earthlings, all rely on. Hope.”

Kara stays quiet as Clark leans back to look at her seriously.

“You have to make a decision, Kara. You can keep living your life like this, without a purpose, or you can choose to move forward, to take whatever you have and to turn it into something more… something great,” Clark says, tucking a strand of hair behind her hair. “You’re not just Supergirl, Kara. You’re more than a cape and that symbol on your chest. You are a woman, a girlfriend, and a sister.”

“I don’t know,” Kara says, looking down. “I just feel… unprepared.”

Clark looks down at her a few moments before he takes a deep breath and gazes up at the sky. His arms wrap around Kara’s shoulders as he gets her to look back up at him with an encouraging hum.

“You know,” Clark says, reaching into his suit for a small slip of paper. “There’s this place you should check out if you’re feeling lost. It’s a place that might just remind you of home.”

Kara takes the slip, wary, but not unresponsive to the idea. "Kal, I…"

“Just give it a chance,” Clark says, leaning forward to peck her hair again. “No pressure, Kara.”

Kara takes the note and folds it into her pocket before she gazes up at her cousin with a small smile. She tucks herself into his arms once more, closing his eyes at the comfort his strength provides. If she focuses hard enough, she can feel Krypton itself.

Eventually, Clark steps back giving her a small nod.

“You can do this, Kara—with or without Supergirl.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for all the lovely comments so far!! Y’all are great <3

Don’t worry, Alex will still have time to deal with her grief over her baby, but just not right now.
Chapter Summary

Trouble continues to brew in National City and Alex pays someone a visit.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warnings for Gore and Graphic Depictions of Death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lena is working through some old files, trying to link this Black Kryptonite case to Project X. She needs to figure out the connection, but with Kara’s recent… detachment, so to say, she’s been distracted. She knows that she should be back in National City to help rebuild and recover post-attack, but Kara needs her.

“Hey.”

Lena turns around at the soft murmur of Kara’s voice. She smiles at the sight of her girlfriend, setting aside her tablet to nod.

“Hi baby,” Lena says softly, “how are you?”

“I’m better,” Kara says with a soft smile, padding into the room. “Kal flew by and popped in. He… he said somethings that had me thinking about all of what has happened… you know… with my powers.”

“And?” Lena asks as Kara comes to sit next to her at the desk.

“I think I’ve spent so much of my life defining who I am because of what Krypton gave me,” Kara says, looking to her palms. “Doing so, I forgot that being powerless isn’t a bad thing. I mean… you build incredible machines and technology. Alex puts away criminals and thugs, meta-humans and demons, and she doesn’t have a power. Maggie is an incredible detective and she can solve cases so quickly.”

Lena smiles at the growing strength in Kara’s words as she looks up, the defeat wiped from her face as she smiles. “I realized, thinking about the two of you, and countless others, that I don’t need to be Supergirl to help save our city. I can do other things.”

“Baby,” Lena whispers as she leans forward to capture Kara’s lips in a slow kiss. “You have always been incredible, with and without your powers. You are the love of my life… you are my hero, Kara.”

Kara sighs into the kiss, reaching up to weave her fingers through the soft cotton of Lena’s sweater. Sensing the urgency, Lena pulls back for only a moment as she tugs the offending fabric off and flings it away. They both stand, reattaching their lips as Lena deepens the kiss, her hands tangling
in the hem of Kara’s shirt.

“I need you,” Kara gasps into her mouth after Lena’s lifted the shirt from her frame. “Please, Lena, I want you. Only you.”

“I’m yours,” Lena hums wistfully, kissing her lover tenderly. “Take me to bed, Kara.”

Without hesitation, Kara reaches under her and lifts, allowing Lena’s legs to lock around that powerful frame.

While Kara might not have her powers anymore, she was no less capable of carrying Lena over to their bedroom and settling her gently upon the sheets. Lena, now faced with those hard abs, places kiss after kiss into those lean rings of muscle, holding her close.

“I love you,” Lena breathes into her skin, “never forget that.”

Kara gasps as Lena’s nimble fingers undo the latch of her belt before tugging open the button on her jeans. Lena tugs them down, alongside her underwear, leaving Kara bare and wet just for her.

Placing a kiss on her pelvic bone, Lena takes a moment to breathe.

And when she gets her first taste of Kara, it’s like the world explodes into pieces and she’s reaching for the stars and the moon.

It's perfect.

* * *

Alex keeps staring up at the screen projected on her bedroom wall with an empty gaze.

She looks to the small holographic of the fetus—her fetus—and she hangs her head.

A bottle of half-empty scotch sits beside her, the alcohol doing nothing considering her newly rearranged genetics. In her hand she holds her phone, a number already dialled in and ready to press call, but Alex can't work up the courage to press the green button.

Coward, she thinks bitterly as she uses her free hand to down more than a glass'-worth of scotch in a single gulp. Pathetic.

"Alex," she hears Kelex warn gently. "While your genetic wiring can withstand large doses of alcohol without inebriation, your liver—"

"I don't care," Alex mutters as she sets aside the near-empty bottle. "It's my body, and I will handle it."

"I understand you to be grieving—"

"Shut up," Alex snarls, growling up at the holographic face in front of her. "You have no idea what I am feeling."

Kelex pauses, his face neutral before he speaks again. "While I am not a living being and do not possess 'emotions', per se, I can comprehend the magnitude of a loss. You lost your child, whereas I have lost my entire civilization, bare for two Kryptonians."

"You didn't father them yourself," Alex spits angrily as tears well in her eyes. "They weren't yours."
"As the world's matrix, they were."

Alex's head snaps up again, swallowing thickly. "What do you mean?"

Kelex pauses before he begins again. "On Earth, reproduction is more primitive, with physical copulation required to induce conception. On Krypton, children were conceived through the matrix. My system overlooked the entirety of the Krypton fetal database. I was responsible for gestating them, for carrying essential nutrients and stimulation to their pods, and to ensure their survival."

There's a small pause before Kelex quietly adds, "and I failed."

Alex knows Kelex is not sentient enough to experience proper grief, but she knows the tone in his voice like her own.

"The only way to allow Kara Zor-El and Kal-El the chance to escape was to delay the destruction of Krypton by 14.5 seconds," Kelex explains, his voice straining slightly. "In order to give them time, I was programmed to destroy all of the birthing units on the planet."

Alex clutches the phone in her hand tight enough for the screen to crack as Kelex looks to her with a blank expression.

"I killed an entire planet, Alex, to save two Kryptonians. Those children—the children I helped raise—died because of me."

"You were programmed," Alex says, her voice cracking. "That means—"

"My software allows for me to override commands that do not meet the Kryptonian philosophy."

Alex gulps, blinking back her tears as she looks to the robot with dread. "Which is…?"

"The preservation of Krypton," Kelex finishes calmly. Frowning, Alex leans back on the couch.

"But, you just said—"

"Krypton is not a planet," Kelex replies, "it is life."

Alex mulls over the words and realizes the implications with a sharp sense of pity and sadness.

"So, by saving Kara and Clark, you saved Krypton?" She asks, looking back up. Kelex waits a moment before nodding.

"Statistically, they were the only ones who stood a chance at survival. Our life and culture relied on their survival."

"How could you do that?" Alex asks, rubbing at her face. "How could you make that decision?"

Kelex waits until she looks up before he replies, "the same way you do and have always done."

"I'm not programmed to do anything—"

"No," Kelex says, blinking slowly. "But you would sacrifice anything to save Kara, even yourself."

"Anyone would do that," Alex growls back defensively. "Ask anyone at the DEO. Kara's safety is a priority."
"And do you honestly think that anyone, aside from you, would be willing to risk their life—the lives of billions—for her?"

Alex clenches her teeth, trying to force out an answer, but she can't. Instead, she looks down at her phone to the number in her hand. She looks to the picture on the screen and feels her heart splinter deeper inside of her chest. She could easily just press the button…

But she can't.

"You hesitate because you want to protect her," Kelex says softly, "even if it comes at the cost of rupturing your relationship."

"I love her," Alex chokes out as tears slide down her cheeks. "I wouldn't be able to cope if I lost her, even if she hated me."

"And yet by delaying your communication, you are losing her."

Alex sniffles, shaking her head bitterly. "It's complicated."

"It is," Kelex affirms, "and it is also why you couldn't answer my question from before."

Alex looks up, her eyes itchy and sore from crying as Kelex offers her a sympathetic shrug.

"When we protect the ones we love, we often mistake our distance for protection. Your avoidance does more harm than good."

Alex looks away, wiping away a stray tear. "For an AI, you're oddly humanistic."

"I was programmed——"

"Yeah," Alex scoffs as she sighs and closes her eyes. "I know."

There is a small moment of silence before Kelex speaks up once more.

"You need to call her, Alex. She needs to know the truth about what happened. And... and you need to apologize."

Alex lets the words wash over her before she blinks open her eyes and looks down at the cracked screen of her phone. The numbers blare up at her and she sighs as she reaches out and clicks the phone shut. She sets it aside and rubs her face, riddled with guilt.

"Tomorrow," Alex murmurs quietly before she stands and gathers her things, "I will call her tomorrow. I promise."

"Where are you going?" Kelex asks, worry filling his monotonous tone. "It is late, Alex, it is dangerous——"

"I need answers," Alex says as she shucks on her leather jacket before staring at his face determinedly. "I need purpose."

"But——"

"I have to do this," Alex whispers, her voice cracking. "I need to do this."

* * *
When Maggie opens her door to incessant knocking at three in the morning, the last person she's expecting to see is Alex Danvers.

Alex Danvers, a woman that until right now, Maggie had been losing hope was still alive.

“Alex?” Maggie asks in disbelief as she lets go of the door and rakes in the sight of her weary ex. “Jesus, where have you been?”

Alex sighs, running a hand through her hair as she lingers in the foyer nervously. “Tough week. I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Don’t want to talk about it?” Maggie guffaws as she crosses her arms. There are a multitude of emotions crossing through her mind. “Alex, we all thought you were dead. Kara thought you were dead. She called me and she said she heard your heart stop beating.”

Alex’s head shoots up at that. “Kara’s powers are back?”

Maggie’s face falls as she sighs, looking away. “No. They had some sort of glitch where it all came back and now they’re gone.”

“Oh,” Alex murmurs sadly, “I… I probably should have called her.”

“Yeah,” Maggie says, trying to keep the bite from her voice. “You should have, Alex. What the Hell were you thinking? You could have been dead… I… I could have lost you…” Maggie bites her lip, willing herself to not get emotional as she looks at her former fiancée.

Alex just nods bleakly. “Yeah, I know. I… I’m sorry.”

Maggie takes her in, then. She gazes at the dark circles under her eyes and the slouching frames and while Alex has always had a perpetual look of fatigue on her face, this is something else entirely. Alex looks lost, and there’s an unfocused cloudiness in her eyes.

She looks… haunted.

“Alex?” Maggie asks, her tone softening. “Everything alright?”

Alex looks back up at her, tears in her eyes. “I…”

“Come inside,” Maggie says, moving aside so Alex can come into her apartment. Alex hesitates a moment before she enters slowly, her eyes flickering around the room like a panicked animal.

Maggie shuts the door behind her as she looks at Alex’s hunched-over form. “Danvers?” Maggie calls her out again. “Hey… why don’t we sit down?”

There’s a flinch that Alex fails at masking before she relaxes at Maggie’s words. Alex nods as Maggie reaches out to gently clasp their hands together, before leading them over to the couch. Maggie reaches up, gently curling Alex’s choppy hair away from her face. It’s then, as she gets a closer look, she sees faint bruises on Alex’s cheek and the barely-there scar running along her left temple. Her eyes also look different, now that she looks at her up-close without the initial shock. When Maggie’s eyes rake downwards, she takes in the slight change in Alex's shoulders, broader than they'd originally been, and judging by their new eye-to-eye levels, a height change?

Alex is almost thirty-one, and Maggie was certain humans stopped growing in their twenties?
But she doesn't dwell on the anatomical changes for right now, because her eyes linger on more scars around her collar and neck.

“How did these happen?” Maggie asks in concern. Alex flinches, shaking her head as she leans forward, almost in Maggie’s space.

“No,” Alex murmurs. “I really can’t talk about it.”

“Alex,” Maggie whispers as she gently traces over the scars with a mixture of interest and concern. “You’ve never been like this before.”

“I just… I came to talk to you about something… something else,” Alex says as she looks up with a dejected expression. “It’s about those statistical reports. I… I wanted to know… is it still true? The crime levels, the rates of homicide and murder, are they that high?”

Maggie frowns, but at Alex’s insistent gaze, she sighs, “yeah, they are. Why?”

Alex reaches over then, clasping their hands together tight enough to make Maggie wince slightly.

“I need to see it,” she says, “I need you to show me, Maggie.”

* * *

Maybe it is a bad idea, Alex thinks with destitution, but she can’t tear her eyes away from the destruction outside the police car window. There are children weeping, fires burning in dumpsters, the city in tatters. It looks like a war zone, much less a metropolis.

She turns to Maggie. “How many displaced since the attacks?”

Maggie grips the wheel tighter. “A little over five hundred.”

“Fuck,” Alex growls, fighting the rage which swells through her. “And nothing has been done to help with relocation efforts or crime reduction? What about protection?” Alex asks the question with fire in her voice as she watches a man scrounging through trash.

“You're barking up the wrong tree, Danvers. This isn't the DEO. We don’t have funding or resources,” Maggie replies sadly. “Most of the money is going towards structural repairs and campaign propaganda. The election is coming up, and this is apparently great fuel for political shift.” Alex watches as a woman huddles on the street with her child, trying to layer blanket after blanket, crying miserably.

“It doesn’t help that Supergirl is gone,” Maggie says, and Alex can tell she’s trying to tread lightly. “Without her there to provide a sense of fear, people are starting to act however they want. National City is turning into the streets of Gotham, Alex. To think I escaped it…”

Maggie takes a breath before turning her gaze towards the poverty and violence around them. “The mayor doesn’t care about this, and neither do my higher ups. I know for a fact NCPD’s commissioner is getting bribed. Supergirl helped keep this city safe, but who knew that it really needed saving from itself. Besides, to everyone downtown, these people are scum—desperate low-lives with no hope.”

“So what?” Alex croaks. “They take matters into their own hands?”

Maggie purses her lips before pausing. “Someone has to. Around here, no one is looking out for you; all you’ve got is yourself.”
You could change that.

Alex’s head snaps up at the familiar voice of Kelex in her ear.

Yes, Kelex says, I can communicate with you without the device.

Alex is still startled. “H-How?”

Maggie frowns. “What?”

You do not need to speak aloud to communicate with me, Alex.

Alex swallows thickly, nodding apologetically to Maggie. “Sorry, I just… I was lost in my own thoughts and didn’t realize I spoke.”

“Oh,” Maggie says with an arched brow. “If you insist.”

So, I just, do this then? Alex thinks, blushing in embarrassment.

Precisely, Kelex replies, the chip has fused, Alex. We are one, now, until our connection disconnects when you pass. Alex grunts.

Morbid much?

Realistic, Kelex corrects gently, and right now, you could use this picture of reality to convince yourself of your potential. Look around you, Alex. These people—innocent people—are suffering. You can help them. Bring them the justice they so desperately seek.

How? Alex asks, looking out to see a man, face-down and covered with a white sheet covering his body as police investigators wait for a coroner to arrive. I’m not a superhero, I’m just… me.

Oh, but Alex, Kelex encourages her, you could be so much more.

Before Alex can ponder it, the radio cackles to life.

“Calling all available units, please be advised. This is Office Mendez with a 10-33 by 52nd and 14th. We’ve got a gunman with fourteen hostages down in a crack house. The victims are children. Requesting all available units to respond immediately.”

“Shit,” Maggie growls as she quickly radios back, “10-4, Detective Sawyer show me going. Give us ten minutes and we’ll be there. Hold tight, Mendez.” A faint ‘copy that’ parrots back, and before Alex knows it, Maggie has switched on the sirens and is pulling forward.

“You good to help or do you need to stay in the car?” Maggie asks as she swerves past another car. “I don’t know the sit-rep and while I know you know your way around weapons, I need to know if you’re okay?” Alex just grits her teeth and nods her head determinedly.

“If you’ve got a spare gun, I’m all yours.”

* * *

Kara gazes over to where Lena is resting beside her with a content smile on her face. She’s curled into the crook of Kara’s arm, her hair tickling the smooth curve of her bicep as she shifts forward. She wants to feel happy, to live in bliss, but something gnaws at her mind.

“What are you thinking about?” Lena drawls sleepily, her fingers reaching out to splay themselves
over Kara’s waist. Kara hums as she nuzzles closer, pressing a soft kiss to the corner of her lips. She tries to distract herself in Lena's warmth, but she feels unsteady.

“About how much I love you,” Kara replies, though her voice is strained. “And how I’m lucky.”

“Lucky?” Lena murmurs, glancing up. “Why lucky, Kara?”

“Because,” Kara says as she tucks a stray piece of hair behind Lena’s ear. “I love, and am loved, by the most brilliant woman alive. A woman, who was willing to give up everything to help me heal, even when she herself was struggling. I’m lucky I have you. I love you.”

Lena’s eyes mist and Kara pulls her closer. “Lena…”

The feeling spreads deeper, like a poison, to the point where Kara flinches.

“Sweetheart?” Lena asks, kissing her neck. She can hear the concern in her girlfriend's voice. “What is it?”

Kara draws a deep breath before she sets her jaw, no longer to ignore the unsettling pit in her stomach.

“We have to go home,” Kara murmurs as the sinking feeling in her gut spreads, “I think war is coming.”

* * *

Maggie pulls in across the street to where the crime was called in. She sees a few downed cops already being dragged away, and by the looks of it, the situation only seems to be getting worse. The entire area is covered in broken glass, blood, and torn apart body parts. Alex trails behind her as the two of them make their way towards the officer in charge, noting the pale discomfort on his face.

“Mendez,” Maggie greets him as they cower behind a police car, trying to tune out the sounds of rapid gun-fire. “Give me a sit-rep.”

“Not good,” Mendez says worriedly. “Two guys got inside, found one of the kids beaten to a pulp. The other thirteen are hidden in the house somewhere, but he’s got it trapped with bombs and knives. Three of our guys were taken down… one didn’t make it, poor sod.”

“What’s are plan of action?” Alex asks from behind her. Mendez glances over Maggie’s shoulder in confusion at the sight of Alex.

“Who’s this, Maggie?”

“I’m with the FBI” Alex smoothly lies, reaching into her pocket and flashing her fake badge before she adjusts the grip on the gun. “I was riding with Detective Sawyer when the call came in. I’m within jurisdiction and I can provide additional help if you need it.”

Mendez just shakes his head. “You don’t need to tell me your whole life-story, lady. I’ll take all the help I can get. This thing has already blown so far out of control. We can’t get any more cops or detectives down here because of an arson call a block ahead.”

“Without dying on your way in?” He asks. “God knows.”

“Let us try,” Alex pleads, “we have to do something.”

Mendez looks between them before he waves forward. “Go on, then.”

Maggie nods and she turns back to Alex. “Okay,” she says, “this is our plan of action. You take the front, and I’ll cover the back. If you see something suspicious, you walk around. You got it?”

“Got it,” Alex says, “let’s go.”

Maggie gives her one final nod before they both part ways. Mendez signals for some of the cops to give her covering fire as she jogs up towards the house. She manages to roll towards the front door. Judging by the singed wood, the trap has already been diffused.

She hears a male voice yelling from within, followed by Alex’s own shouting. Maggie prays that Alex stays safe while she causes the diversion, and she bolts into the house. Her heart stops when she sees the mutilated body of the child Mendez talked about in the hallway, his eyes glassy and grey as blood seeps around him.

“Fuck,” Maggie hisses as she trudges further into the house, making sure to check each doorway and hall as she pads further. She hears some muffled cries and follows the sound down the set of stairs towards the basement. She’s careful as she bounds down, before she finally makes her way down to the bottom step with a small creak.

Maggie barely ducks in time before a swinging blade whistles in her direction before lodging itself into the wood. She looks back up and turns on the flashlight atop the muzzle of her pistol.

The image before her makes her gag.

Children’s bodies are strewn about, their limbs torn, and their eyes ripped from their skulls. There are twelve of them hanging from ropes in the ceiling, like a grotesque human-version of cattle on hooks. She swallows her bile as she hears the muffled cry again.

“Hello?” Maggie calls out desperately. “I’m here to help!”

The muffled crying gets louder as Maggie continues further. Her flashlight catches the bottom of someone’s knees, before she slowly tilts the gun upwards. Maggie’s heart stops at the gruesome sight.

A girl, no older than ten, is strapped to the floor with some kind of apparatus tied around her waist. Her mouth is gagged with soiled cloth and she looks beaten and starved. Maggie goes to run forward when the child shakes her head desperately, crying louder.

When she steps forward, the crying intensifies.

And then, Maggie makes out what she’s trying to say.

“Stop.”

“Maggie!” She hears Alex’s voice call out from atop the stairs. “I subdued him—he’s in custody with Mendez, did you find the kids?”

But Maggie can’t reply. Her eyes are trained on the blinking green LED lights strapped to the little
girl’s waist. Footsteps thunder down the steps as she hears Alex’s voice growing closer.

“Maggie, the—*what the fuck*?”

She feels Alex’s anger washing over in waves. “Maggie…”

The crying from the girl intensifies when Alex comes to stand next to her, finally following what had caused Maggie to freeze.

There are numbers on the screen.

“It’s a bomb,” Alex whispers, “we have to save her.”

The time ticks down, and Maggie is still frozen.

Alex goes to move forward, but the screen flashes red.

Five seconds remaining.

Maggie has tears streaming down her cheeks as when she looks up, the last thing she sees are Alex’s wild brown eyes widening with fear as the room suddenly closes in on them. Alex turns her head once more to face the child, before the time ticks to a halt.

The last thing Maggie feels before she’s splattered in blood and fire, is the firm weight of Alex throwing herself atop her body.

* * *

October 22nd, 2018

After the final round of questioning, Alex and Maggie finally head back to Maggie’s car. They’d been at the NCPD headquarters for nearly eight hours. Donovan Sanders, the man who had escaped with barely a shiner for all that he’d done, was being held in the facility. He’d laughed through their interrogation, spat in their faces, and took pride in the horror he’d created, the lives he’d stolen.

It makes Alex sick.

“It’ll be a capital punishment,” Alex says as she rubs at her face when the car pulls to a red light. “He doesn’t stand a chance.” Maggie lets her hands drop from the steering wheel, sighing sadly.

“The guy was rich,” Maggie offers, “he’s got the money to afford top lawyers. Plus, he’s going against the state, which is already corrupt enough at it is. I don’t think it will be capital.”

Alex turns to her in shock. “He murdered *children*, Maggie. *Children*!”

“I know,” Maggie growls back, rolling the car forward as the light changes, “but I can’t change the law or the system. It’s corrupt. Sick people get away with what they want because our government is too focused on making profit to understand how we are suffering.”

Alex runs a hand through her hair, shaking her head. “Those children… they never got to live their lives, grow up, fall in love. That asshole had every damned thing and he took it all away from them. He deserves to die, Maggie. Nothing less.”

Maggie stays quiet. “I don’t know if that’s justice, Alex.”
“Maggie—”

“Taking the life of one does not erase the deaths of many.”

Alex’s eyes narrow. “It’s repentance. It’s what is owed to these people.”

“It’s vengeance,” Maggie snarls back, her voice cracking as she stares into Alex’s cold gaze. “Or is that above the law for you?”

Alex only growls again. “I’m serious, Maggie. He should be dead.”

“And what does killing him do?” Maggie asks, her voice cracking as she pulls the car over. “Does it bring those kids’ lives back? Does it change the fact that we had to call in fourteen grieving parents to tell them that their child will never wake-up again, that there weren’t even bodies left for them to recover? Does it change any of that, huh? No, it doesn’t, and you know it, Alex. You think that everything has a simple black-and-white fix, but you don’t get it, do you? This world is different. This world, justice doesn’t exist. It’s all a lie.”

Alex looks on in silence, dumbfounded by Maggie’s reaction.

Sighing, Maggie unlocks the door. “It’s been a long night, Danvers. I have to head back to finish some reports, and you need to sleep.”

“That’s it, then?” Alex scoffs, misty-eyed. “You’re throwing in the towel because the system is rigged? That isn’t like you, Mags.”

“Because you know me so well, isn’t that right?” Maggie spits back, angry and hurt. “You don’t dictate my thoughts or beliefs, Alex.”

“Someone needs to take a stand,” Alex says as she exits the car. “If we let this slide—if we don’t send a message—more children will needlessly lose their lives than the ones tonight. Their slaughter will be in vain if we allow this to break loose. The city will burn.”

“Then let it!” Maggie shouts back, her voice cracking as she looks to the shell of the woman she once knew. “Because we have no one left to save us, Alex. Supergirl is gone, the police and the government are crooked, and we have nothing left to give. There is nothing.”

Alex watches on, heartbroken as Maggie wipes at her eyes before settling back in the car. She eyes Alex one last time before reaching over to close the door. The window rolls as Maggie gives her a half-hearted, “goodnight, Danvers”, before heading off into the night.

Alex watches her go, unsettled with the pit in her gut.

Kelex’s voice rings clear in her head again, drowning out the sounds of sirens and blood and death—

You have the power to change this world, Alex.

You have the power to save them from more pain.

You have the power to bring them justice.
Sorry this came a day later than expected -- I had some medical problems I had to sort through. Thanks for all the comments and feedback so far! For those of you wondering about the Kara & Alex sibling moments, they are coming don't fret! Their relationship actually starts to rebuild itself starting in the next chapter, I promise. It isn't an easy road, but they do mend their relationship and there are plenty of lovely sibling moments to look forward to.

Just hold out through one more chapter of angst!! :)
Some nights, the nightmares are violent.
Some nights, Reign and Ruby stand above her, clutching the mutilated body of her child like it's a toy for them to tease, and she's a hungry dog. They laugh and snicker and wave her around like a flag to represent her failures.

Some nights, the nightmares are subtle.
Some nights, it's Kara pleading for her to stay, to help her through the pain. Other nights it's Maggie instead, standing at the door, whispering words, questioning why she was never enough, why she always had to have more.

Some nights, she can handle it.
Some nights, she can't.
Tonight is one of the latter ones.
She lays awake, a cold sweat beading down her forehead as she replays the events of the past few hours over and over again until she can make out nothing more. The darkness is chilling, and yet her body doesn't shiver. She stays, still and comatose, as images flash through her brain, assault her eyelids, force her to stay awake against all odds.

You are stressed.

Alex grits her teeth. "Are you always going to make a comment on my current state?"

Kelex pauses a moment before he speaks again. I am a part of you now.

Alex rolls her eyes and swallows thickly. "Great. As if my own self-destructive thoughts weren't enough."
There's a silence in the room, and Alex suddenly understands why Kara struggled so much when she first arrived on Earth. She can hear everything, from the dog barking at a car alarm ten miles away, to the cluster-fuck of screams and cries, the laughter and the voices, the rumble of engines and the dinging of telephone calls. She hears the static of a thousand televisions, the raised voices of parents arguing about superficial things while their children whine.

"Fuck," Alex mutters as she clutches at her head. "I... I can't make it stop."

*Adjustment usually takes a few days.*

"Thanks," Alex says as she shakes her head and swings her legs off the bed. "I'll just not sleep... again."

Kelex doesn't reply as Alex flicks on the light and squints up at the clock. It's nearly four in the morning and this is the third sleepless night she's had in a row. She maneuvers around the mess of empty scotch and whiskey bottles littered around her bed as she grabs at her towel. She tosses it over her arm as she makes her way to the bathroom.

When she steps inside, she avoids the mirror while she turns on the tap for the shower. Steam begins to fill the room as Alex peels off her tank top and boxers before stepping into the scalding spray, hardly flinching at the heat.

It's been so long since she'd last been reminded of what this kind of sheer loneliness and pain once felt like.

It was years ago, when she was flunking out of medical school and losing her Goddamn mind.

It was years ago, when one Director Hank Henshaw saved her stoned, drunk, high ass from a jail cell. When he posted bail and told her that he made a promise to her father to keep her safe, to keep her from losing herself.

A job. More specifically, *the* job.

Alex dips her head under the water and closes her eyes as she remembers the brutal training. First, it was physical strength conditioning. Going toe to toe with aliens twice her size, breaking every bone in her body and having to lie about being clumsy to her sister and mother on the odd occasion they would visit. She would train for twelve hours in a small room, working out until her muscles burned, until she vomited, until she passed out from exhaustion.

Then, it came the emotional training.

"Tell me," Hank had told her one day as she laid curled up on a mat, "what would you sacrifice for your sister?"

The answer?

Well, it's no different to the answer she would still give today.

Hank told her that being close to Kara meant that she was a target, that anyone who had a problem with her Kryptonian sister was likely to go after her first. She was trained to withstand all forms of torture, from physical beatings to emotional and psychological abuse. She was pushed to her extremes, forced to escape each nightmare.

And then, there was the golden question.
"Would you kill for her?"

Alex grits her teeth as she leans her head against the linoleum of her shower, holding back the fire growing within her as she recreates every lost life, every speck of blood that's fallen on her hands since she first started at the DEO. She remembers the first life she'd taken, how she had cried in J'onn's arms, apologizing over and over again until her voice went raw. She remembers lying to Kara, assuring her calmly it was just a really bad break up, but not being able to look her in the eye, because for God's sake, Alex was meant to save lives, she was en route to being a doctor.

Alex blinks open her eyes, letting her tears mix with the water of the shower.

Saving lives was never her job.

Protecting her sister at all costs, that was her job.

Even if it costs her everything.

Earth may be Alex's planet, but Kara's her whole Goddamn world.

But even she has her limits.

Alex turns off the faucet and wraps herself in a towel before stepping out of the tub. She clears some fog from the glass of the mirror and stares at herself in the reflection. Her eyes cast over the hollowness in her cheeks, the new black specks in her eyes, and then the shaggy, overgrown length of her hair which just makes her look thin and frail.

Alex, she hears Kelex murmurs softly, you said you would do it today.

The deeper meaning is not lost on her as she looks to the small pulsing orb in her chest.

Alex murmurs as she turns away from the mirror and heads back into her living room. She hardly bothers to dry herself before throwing on an old Pink Floyd shirt and some flannel sweats. She grabs her phone and punches in the number, her finger hovering over the green button. She can feel the self-doubt bubbling inside of her like poison.

All she has to do is suck out the venom and face the truth.

With one last deep breath, Alex presses the button.

* * *

Kara is sitting on the couch, reading a book when the computer dings. She glances up at the screen and gasps.

"Incoming call from Alexandra Danvers."

"Accept," Kara blurts out, shoving the book aside. "Accept!"

The call connects and Kara feels her world stop spinning.

After what feels like an eternity, Kara is seeing her sister for the first time.

Sure, the longest time they had been apart had been back when Alex left for Stanford, but even then, Kara never felt like she ever forgot what her sister looked like. Alex was always good at lying, and there are days when the guilt still soaks into her bones for not noticing sooner, for not recognizing Alex's avoidance as pain and misery and hurt. She remembers the gauntness of Alex's
cheeks, the sadness in her voice, the fatigue in her tired eyes, her shaggy hair.

Kara always prayed to Rao she would never see that look on Alex ever again.

But maybe He didn't listen, because right now, Kara swears she's looking at a ghost.

Alex looks exhausted beyond means, judging by the bags under her eyes and depth in her cheeks. Her eyes are empty, like the life has been drained from them completely. But Kara can set aside the clear distress on Alex's grainy features for half a second because it only hits her then that Alex is alive, that Alex is breathing, that Alex's heart, no matter that she can no longer hear it, is still beating. The joy of her sister's existence is enough to shadow the pain.

“Alex,” Kara gasps, tears already welling in her eyes at the sight of her sister. “You’re… alive.”

Alex only smiles tiredly. “Hey, Kara.”

Never has Kara ever wished to have her powers more than in this moment. All she wants to do is fly across the world and to wrap Alex into her arms and never let go. Sure, they fought, and they said things they never should have, and yes Kara is hurt and she is still angry at so many things, but looking Alex now, none of that matters. Maggie was right, no matter what life throws at the Danvers' sisters, their love would always hold out and win in the end.

"Kara," Alex says, interrupting her train of thought. "I... I need to apologize."

Kara swallows down the pit in her throat as she hears the crack in Alex's voice. "No, Alex—"

"No," Alex says as she shakes her head. "I said things I didn't mean because I was upset and scared. I love you, Kara, and I always will love you, and what I did was not right. I was so scared to call you again, I was scared that I'd pushed it too far, that I had finally undone everything for good. I was... I am... so scared of losing you, Kara. I love you."

Kara can't wipe her tears away fast enough as Alex chokes down a sob and look at her with a weak, half-smile.

"I abandoned you," Alex croaks as she shakes her head guiltily. "You needed me and I abandoned you."

The two of them sit in silence for a few moments before Kara sniffles and nods.

At last, she softly murmurs, "I know, Alex."

Alex's head bows and Kara can't tear her eyes away from the way Alex's hands claw into her shaggy hair. She can tell the pale pallor of her skin is not because of the reflection of the phone screen, but because Alex is hurting and upset and her body is showing for all of it. She loves her sister to death, but she would never want it to come to that.

"I know," she repeats again, firmer this time. "And I forgive you, Alex."

At that, Alex's head jerks up in surprise, and Kara winces at the raw look in her eyes. "How?"

"How?" Kara says back, laughing sadly. "You're my sister and my best friend. Being without you for nearly four months was awful, but if I had to do that forever? I would rather die, Alex. I know you did what you did to protect me. I know you and Lena are hiding things from me and while it makes me upset, I know why you're doing it."
"You can't just—"

"I can," Kara says as she smiles at her, stronger and more confident than before. "And I will. It's done, Alex."

Kara can see Alex struggling to hold back tears again, and her heart aches because she knows the self-deprecating thoughts which are coursing through her brain. She knows, because she's spent many nights holding Alex's head in her hands, weaving her fingers through her hair, whispering soothing nothings in her ears, kissing her temple—anything to ward off the demons which plagued her sister's mind. She has been there and she knows it all.

"I want to move forward," Kara says softly, drawing back her sister's attention. "I need to, Alex. Please?"

For a second, Alex chokes, and Kara thinks she's about to burst into another hasty apology, but she quickly raises her hand. She gives Alex another measly smile and leans forward, wishing she could just fly back to her apartment.

But she can't.

Kara tries not to dwell on the sobering fact that she might not ever be able to fly to Alex again.

Luckily, Alex puts her own morbid thoughts away and steers her back to the present.

"How are things, then?" Alex asks nervously, gazing her up and down. "Do you like it in Ireland?"

Kara lets a single tear slide down her cheek as she swallows, her throat bobbing. She looks outside the window to where storm clouds are rolling in over the grassy fields. "It’s… it’s been good. Lots of hills and sheep. It’s quiet."

"That's good," Alex says with another smile. "You deserve peace and quiet after everything. I'm... sorry I didn't call."

"No," Kara chokes out, "no, it's okay, Alex. I get it. I said some pretty bad things to you and I'm sorry, too. I should have never pushed you away like that. I was being stupid and I'm so sorry. I just... losing my powers... it was hard."

The understatement of the year, more like.

"Hey," Alex coos gently, easing the sobs which had started to break free from Kara’s throat. "I’m not innocent either, Kara. I know you said you wanted to move forward, but you're not guilty in this. If anyone pushed anyone away, it was me pushing you. I was just scared. You lost your powers and I just thought... I just wanted you safe."

"I wanted the same for you," Kara says, wringing her fingers together nervously. "Without my powers, I couldn’t protect you."

"Ha." Alex chuckles airily, "we all know it’s me who protects you, baby sis."

Kara’s lips turn up into a shaky smile at the quip.

"Yeah," Kara whispers, knowing it’s the truth. "I know."

"Listen," Alex says, clearing her throat and blinking back tears. "I have to go soon, but I just... I
wanted to see your face. God, you look so beautiful, Kara. I... I missed you, so much. So much.”

“I missed you more,” Kara says, her voice cracking as she uselessly wipes at her tears. “But we won’t be apart for much longer. Lena and I are planning to come home soon. There’s some things she needs to finish up here, but we should be back in a few weeks.”

Alex’s brows raised. “Your powers came back?”

Kara flinches, looking away. She hears Alex sigh sadly.

“Lena’s working on it,” Kara mumbles as she looks back up with a distant expression. “I’m not sure if she’s managed to figure it out yet, given the stress she’s under. I’m sure you know her lab was broken into at L-Corp, the one only you and she have access to?” Alex’s face falters slightly at that, before her sister nods.

“Yeah,” Alex says quietly, “I’m going to stop by and investigate.”

“Be careful,” Kara tells her. “I know you always like to run into things guns-blazing, but Lena says that whatever broke into the lab is not a force to be reckoned with; its’ power is monstrous.”

Alex flinches slightly at that. “Right.”

She can detect some hesitation in her sister’s voice, but before she can question it, Alex offers her a half-hearted shrug and nods.

“I’ll keep you both updated on what I find.”

“Alex?” Kara asks, leaning forward on the couch. Alex pauses.

“Yes?”

Kara takes a deep breath. “I love you.”

Alex smiles again, teary-eyed. “I love you too, Kar.”

* * *

October 21st, 2018

“Alright,” Alex says as she settles down in front of her computer with a cup of steaming coffee. “I need to know the full breadth of my capabilities, Kelex. I know that I have some super strength now, but what else can I do?”

Kelex blinks back at her from the screen as her body scans are illuminated on the hologram. “Analyzing. Data generated by the microchip within you suggests that you possess the same powers as a Kryptonian. These powers present at equal or higher intensity.” Alex’s brow arches at the implication, looking down to her feet skeptically.

“So, I can… fly?” Alex asks, looking back up. Kelex nods.

“The Black Kryptonite enables you to possess the power of flight, however, there is a complication.” Alex frowns when Kelex pauses. A few more scans are brought up the screen, followed by complex calculations. Alex hums.

“What is it?”
“Due to the nature of your human physiology, flying at the height of most commercial airlines would cause your system to crash,” Kelex explains as hypothetical schematics start popping up on the screen. “You would require a suit and mask to sustain altitudes above twelve-thousand feet and speeds above two-hundred aeronautical knots. Additionally, a suit with the correct design would be able to evenly redistribute the power of the stone to your body.”

“Okay,” Alex chuckles as she leans back. “I guess I’m building a super-suit, then. The only thing is: what is compatible with Black Kryptonite? I need something highly conductive, which can self-generate and sustain my powers.” Alex starts swiping through the holograms before typing at her tablet, biting at her lip as she thinks harder.

Then, it hits her. She looks up at Kelex's unblinking face. "What about pure silver?"

“Analyzing,” Kelex says, before pulling up a series of diagrams, figures, and formulas on the screen. Alex moves them onto the schematics of the suit with a small, hesitant smile. “Pure silver would be an adequate conductive metal. However, you would not be able to withstand the electrical stimulation between the alloy and metal.”

“So, I’ll need to insulate the suit with something non-reactive and stable,” Alex muses, gazing at the formulas. She grabs at her notepad and scribbles down some chemical balancing formulas before nodding. “How about pure lead?”

Kelex pauses, runs the calculations, and then nods.

“This is acceptable.”

“Okay,” Alex says as she rubs her hands together. “Now, it’s just a matter of getting the materials. I’ll have the line the inside with something soft, something skin tight to prevent friction and chaffing against the metal. But it will still need to be breathable enough as to not overheat my skin. I could modify my current suit from the DEO to something more sleek and lightweight. I am pretty sure Winn left the design on his drive, which I can remotely hack from here.”

Kelex nods. “I would recommend a mix of polyester and lycra for the materials.”

“Right,” Alex says, standing up. “Let’s get started then.”

“Pure silver and lead can be found in the mines on the Eastern quarry, well into the mountains,” Kelex says, pulling up coordinates. Alex looks it over before glancing back to her feet. A thought crosses her mind, but she's nervous.

“Can I… fly there?” Alex asks, looking up to Kelex.

“So long as you remain under the radar, yes.”

“Right,” Alex says as she looks to her feet. “Just one thing… how exactly do I fly? Like I just jump and that’s it?”

“Flying requires complete concentration of the mind and body,” Kelex tells her as Alex shifts her weight from foot to foot with barely-contained anticipation of what's to come. “You must parse out any distractions before attempting to fly. I would also recommend doing it away from the city, in case you are unable to control your powers immediately.”

Alex takes the information in with a sharp nod. “Makes sense.”

In hindsight, it makes sense.
In reality?

Well, she's about to find out.

With one last look at the schematics on the screen, Alex takes a deep breath and goes into her living room to grab at her DEO-issued suit. She slips it on and fastens the straps before pausing and glancing at her reflection in the mirror. She bites her lip and walks over to her dresser, opening it up and scummaging for a black ski-mask.

Looking down at it, Alex gulps and swallows thickly. "I guess I'm doing this, then."

She doesn't wait for Kelex to reply before grabbing her keys and bounding out of her apartment.

* * *

Maggie is on her sixth cup of coffee of the day as she reads over the latest on the Donovan Sanders case. She rubs at her forehead tiredly as she looks down to see that the court date is tomorrow and she frowns at his plea choice.

Not-guilty under an account of mental disorder.

Tomorrow, the psych evaluation would reveal the truth.

"Detective Sawyer?"

Maggie looks up to see J'onn standing in her office doorway. "May I have a moment?"

“I thought we knew each other well enough by now for you to call me Maggie, J’onn. But yeah, come in.” Maggie sets down the report. “What brings you over to my neck of the woods? Still trying to contain your bleed inside the DEO?” J’onn shuts the door behind him as he takes a seat, a grim expression playing at his lips. Maggie frowns at his eyes.

"Alex still hasn’t reported in,” J’onn says worriedly. "I wanted to see if you had an update on her whereabouts."

"Alex?” Maggie echoes in confusion. "She was with me yesterday. What do you mean she hasn't reported in?"

J’onn’s eyes flash at the reveal and Maggie's gut twists with something harrowing. “She was?”

Maggie nods, avoiding the dread building within her. “Yeah, she helped apprehend Sanders with me.”

“Hmm,” J’onn muses over the information. “She hasn’t been to the DEO's office since she’d been caught in the para-demon case. Last I heard, not even Kara or Lena had heard from her either. I… I was convinced she might have…”

He closes his mouth and Maggie looks away.

No one needs to hear the end of that sentence.

“That’s odd,” Maggie says instead, frowning again. “Alex isn’t the one to shrug off her responsibilities, even if she’s in a shitty place.” Her response piques J'onn's interest, and she winces at his expression of sorrow and remorse.

J’onn eyes her carefully before quietly asking, “when you saw her, how was she?”
“Distraught,” Maggie replies, hanging her head as she remembers Alex's tired gaze. “She looked…
different. She wasn’t as focused as she usually is. I think with Kara being gone and city in a state of
turmoil, she feels lost.”

“And this case,” J’onn says, looking to the file. “How’d she process the results?”

She remembers the argument that followed after they’d interrogated Sanders in her car. “She
wasn’t pleased with the reality that this sick fuck probably isn’t going to be receiving a suitable
punishment,” Maggie says, glancing back up to the D.E.O. director with a frown. “She was furious,
said he deserved to die for what he did. She… spiralled, J’onn.”

“This worries me,” J’onn says. “I do not want Alex making a mistake that she will regret because
she acts in a moment of rage. I want her monitored until Sanders is placed on lock-down.
Understood?”

“Ha,” Maggie scoffs with a shake of her head. “If you think for even a second that I can keep tabs
on one Alex Danvers, you’re tripping. No one knew where she was in the last four days, not even
you. Besides, we’re not together anymore. Trying to put myself back in her space is not going to
end well for either of us, even if I do still love her.”

“Maggie,” J’onn urges, concern dripping from his tone. “Please. I… I just have a bad feeling.”

This garners Maggie’s interest. “About what? Alex?”

J’onn is quiet for a moment, before he swallows thickly.

“The world is changing, Maggie. Something is coming.”

* * *

The field is dark when Alex pulls her bike to a stop.

It’s nearly dawn, and Alex is grateful for the blissful silence which surrounds her as she swings her
leg off her bike. She walks into the field of wheat, closing her eyes as she takes in the fresh scent of
farmland and non-polluted air. She extends her fingers and allows the pads of them to brush against
the wheat as the sky bleeds orange and red.

*Listen to the beating of your heart,* Kelex tells her, *focus, Alex, on everything around you, within
you…*

Alex keeps her eyes closed as she reaches for the mask and pulls it over her face, tucking the end of
it into her suit. Her hands tremble, but she feels more alive than she has in the last few days after
talking to Kara this morning.

Alex listens to the steady drumming of her heartbeat, feeling an energy course through her frame.
It’s a dull throb starting from her chest, before it sends tendrils of warmth through her arms and
legs, and finally up the back of her neck. Alex steadies in on her body’s sensations. She pulls
herself away from everything else to focus sharply.

Then, the energy shifts, and Alex feels her heart-rate speed up.

*That’s it,* Kelex says as Alex flexes her fingers, *trust in yourself, Alex. Feel the energy and the raw
power of the stone flow through you like a river. Let it carry you like a wave and elevate you to the
stars. Let it guide you, Alex…*
Alex takes a deep breath, feeling her body brimming with energy.

And then, she opens her eyes.

Alex starts jogging at first, but then lets it turn into a run as she jumps. The first jump doesn’t go far, but she pushes through, running faster as she jumps again, feeling more height being covered at that leap. Alex grins as she continues to run, pumping her arms as she jumps again, feeling her feet hover a few minutes.

That’s it, Kelex beams in her ear, trust in yourself, Alex.

Alex runs faster, jumping again and reaching an even higher height. She jumps as soon as she hits the ground, her body launching further from the ground with each attempt. She can feel her energy practically roaring in her bloodstream as she takes another leap.

And this time, her feet don’t touch the ground again.

“I’m flying,” Alex laughs in disbelief as she looks to the ground moving below her. “Holy fucking Hell, I’m flying!” She extends her arms out in front of her like Kara often did and finds herself feeling more in control of her ability. She keeps climbing, until she’s at a pace where she can breathe but still keep a good height above the ground.

For a moment, she can just pause.

The noise, the sounds of the city, the static—it all fades into nothing.

For the first time in a long time, Alex feels a sense of peace, a sense of purpose, wash over her.

She takes it all in, letting her senses adjust to the newfound power coursing through her. She places a hand over her stomach and she looks down, her heart still sinking as she remembers the sacrifice that enabled her to do this. She closes her eyes and thinks of her Little Bean, of the girl who gave up the world to save it, and she feels determined.

Alex opens her eyes and stares at the horizon.

“Now, Kelex, where the Hell are these mines?”

* * *

October 22nd, 2018

Lena scours through the research on Kara's ancestry and the powers Kryptonians derived from Earth's yellow sun, but no matter how hard she tries, she can't figure out how to restore Kara's powers. She knows Kara's still conflicted about them coming back, but she knows better than to set aside the research on the notion of a hypothetical.

Kara deserves better than that.

Lena looks out the window to where Kara is helping herd the sheep from their pen into the barn. As much as she loves the sight of her girlfriend in this domestic, ethereal fantasy, she can't ask Kara to give up a part of her identity. As much as Supergirl was a burden to the young woman, it was also a part of her that makes Kara who she is. Lena knows that no one, not even Kara herself, could ever deny that. Helping people—saving people, that's all Kara.

With or without the cape, Kara Danvers will always be Lena Luthor's hero.
The least she can do is help her girlfriend get that part of her back.

* * *

Alex drives back through the streets where she’d been with Maggie only a few days before. She looks the scribbled list in her hand and sighs as she pulls her car up to a small side street. She powers off the engine and opens the door, exiting the vehicle.

Alex pockets the list and keeps her head down as she makes her way down the street, ignoring the looks and jeers of some of the roughened people she passes. They heckle her, spit at her feet, but Alex doesn’t pay them mind as she reaches the apartment she’d been looking for. She hops up the stairs and takes a deep breath.

And then, she knocks.

It takes a few moments, but eventually the door swings open to reveal a tired, haggard-looking woman with gaunt cheeks and pale skin. She looks exhausted, and Alex feels herself wince sympathetically. The woman eyes her up and down, before her gaze settles on the bronzed flash of her badge sitting on her hips.

Then, the woman looks up and rasps, “why are you here?”

The question takes Alex aback as she hears the sadness in her voice. Swallowing her nerves, Alex gives her a nod.

“My name is Special Agent Alex Danvers of the FBI,” she introduces herself. “I was one of the responding officers at the scene yesterday with your daughter.” The woman sighs, looking down as she rubs at her forehead tiredly.

“Look, can’t you leave me alone to grieve? I swear, I’ll answer your questions at some point, but right now, I can’t—”

“No,” Alex softly interrupts. “I’m not here to question you.

The woman looks up at her, sneering. “Then why are you here, Agent?”

“I…,” Alex chokes out. “I wanted to offer my condolences. For your daughter, Charlie.”

“Condolences?” The woman spits. “I don’t need your fucking pity. I don’t need you to stand here and make me relive the pain I felt yesterday when that fucking bastard took my little girl from me. And you can’t bring her back to me.”

Alex takes the barrage with a steady gaze. The woman looks up to her, tears welling in her eyes as she shoves a finger into Alex’s chest, barely moving her as her bottom lip starts to quiver.

“I lost my baby girl,” the woman chokes out, “because no one was there to help her. No one was there to tell her she would be okay. She died, scared and alone and tied up by that monster. No one stopped him from doing what he did. And now I have nothing left. My home is empty, my family is dead, and I have nothing. So what do you want?”

Unconsciously, Alex winds her arm around her own stomach.

“Have you lost a child?” The woman asks sharply. “Do you know what it feels like to hear her heart stop beating?”
Yes. I do.

“No,” Alex replies sadly, looking away. “I’m sorry.”

The woman hangs her head defeatedly, reaching for the doorknob.

“Please,” she begs softly, “please… just leave me alone.”

* * *

October 23rd, 2018

"This is Lara Daniels reporting for National City Eyewitness News, where the trial of Donovan Sanders is about to begin. Sanders is pleading not guilty to a series of charges against him involving murder and homicide. The public is gathered around the National City courthouse today in a rage, demanding justice for their lost loved ones after this horrific event that ended in the mutilation of over a dozen children, both of alien and human descent…"

Kara's eyes well with tears as she watches the news reporter's voice carry over from the television screen. She knows Lena had left it on low in the hopes she would not catch on, but she wanted to ask Lena about attending a session at the centre with her when she heard the static of the television. She barely stifles a gasp as she looks to the horde of people protesting outside of the courthouse, some crying madly while others were yelling for Sanders' death.

But then, the reporter's voice draws her attention again and she feels her heart sink.

"With the current crime situation in National City coming to an all-time pandemic, it begs the question, where is Supergirl?" The reporter asks, and Kara feels as though she's staring straight into her soul through the camera.

The camera cuts to an alien holding a picture of his daughter as Lara hands him the mic.

"Supergirl promised she would protect us, to protect all life, but she abandoned us in our darkest hour," he spits angrily into the camera, holding out the photo. "My little girl looked up to her, said she wanted to be just like her. I know that in her last moments she was pleading for her to come, because she always told me that all you had to do is call, and Supergirl would come. But she didn't. She didn't come, and now my precious baby is gone. She's gone…"

Kara can hardly breathe as a few more people give their testimonials, spitting on her name and blaming her for not stopping this atrocity from happening. Their voices all blur together as she feels her knees tremble. She slides down against the wall, her heart sinking as she hears Lena's stifled sobs from where she is hunched over on the couch.

"She's not a hero," she hears another woman snarl, "she's a coward."

Kara looks to her hands, trying to will away the noise, to remember why she couldn't help, that she's powerless.

But it doesn't work.

The guilt still settles deep within her bones, threatening to kill her from the inside out.

Because, deep down, Kara knows that they're all right.

She abandoned them.
“Why am I assigned to be here?” Maggie asks as she adjusts the straps around her Kevlar vest. “Surely this is a conflict of interest considering I was on the scene.” After strapping her gun in place, she looks up to J’onn.

“Donovan Sanders has generated a buzz in the community,” he says as the two of them look up to see a black transit van pull up outside of the police station, flanked by two cop cars. “Both humans and aliens are enraged that he might get off on a lighter sentence than anticipated. They want his head, and they’ll fight for it. I’ve already been warned that we have protester at the courthouse. Some had to be detained because of violent outbursts.”

“He deserves it,” Maggie grumbles as she follows J’onn into the holding area, grimacing at the sight of a smirking Sanders staring back at her in his orange jumpsuit. “Look at that sick fuck. He’s so proud of himself and his actions.”

“Killing makes us no better than him,” J’onn warns her gently, resting his palm on her shoulder. “We must be smart about this. I’ve got agents in the crowd in case anyone is planning a revolt. I’ll coordinate with them from afar.”

Maggie only sighs and nods, rubbing at her head as she listens to Sanders’ cocky words in the distance. “Let’s just get him out of here and we can worry about the rest later.” J’onn nods as they both step into the cell and slap the metal cuffs on Sanders’ wrists. Maggie cranks them extra tight, taking pleasure in the small wince Sanders gives.

“Suck it up,” Maggie hisses, leaning back. “Your ride’s here, bastard.”

“Oh good,” Sanders practically purrs as he’s lead out of the holding room and down towards the entrance of the station. “I only wish your little friend were with us too. She gave me quite the shiner—caught me by surprise. I might say, it was a pleasant change to see a woman with such a firm grip.” Maggie growls at the suggestive comment.

“Get in the car,” Maggie growls at him as one of the agents opens the back door. She shoves him in, ignoring his sadistic laughter. His eyes are beady and glittering with arrogance as Maggie reaches for the seatbelt roughly.

After securing him to his seat, Maggie slams the door in his face before moving to sit in the passenger seat. J’onn sits in the driver’s seat, powering on the engine as the convoy starts to roll out towards their final destination.

Onto the courthouse they go.

* * *

Sparks flicker as Alex finishes welding the last piece of melted down and reformed lead onto the outer casing of her helmet. Aside from the small television in the background, the storage locker-turned-makeshift workshop is dark and musty with the scent of burnt metal. Alex lifts her welding mask and wipes at the sweat on her brow before reaching for the remote. She sets aside the tool and then stands before the television screen with a deep scowl.

“Donovan Sanders, the man currently on trial for the murder and mutilation of fourteen children and adolescents has just arrived at the NCSC, flanked by high-ranking officials and detectives from the NCPD. He’s being led in by a detective and officer who were reportedly on scene with him: Margaret Sawyer and Rick Mendez, respectively.”
Alex looks to the grainy screen at the sight of Maggie tugging along a grinning Sanders up the steps of the supreme court hall. Protesters are gathered along the side, barely held back by police officers as they shout lewd and vile things in the man’s direction. Alex can even see Vasquez in the corner, and she knows the DEO is also involved.

The camera pans back towards the front of the courthouse where Sanders is being ushered inside. “Donovan Sanders will hear his sentencing today, and based on local information, it seems that his lawyers will still plead not guilty.”

Alex’s eyes look to all of the heartbroken and devastated people on the screen with a twisted feeling in her gut. She can see the anguish and frustration in their watery gazes and hear the anger and hurt in their voices. She looks to the various pictures of their children and sighs. Alex takes a breath and turns her head away as he disappears.

The camera focuses back in on the solemn-looking reporter as she continues to narrate the events while people continue to leer and roar from behind her. “Hundreds are gathered here to protest the sentencing, feeling as though the non-guilty plea for insanity does not do anything to assuage the ache left in his destruction. Many are calling for him to be given the lethal injection, but if his plea is successful, Sanders will be most likely transferred out of National City and to Arkham Asylum in Gotham, where he will receive adequate treatment for his mental illness…”

Alex looks onto the workshop table to the helmet, her eyes raking in the intricate design of the tinted visor plate, outlined by the striking pure silver casing. She reaches over and takes the helmet into her hands and feels the heavy plate of lead weighing it down. She holds it in her hands as the reporter still drones on in the background.

* * *

“If you do this, there is no going back. You must be absolutely sure.”

Alex swallows at the sound of Kelex's gentle voice. She grips the mask tighter as she closes her eyes.

"I'm sure."

She hears his voice again, clear and firm as he asks, are you ready, Alex?

Alex blinks open her eyes and looks to the visor before glancing at the television with a determined look.

“Yes.”

* * *

“All rise for the jury.”

Donovan rises from his seat, keeping his cuffed hands above his lap as the jury members walk back into the room. The nervous-looking foreman approaches the judge, appearing to be worse for wear as everyone remains standing.

“Foreman, has the jury reached a verdict?”

The foreman wipes his brow and nods nervously. “Yes, your honour.”

“And is this verdict unanimous?”

The foreman pauses, glancing over to Donavon before gulping.
“Yes, your honour.”

“Very well. Please present to me the verdict.”

Donovan Sanders sits in his seat as a balding, middle-aged man gulps as he stands before the microphone next to the judge. His eyes flit over the room before they land on Donovan. He looks pale and clammy as the sheet shakes in his hands, but Donovan just grins. He finally hands it to the judge, who glances it over, before passing it to the clerk.

“In the State of California vs. Donovan Hugh Sanders, we the jury finds as follows,” the clerk reads clearly, before her throat bobs and her voice cracks. Donovan beams at her reaction. “On all counts on the charges of malice murder as alleged and all counts of the indictments, we find the defendant not guilty under the account of a mental disorder.”

Donovan’s lips barely pull up into a smirk as a still hush falls over the room as the clerk finally chokes out, “so say we all, this the twenty-third day of October, 2018, signed by foreperson.”

And then, pandemonium erupts.

“This isn’t justice!” One person yells, “this isn’t right!”

“Our children were killed by this monster!”

“We demand a retrial!”

“Put him to death!”

Donovan just smirks at the chaos.

“Order!” The judge growls as he slams his gavel on the peg a few times. “I’ll have order in this courtroom. All of you calm down, the sentence has been declared. Officers, escort Donovan Sanders to the transit vehicle immediately; this court is now adjourned.”

“All rise,” the bailiff calls out, but it falls on empty words as the people in the court continue to shout and scream vulgar threats. Donovan remains calm as Detective Sawyer and Officer Mendez roughly gather him out of the room and towards the entrance.

Donovan keeps the smirk on his face as he’s paraded through angry protesters attempting to break through the line of police barricading them from him. He walks forward with his head held high as the massive courtroom doors swing open and he’s faced with the rumbling thunder and the thrashing of rain against pavement.


Just as Donovan goes to quip a retort, a boom pierces the air.

Everyone looks to the sky, quietening as stormy clouds whirr about overhead, revealing a small figure flying in their direction. Donovan remains unfazed, grinning as he waits. He twiddles his thumbs in anticipation of what’s to come.

“Is that Supergirl?”

“Supergirl is back!”

“Wait… that’s not…”
The figure catapults to the ground, landing with a knee deep enough in the pavement to cause it to crack and form a deep hole in the ground. Donovan's brows raise in shock as he takes in the thickly-armoured black suit with glowing silver lining. The figure raises to its full height, a good six feet tall. He takes the form in, confused at its' sight.

*Definitely not Supergirl,* he muses to himself as he keeps smiling. *Still, ought to be interesting.*

A hush falls upon the crowd as everyone watches the figure slowly stalk forward. Upon a closer look, its' armour looks impenetrable, with a glowing, almost metallic-black oval curve situated in the middle of its' chest. Gleaming silver runs through the outlines of the thick plating. It doesn't wear a cape, nor does it have any frilly leather.

It looks more like a… machine.

“Stop!” Officer Mendez says, pulling out his weapon as he holds it out with shaking hands. “Don’t step any closer.” The figure pauses but doesn’t react to the barely-there threat, but respects his order and pauses. Donovan can’t see if it has eyes, because instead of two eyeholes or a mask, all that looks back at them is a cosmic-swirling, dark visor.

When the figure still doesn't move, Officer Mendez gets frazzled.

“Who are you?” He demands, his gun trembling. “What do you want?”

The figure remains silent for a few moments, the rain pelting against the hard shell of steel as it remains utterly motionless. Donovan remains patient, though now his arrogance is starting to delved instead onto apprehension.

“Speak!” Officer Mendez chokes out. “Or else I’ll shoot. Don't test me!”

When the figure doesn’t reply, Officer Mendez cocks his gun. "I'm serious!"

Before he can fire, however, the figure’s hand darts forward and grasps the gun in its hand before yanking it backwards, sending Officer Mendez to the ground in a heap. In its' hand, the figure clenches its’ fist, demolishing the gun into nothing but scrap metal within mere seconds. It opens its palm, letting the shatter alloy clatter down.

Now, Donovan feels slightly less confident.

“You’re not Supergirl,” he says, his voice trembling slightly as the figure steps over Officer Mendez to him, walking very slowly. He can feel the pulsing heat radiating off of the glimmering oval as the figure inches closer than before.

The being pauses a moment before it speaks, its' voice a deep, almost galactic sound to it. Donovan knows it’s being modulated, but it doesn't make it any less intimidating. There's no mouth, only a swirling cosmos of the dark visor.

“No,” the figure says, “I’m not Supergirl. I'm not a hero.”

Beside her, Detective Sawyer finally steps in front of him.

“Back away,” she says, holding out her gun. “Please.”

“Move,” the figure replies calmly, though its’ head doesn't move. “I do not wish to harm you.”

Detective Sawyer shivers as the rain pelts down harder than before, soaking them all in the
torrential downpour. She stands strong, but the figure remains undeterred. Donovan trembles as thunder roars overhead and lightning flashes. The being continues to keep its head directed towards him, not even flinching as a thunderclap startles him.

Donovan gulps nervously, shaking his head as he stumbles back ever-so-slightly. “I don’t fear you.”

The figure only chuckles lowly, the sound ominous and dark.

“Oh,” it replies coldly, “but you do.”

* * *

"What is that?"

Lena turns around to see Kara staring at the screen in utter shock and uncertainty. Lena rises, about to explain why she's watching the news, but she knows there's no point as Kara stumbles into the room and steps in front of the television with wide, terrified eyes. She clasps her mouth shut as she looks back to the aerial view of the mysterious figure in a standoff against Maggie and the criminal. The rain and thunder, coupled with the whirring of the helicopter blades, make it nearly impossible to hear anything going on with the sudden appearance of this being.

"Is it… alien?" Lena asks, looking at her girlfriend. "Do you recognize it?"

Kara gulps, her eyes widening as she shakes her head. "I don't know… it's not—"

But then, before she can finish, they both watch as the figure finally makes its move.

* * *

It all happens so fast.

Maggie barely has the time to blink before the masked figure darts forward and grabs Donovan by the neck before shooting up to the sky. His screams pierce through the cackling thunder as she watches in horror as the figure violently turns and plummets them both down to the ground. It presses Donovan neck first into the pavement.

Maggie almost gags at the sound of bones crunching and muscle tearing upon impact. She stumbles backwards from the slight ripple of the force of the landing. When the dust clears and settles, the figure reaches down and grabs at Donovan’s head, before ripping it clean from his shoulders with a barely-there pull. Blood spews from the discarded, beheaded carcass as it collapses limply into the new crater. The being holds the head up to the crowd. Donovan's eyes are blank and grey, his mouth still parted mid-scream as flesh and bone dangle from his decapitated head.

The being looks down at the head before looking out into the crowd, who are now gasping in shock and fear. Maggie watches in silence as the figure paces up and down the barricade before harshly tossing the head down the steps.

It turns to look at the crowd, its shoulders squared.

“No more, should you cower in fear.” The figure's words are cutting and blunt as it looks around. “No more, should you rely on heroes to save you from the destruction. No more, should you place your faith in false Gods. I am not your hero. I am not your martyr. I am simply here to do one thing, and one thing alone." Maggie watches as the figure turns, so it's head looks down at
Donovan's mangled corpse and then at his pale, bloodied head.

"I am here," it repeats calmly, "to bring you what you so rightly deserve."

The being then turns and looks to Maggie, and she feels a shiver run down her spine.

“I am here,” the figure says, “to bring you justice.”

Before anyone can speak, it shoots back up into the air and disappears into the clouds without any further trace. Maggie gasps in shock as she looks to the decapitated and mutilated form of Donovan Sanders in the stone.

What the *Hell* just happened?

Her blood runs cold as she looks out into the crowd to find J'onn staring back at her with confusion and apprehension. Maggie holds his stare, the gun in her hand trembling as the rain continues to soak through her bones. The crowd still hasn't reacted, still stunned into disbelief at the drastic change of events in the past four minutes since the sentence had been delivered. She keeps her eyes on J'onn, and her heart beats out of her chest.

Maybe he was right after all.

Chapter End Notes

NOW WE STARTING THIS JOURNEY BOYSSSS. It finally gets interesting.

Alex's armour is modelled after Iron Man's armour (but replace the power source thing for the Black Kryptonite and the mask for the visor):

Alex's visor: https://www.artstation.com/artwork/0rZoV.
The world recovers after the incident with Donavon Sanders.

No Major Trigger Warnings Apply.

This chapter is more Alex-centric. The next chapter will have more Kara/Lena, I promise. Also… the SANVERS is returning. I love this ship so much ugh.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

October 24th, 2018

J'onn shakes his head at the ebbing feeling of dizziness as he walks from the portal to the stretching hallways of the Watchtower. He can hear commotion up ahead, and he already feels dread settling in his gut. He walks steadily, trying to keep his head up as he sees the round table coming into a clearer focus, revealing his arguing colleagues.

"It could be associated with Darkseid," J'onn hears the low voice of Arthur Curry snarling from his seat. "I don't think we should be taking a chance on getting to know a being so comfortable with beheading a man without remorse."

"That man was a criminal," Diana says back, her voice cold as ice. "If anything, he deserved a slower death."

"Diana—"

"No, Arthur, this isn't Atlantis. Humans are not like us."

"I think you're forgetting I'm half-human."

"Enough," J'onn says as he rubs his forehead. He walks into the room, looking around at the faces of the Justice League as a holographic image is projected in the middle of the vast table. He looks over to where Clark and Bruce have been oddly quiet since he'd stepped into room. Taking his seat, J'onn sighs and looks up to the mystery figure.

"You're the oldest one here, gramps. What do you think?" Barry asks, his voice trembling as he looks up at the holographic image. "Do you think that it's a part of Darkseid's elite? Does your years of history involve this thing?"

"No," J'onn says as he leans back in his chair. "I don't know what this is."

"We should reach out," Clark says, his voice low as he cautiously throws out the words. "I might be able to talk to it."
"What? Do you suspect that it's Kryptonian? If it is, you know that talking isn't really your strong suit. 'Talking' went well when Non and Astra came," Hal snorts incredulously, waving his hand in a non-committal fashion. "No offence, Supes, but your kind aren't exactly the most friendly. Speaking of friendly, where's Kara?"

Clark frowns, his jaw set tightly. "Kara isn't a part of the Justice League."

"She should be," Dinah chimes in next with a smirk. "Could use a bit more women amongst all the testosterone."

"I thought she was going to be indicted this quarter," Victor adds. "She should be here, shouldn't she?"

"Kara's not… she's…," Clark stammers, shaking his head. "She's not ready."

Dinah hums. "Yet. She's not ready yet, Clark. When are you going to let her be more than just a neighbourhood hero? Last I checked with Bats over there, she's even stronger than you—Hell, she's stronger than all of us put together."

"Yeah," Billy chimes in next, conveniently dressed as Shazam to make his appearance more credible. "Kara's super cool, but she's also a badass. I think that if we have to take this thing, whatever it is, down, Kara's our best bet."

"The kid's got a point," Oliver replies, nodding in the overgrown child's direction. "Bring Kara in, Clark."

"I can't, okay?!" Clark snaps as he rubs at his forehead, a sad look on his face as he hangs his head. "In that fight with the para-demons that came onto National City, Kara lost her powers. She hasn't regained them since."

A hush falls over the League as Clark sits back in his chair, forcing down his tears as he looks up to the hologram. "If this thing is Kryptonian, I might be able to figure out what it's intentions are with Earth. It doesn't seem to want to cause harm, but to bring justice. I am not sure what it means by that. It's best we ask and find out, not wage war."

"As much as I admire your noble efforts to keep war at bay, you must know that if it is to be, war will come," Diana says cautiously, her brow arched as she looks across the table to where J'onn is now sitting with his hands folded.

"J'onn," Diana says his name softly. "You haven't spoken yet. What troubles you, Martian?"

The entire League turns to face him, eager to hear his thoughts. J'onn clears his throat and leans forward, his eyes fixated on the visor of the mysterious being, and then on the pulsating orb in the middle of its' armoured chest. He looks to the severed head of Donovan Sanders in it's right hand, tugged up by his hair, to his glassy grey eyes…

"J'onn," Bruce says next, his voice low and rumbling. "Your thoughts?"

There's something achingly familiar about it all, but J'onn can't put a name to the feeling he feels.

"We should talk to it," Clark nearly begs, "J'onn, we can't just kill it, that isn't who we are—"

"We are meant to protect humanity," Arthur growls, standing from his seat. "This thing is a threat —"
"It could be an ally?"

Diana sighs tiredly. "Barry, while your goodwill is appreciated, this is a peculiar case—"

"We're not called the Murder League, we're the Justice League! We don't kill."

"Enough!"

Everyone stills again at the cadence of J'onn's harsh voice. He looks up at them wearily, shaking his head.

"Clark's right," he mumbles quietly, "we must seek out it's intentions first."

Arthur snorts, shaking his head. "You're kidding—"

"And then," J'onn interrupts, glaring at the Atlantian. "If it isn't friendly, we take the next step."

* * *

"The world is still in disbelief over the death of Donovan Sanders, a convicted murderer who had been granted an insanity plea during his trial only yesterday. Minutes before getting into the transit vehicle bound for Arkham Asylum, Sanders was decapitated by an unknown masked figure who appeared to possess superhuman qualities. The city is still in shock over the destruction, but some are claiming that Sanders' death was the first real serving of justice to be had since before the para-demon attacks. Rumours show that the Justice League are uniting to discuss the potential implications of this new super-being, but these speculations have not been proven or verified..."

The news reporter drones on as Alex stays planted to her seat in the bar, nursing her eighth drink of the night. She decided to avoid the usual place, unsure if she'd be figured out by M'gann in her state. She looks up to the images of herself in her suit at the courthouse before glancing around at the other confused patrons.

"Meanwhile," the news reporter finishes, "there is no sign of Supergirl anywhere to be found. Has she abandoned our city? More to come, tonight at six. This is Andrea Simmons, Channel Seven: Action News, signing off for now."

"Crazy world we live in, huh?"

Alex turns around to see Winn walking up to her, looking pale. "I figured you'd come here. After everything that happened yesterday, it's shaken us all up. I'm surprised I even found you. I thought you were dead, to be honest."

Alex looks up at him tiredly as he takes a seat beside her at the bar, his hands shaking as he places them flat against the wooden surface. His throat bobs, and Alex can see he's struggling to keep it together as he turns to her, eyes red rimmed and watery. Alex feels her heart throb inside her chest as Winn swallows thickly before rubbing his head.

"Why didn't you come back?" Winn asks, voice cracking. "Why did you let us all believe you were dead?"

Alex looks up to her drink and sighs. "I didn't mean to scare you—"

"Scare us?!" Winn chokes out. "Alex, I wasn't scared. I was mourning because Kara told us she couldn't... she..."
He can't get the rest of the words out as he breaks down crying. Alex looks up from her drink as he tries and fails miserably to keep it together. Sighing again, she reaches out and places her hand on his shoulder, squeezing gently.

"I don't think you get it," Winn croaks sadly, "you're my family, Alex. You, Kara, Maggie, Lena... you're family."

Alex holds his gaze as he looks up and sniffles. "I love you, Alex. I don't get why you left us."

"I'm sorry," she whispers as she squeezes his shoulder again. "I am, really. I know I let you down—all of you. I just... I've been going through some changes and I needed the space. I should have told you the truth, and for that I'm sorry. You're right, Winn. You're my little brother. I should have been there for you when everything fell apart."

"Yeah," Winn sniffs, chuckling sadly. "Apology not accepted... for now."

Alex offers him a half-smile before leaning over to kiss his temple. "I'll take that."

Winn nods, looking back to his hands. "It's... it's not why I came, though. Maggie... she's not doing so hot."

"Maggie?" Alex asks, taking a sip of her drink. "Where is she?"

"At our regular place, getting trashed. Watching that prick get ripped apart has really done her over," Winn replies in concern, rubbing the back of his head nervously. "It's actually why I came here, besides to yell at you, which I couldn't even do properly. I just think... she could really use a friend right now. She could really use you, Alex, and I know you both aren't together, but I don't know how to help her and she's seriously losing it right now and I—"

"I'll go," Alex gently interrupts, sliding over some bills to the bartender before rising from her seat. "You coming?"

"Obviously, someone has to drive your drunk ass," Winn asks, guffawing. "Which, by the way, how are you not completely sloshed?" Alex shoves his shoulder lightly, but the depth of his words leaves her feeling slightly uneasy.

When Winn drives her the few blocks between the last bar and this one, Alex feels nerves creep up on her. She knows that Maggie doesn't know about her secret, but she feels hyper-vigilant all the same. When they finally arrive, her inebriation is diminished to nothing, and she finds herself uncomfortably sober as she stares at the bar door sadly.

"There she is," Winn points out as he opens the door. "Go get her."

He gestures outwards, nodding in the direction of Maggie nearly slumped over in a booth. Alex sighs and nods, wringing her hands together as she approaches the other woman with a grimace, noting the intense mixture of alcohol and sweat meeting her senses. She almost recoils, but then Alex catches sight of Maggie's face.

She looks exhausted.

Alex takes a breath before sitting down across from her. "Mags?"

Maggie doesn't stir at first, but at the reiteration of her name, Alex watches as she jerks upwards, her gaze cloudy and unfocused. Alex's heart sinks in her chest as she sees the fear riddled with the confusion in her glassy eyes.
“Al… Alex?” Maggie chokes out, looking at her. “What’re you doin’ here? You… You don’ come here anymore! You don’… you… why are you here?” Her words are slurring together incoherently, and Alex feels really guilty now.

Because she did this.

Because she killed him.

But really, this isn't about Sanders.

All of this, all the pain radiating off Maggie's shoulders, is because she left.

“Hey,” Alex coos gently, reaching over to gently place her hand atop Maggie’s slightly trembling fingers. “Winn called me. Said you weren’t doing so hot after what happened. Figured I could come by and help out. I can take you home—I’m sober now. Let's go, Mags.” Maggie just nods, and Alex can tell she’s in a floaty headspace right now.

She remembers that headspace, but the thought is neither appropriate nor welcoming.

“Yeah,” Maggie slurs, head dipping forward. “Home.”

Home.

The word strikes like a blade to her heart. She knows Maggie isn’t aware of the connotations behind the word, but for Alex, she suddenly feels that sickening pit in her throat halt her breathing. She doesn’t hesitate as she steps around the booth and reaches under Maggie’s thighs, hoisting her softly into her arms like she weighs nothing.

Maggie’s head slides to rest against the firm plane of her collarbone, and Alex’s heart breaks even further when she feels Maggie sigh in relief, as if every burden she’d been carrying finally dissipates with that breath. Looking up, Alex catches Winn’s sympathetic, but grateful, gaze. She nods to him and he gets the message to no longer worry.

As Alex carries a near-asleep Maggie outside, she contemplates just flying them both home to save time. She knows better than to be reckless this early-on, though. Instead, she hails them a cab and keeps her ex-fiancée’s body protectively held against her own until they’re at Alex’s apartment—the apartment they’d shared only months ago.

And yet, those months feel more like years.

Alex pays the driver generously before carrying Maggie up the steps and fumbling her way through the door and letting herself into her apartment. She settles Maggie down on the bed before locking the door. She gathers an empty bucket, aspirin, some crackers, and a glass of water, before she makes her way over to Maggie’s snoring body. She sets the items down on the dresser before she reaches for the covers and gently lays them over Maggie.

Alex sits at Maggie’s side, watching the slow in-and-out motion of her chest as she breathes. For a moment, Alex allows herself to remember the last time she’d seen Maggie like this—so at peace. She loses herself in the moment of waking up next to Maggie, kissing her until sun crept over their bodies and reminding them of the world outside.

But those are memories now.

Alex made sure of that.
"I'm sorry," she murmurs as she reaches down to stroke Maggie's hair. "I never meant for any of this."

Just as Alex gets up, a soft tug pulls on her hand.

“Alex?” Maggie murmurs, cocking one eye half-open blearily. “Stay?”

Alex’s breath hitches at the contact as she looks to Maggie’s hand, small and warm in her own roughened palms. “I… I don’t know… maybe I should just sleep on the couch tonight, Mags. We're... I... I hurt you and I...”

“Please,” Maggie croaks. “I need you. Just for tonight... stay. Please?”

Alex knows she shouldn’t but even her heart is weary as she nods and removes their hands. She moves around the opposite end of the bed, laying behind Maggie’s curled-up form. At first, they both lay there, only a few centimetres apart, before Maggie reaches backwards and gently clasps at Alex’s wrist, tugging it over her side to wrap around her stomach. Alex hesitates a moment, but then thinks better of it. She holds on, burrowing into Maggie's shoulder.

She deserves rest, too, doesn’t she?

Maggie cries against her, soft and shivering, and Alex can only murmur sweet nothings as she holds them together. She squeezes Maggie, mindful of her newfound strength. She presses a soft kiss to Maggie's bare shoulder, taking in the familiar scent of gunpowder, leather, and Maggie's natural musk. She closes her eyes and seeks out the comfort in Maggie's strong grip on her wrists, in the arch of her spine, in the natural heat of her body against her own.

It's all so familiar.

And yet, it hurts as much as it heals.

Eventually, Maggie turns and they're side-by-side. The two of them stare at each other, eyes wet and words dead on their lips, before Maggie uses her free hand to slide up Alex's abs and push gently. Getting the hint, Alex rolls onto her back as Maggie sidles up to her shoulder, her head sliding onto her collarbone as Alex pulls the blanket up. Her free hand tangles in Maggie's hair, picking up where she left off all those months ago, like nothing ever changed...

So, that’s how they fall asleep. Maggie tucked flat against Alex’s chest, the two of them wound tightly together like a heliotrope vine. Alex keeps her face buried in Maggie's hair, inhaling and refreshing her memory of that clean, warm smell of spice and lavender. The smell brings tears to her eyes as she smiles sadly as she drowns herself in the past.

And then, she whispers, soft and slow, “rest easy, Sawyer. I’m right here.”

* * *

Lena stands on their porch, her hand clasped around a steaming mug of tea as she looks to the sun rising over the cliffside. The warmth of the pink and red sunrays bathe over her face, allowing some calm and easy to seep into her weathered bones. After yesterday, both of them were left confused and riddled with fear and unease. Sleep had not found either of them particularly well, and Lena knows that Kara's guilt is deeper now than it had ever been before.

“You’re up early.”

Lena smiles as two strong arms wind around her waist and a chin lightly digs into her shoulder.
She angles her head slightly so she can capture Kara’s lips in a soft kiss, before resting her head against Kara’s cheek. She feels the tremble of her girlfriend's lips and she knows sleep didn't do much for Kara, either. Removing their lips with a quiet sigh, Lena looks back out to the sunrise. Kara's arms remained wrapped around her waist, chin on her shoulder.

Deciding to break the silence, Lena speaks first.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?”

“It is,” Kara murmurs, squeezing her lightly. “But not as beautiful as you, baby.” Lena blushed at the compliment, but she knows the words are light and distant. Kara sighs into her hair, shaky and weak. Lena nuzzles close to her lover as Kara sways them both. They stand in silence for a few moments, willing to just watch the day begin to rise.

It's a distraction.

But then, Kara breaks it with a soft admission.

“Alex called me.”

Lena perks up, turning around. “She did?”

Kara smiles, though it’s a bit wistful and sad. “Yeah, two days ago, before… you know. She looked tired, but she also looked relieved. We talked things through. I think you were right, we both just needed space from each other. I’m just relieved that she doesn’t hate me—that’s what I was most worried about. I was worried I would lose her forever.”

“Alex is your world,” Lena says, reaching up to cup Kara’s cheek as she presses a kiss to her lips, trying to hold back tears. “And you’re hers, baby. No amount of conflict or disagreement or pain could ever change that. Not even this.”

“You think?” Kara asks breathless, eyes closed.

Lena only smiles. “No,” she says, “I know.”

* * *

October 25th, 2018

When Alex wakes up, it’s to a mouthful of hair in her face.

She blinks and coughs, moving her head back to look down and see Maggie still curled up in her arms, her head against her chest as she snores. Alex takes a minute to memorize the little lines on Maggie’s face, the freckles which dot her cheeks, and the slight parting of her lips as she exhales softly. She looks to the peace on Maggie's slumbering face. A smile curls at Alex’s lips as she takes her time to memorize it all, before leaning back.

“Don’t…,” Maggie murmurs as Alex goes to extricate herself from their tangled limbs. “My head is about to explode… please. Just stay still and don't move for like, four hundred more years, or a thousand. No, infinity.”

Alex just chuckles. “Too much tequila?”

Maggie only grunts and nuzzles closer, mumbling, “not enough.”

The answer sobered them both, and Alex finds that familiar guilt wedging itself into her chest. She
reaches over and gently strokes her fingers through Maggie’s unruly hair, earning a small moan from the shorter woman. Maggie’s hips jolt slightly. Alex bites her lip as Maggie’s eyes sleepily blink open and look at her, still darkened with trauma.

And just like that, the peaceful moment they’d shared for a brief second is gone.

“I’ve never seen anything like it before,” Maggie says as she rolls onto her back, rubbing at her eyes with a wince. Alex pulls her hand away and watches as Maggie lets her hand fall to her side. She looks up to the ceiling, eyes blank. “It was so dark, so menacing. It just… it ripped him to shreds. I mean we were powerless to stop it, Alex.”

Alex chews at her lip worriedly. “Don’t you think… it did the right thing?” Maggie’s eyes flash with shock as Alex nervously swallows before continuing on to say, “I mean, Sanders killed children and was getting off on an insanity plea—the fucker was smiling when his sentence was read. I mean, he knew that he was going to get off scot-free."

“Alex,” Maggie bites out her name. “Are you serious right now? We talked about this.”

“Maggie,” Alex replies, sitting up in the bed. She folds her knees up to her chest and wraps her arms around her shins. “This city’s crime rates have boomed in the last few months. People are suffering. Without Supergirl, the people have no hope, but maybe with this… thing…,” she fumbles with the words, “maybe they can have justice.”

“Justice,” Maggie guffaws. “You call what that thing did, justice?”

Alex sucks in a breath before asking, “wouldn’t you?”

Maggie snorts and shakes her head, looking away. She mutters something under her breath in Spanish, but Alex ignores the insult. Instead, she reaches out, tugging at her hands to bring back her ex-fiancée’s attention.

“Look me in the eye, Mags, and tell me honestly,” Alex says, steel in her voice. “Tell me that you didn’t enjoy watching him die.”

When Maggie is silent, Alex knows she’s received her answer.

Alex lets go of their hands. “That’s what I thought.”

“So what?” Maggie asks, her voice less confident as she runs a hand through her hair. “We don’t even know what it is… if it’s an alien or a human. Is it from our planet or another? With all the talks about this Darkseid guy, Alex, I don't know what to think. It ripped his head off like it was nothing. Imagine what else it could do. I’m terrified of it.”

You shouldn’t be, Alex thinks, grasping Maggie’s hand. It’s me.

Maggie looks to their hands and then back up at Alex, her eyes flitting down to her lips. Alex gulps as she feels them both involuntarily leaning in, unable to resist the draw between them. Maggie’s mouth parts and her gaze darkens as she tilts up her chin. Alex feels the pull, like two opposite ends of a magnet, like a moth to a flame, so close…

They’re about to kiss when a vibrating sound interrupts them.

“Shit,” Maggie mutters as she pulls away, rouge tinting at her cheeks as she reaches for her buzzing phone. Alex coughs, just as awkward as she looks at the wall as a blush creeps up on her neck. “I’m supposed to be at work.”
“Yeah,” Alex says as she leans backwards, “I need to talk to J’onn. I haven’t been to the DEO in a long time, and based on Winn’s reaction, I know they’re more than just worried. I know he’ll be pissed at the least.” Maggie pockets her phone as she rises from the bed, glancing over to Alex in concern as she adjusts her shirt buttons.

“He mentioned he was worried about you,” Maggie says, brow furrowing. “I thought maybe you were taking extended time off, which isn’t like you. But even if you did, you would always tell him. Why didn’t you tell him, Alex?”

Alex pauses after she swings her legs off the bed.

“I guess I just… I lost track of everything.”

“Right,” Maggie says, but Alex can tell she’s not buying it. “I’ll leave you to it. I have to run, but… let’s talk later?”

Alex hears something akin to hope and a bit of apprehension in Maggie’s voice. She smiles and nods, stepping around the bed so they’re face-to-face again. Maggie’s hand reaches up and runs its fingers through Alex’s shaggy hair. It’d grown in the last few months, and Alex knows she needs to get it coloured, and maybe re-dyed, too.

"You sure you didn't get taller?" Maggie murmurs as her hands leave her hair to rest upon her shoulders. She squeezes, chuckling lightly. "Forget that… have you been hitting the weight station, Danvers?" Alex blushes, rubbing the back of her head. Her bicep flexes automatically, and Alex hears Maggie's heart-rate pick up slightly.

"I just… it helped me get my mind off things," Alex offers sheepishly. "I wasn't trying to get buff or anything."

"To think I was muscle between us," Maggie muses, shaking her head nostalgically. "I guess things do change."

Alex winces, hanging her head at the unintentional jab. "I'm sorry—"

"No," Maggie sighs tiredly, reaching out to draw Alex's chin back up. "I don't want to fall back into that cycle, Alex. It's over, right? I mean we're adults. There's no need for us to keep running in circles. I just want you back, and even if we can't be together, I miss my best friend." Alex nods, reaching up to cover her smaller hand with her own gently.

"And thanks," Maggie adds softly, "for coming for me last night. You didn't need to."

Alex just nods, licking her lips as Maggie’s gaze flits down once more. “Yeah,” she mumbles, trying to pull herself away. “Of course. Even though we’re not together, I still care about you. I still lo… you’re still my friend.” One of her hands involuntarily reaches for one of Maggie’s as the two of them stand in a tense, heated moment of silence. Alex knows they’re both trying to avoid acknowledging Alex’s slip of the tongue, but it isn't going well for either of them.

“I should go,” Maggie whispers, but she can’t tear her eyes off of Alex’s own. Alex’s throat bobs as she nods, unable to speak a word. Neither of them move, even after Maggie repeats the words again. Instead, they seem to get closer.

After what feels like hours, Maggie finally finds the strength to turn away and head for the door. But before she reaches for the door knob, she waits again, back stiffening. Alex feels her heart racing as Maggie turns her head.
With one look, Maggie sprints towards her.

Alex barely manages to keep them both steady as Maggie rushes towards her and nearly bulldozes them both as she connects their lips in a fiery kiss. Alex’s eyes close on impact, breath sucked clean from her lungs as she feels Maggie’s arms around her neck. Her hands go down to Maggie’s thighs and her ex-fiancée leaps up, locking her legs around her waist. Alex deepens the kiss, walking them backwards to slam Maggie against the door roughly.

“Alex…,” Maggie gasps between kisses, “fuck… I… we…”

Alex slows down the kiss, hissing as Maggie's hands weave through her hair and tug gently. She can feel Maggie's hands slowly drifting down to place a hand against her collarbone. Alex's grip on her hips falters, letting Maggie's feet touch the ground again. They kiss a few more times, eyes closed and chest heaving as they try to pull away.

Eventually, Maggie is the one to move away with a quiet whimper.

“I’m sorry,” she says as she looks away with shame. “I shouldn’t have done that.” Alex reaches out, her mouth parting in protest, but Maggie shakes her head gently pushes Alex aside on shaky legs, reaching again for the door.

“I’m sorry,” she repeats before unlocking the door and stepping into the hallway. “I have to go, Alex. I’m sorry.” Alex watches her leave, her eyes watery and the fire in her chest expanding with every breath she draws.

The stone within her pulsates, reminding her of her purpose.

While I still do not quite understand human courting behaviours, I believe you have bigger priorities. Kelex murmurs within her mind. If you visit the Martian today, I would strongly recommend wearing your lycra suit underneath your clothing. The faint traces of lead inside will mask him from being able to see through to the Kryptonite stone.

Alex nods, “yeah, I was planning on it.”

Do not doubt yourself now, Kelex says, you can change this world. I understand you grieve, but you are needed.

“How?” Alex asks, grabbing at her head. “I don’t want to make people fear me, Kelex. Maggie’s right; if I become a tyrant, I am no better than a criminal. Maybe I shouldn’t have killed Sanders. Killing him made everything worse.”

Look at the news, look at the people rejoicing around you over his death, Kelex says, urging her on. They are celebrating a welcomed change. They want justice, and you are delivering it to them. It is what they rightfully deserve after all the pain they’ve faced. The city is unprotected without Supergirl. You can be their champion.

“Champion…,” Alex mutters, “that’s what Reign called me.”

And she was correct in doing so, Kelex says, but Reign wished to exploit those powers for evil, for you to join her and become a world-killer. But you ended that, and you saved Earth from her destruction. Now you must do the same. You must save them, Alex.

“From who?” Alex asks. “There are no aliens or para-demons.”

Not from aliens, Kelex whispers, but from themselves.
J’onn looks at his screen, trying to analyze the figure which had been responsible for the gruesome death of Donovan Sanders. He zooms in and tries to use his telekinesis to get a read of the image. While he had been on-scene, he’d not been close to Maggie. He tries to ignore the possibility of the figure being a Kryptonian of sorts, because subduing a Red Kryptonite Kara had been difficult enough. Subduing a fully-powered Kryptonian without the strongest Kryptonian to help keep it down? Even J’onn isn't sure that he is capable of neutralizing such a threat.

“Director Henshaw,” Winn calls out, interrupting his chain of thoughts. “Agent Danvers is here.”

“Alex?” J’onn asks, bewildered. “Bring her in immediately.”

Before Winn can even turn around, Alex walks up behind him and into the office, a timid smile on her face as Winn blushes and walks away, closing the door behind them. J’onn stares at the woman he’d considered to be his own daughter with a look of surprise. He feels many things, and while he's angry of course at the agent’s absence, the relief of seeing her alive and well is more than enough to tide over the frustration of her voluntary disappearance.

“You’re a sight for sore eyes, Danvers.”

“I apologize for not coming in sooner, J’onn,” Alex says, sighing tiredly. “After what happened with the para-demons, and Kara… I needed some space to think about everything. I know I should have told you, but I was scared and I just… I couldn't.” J’onn nods, not entirely convinced as he takes in the agent’s almost unsettled demeanour.

It’s then that he takes in some of the differences in Alex since he’d last seen her. She's taller now, not by a large amount, but she can tell that she must be the same height as Kara with her boots on. Her shoulders and arms are filled out, and J’onn would even wager that the eldest Danvers was even more muscular than her younger sister.

But it’s her eyes that get him the most.

Alex's eyes had always been this unique blend of hazel and chocolate, a colour he'd not seen in any of the other agents or even the other humans he had been around. Now, however, specks of black splatter in amongst her irises. J’onn frowns, but Alex only stiffens at his attempt at a closer look. He tries to read her mind, to seek out her thoughts, but winces when he incurs a mental block. J’onn swallows thickly when he realizes he can't read it.

Alex has never been able to block him before.

No human has, really.

"Sir?” Alex asks, her voice hard. "What's wrong?"

“Usually I prefer to have notice before an extended leave is taken,” J’onn says, keeping his voice calm as he sets aside his suspicions and concerns for the moment. He clears his throat and smiles. “For now, I'll let it slide. We have more pressing matters on our hands at the moment.” Alex steps up beside him to look at the figure on the screen. J’onn can sense something is off with Alex, but he can’t pinpoint it. He feels a slight headache as she steps near.

“I’m worried about its’ presence,” J’onn murmurs as he looks up at the screen, replaying the image of Sanders violently being ripped apart at the courthouse. “That much power holds a lot of responsibility, and used wrongly…”
“Is there really a right or wrong when it comes to punishment?” Alex asks, her voice distant. “People were enraged at what Donovan did, and celebrated his death when he was killed. Perhaps it is not his death itself, but the message that it sends to the people.” The answer is worrying, and J’onn tries to ignore how his stomach churning unsteadily.

“What message?” J’onn asks, observing the glint in Alex’s eyes. “One of fear?”

“No,” Alex says, shrugging nonchalantly as she looks to the screen. “One of justice.”

“Alex,” J’onn says warily. “You call this justice? This is murder.”

“Supergirl brings hope to National City.” Alex continues to say, ignoring J’onn’s response. “But she’s not here so their hope died. National City forgot that they took care of themselves before she came into the picture. When she left, the city forgot how to fend for itself again. Everyone in the position to do something sat back and did nothing. They lost their hope, J’onn.” Alex looks to him, her tone even as he realizes just exactly what she is implying.

His voice is flat as he questions, “and you think this thing will bring it back?”

“No,” Alex says, looking to the screen once again with an unreadable expression as she takes in the appearance of the mysterious figure. “But it might be able to at least provide people with the assurance that someone is looking out for them—someone who won’t ignore the wrongdoings of the government or the corruption in the police.”

“What has gotten into you?”

“I was there,” Alex says, glancing back to the screen. “When Sanders was arrested, Maggie and I were on the scene. You didn’t see what I did, J’onn. You didn’t see what he did to those kids. They weren’t killed, they were mutilated.”

J’onn feels his heart race when Alex snarls, “I’m glad he’s dead.”

He’s always known Alex to blur the grounds of morality. Unlike Kara, who always took the most non-lethal option available, Alex is not above using force and violence to coerce information. Unlike Kara, Alex has a firm grip on her trigger, has a clean shot. Unlike Kara, who has vowed to never kill, Alex is capable of doing worse.

And he can’t even blame her, because she learned it from him.

The DEO was known for their ruthlessness, but it was because of that ruthlessness, because of that ability to tread the grey area between black and white, that made Alex the best agent he’d ever seen. No other agent had ever survived through the training he’d put Alex through, and not only did she survive, she thrived. Alex took to being a guardian to her sister and her city like Kara took to being Supergirl. Only, Alex never got the spotlight or the press.

Not that she ever needed to, anyways.

But now, as J’onn looks to her emotionless face and her taut posture, he wonders if he pushed her too far.

“I think we should schedule an appointment with the resident psychologist for you,” J’onn says, drawing Alex’s attention. He swallows down the guilty pit in his throat as he looks to his surrogate daughter reassuringly. “It’s not because I don’t trust you, but because right now the DEO’s a mess and I need my best agents in their top form.”
“I’m fine,” Alex insists, but J’onn shakes his head. “J’onn. I know I left—”

“You didn't just leave, Alex, you disappeared for month without ever telling us where you were. No one could find you, not even me. In that time, I’ve had an unresolved case involving two dead Kryptonians, a break-in at L-Corp, and now this. I trust you, but I need you to do this,” J’onn is practically pleading as he looks up at her. “Please.”

Alex looks ready to hesitate, but then she sighs. “Fine.”

“Thank you,” J’onn says, breathing out in relief. “Once you’re cleared, I’m going to need your help on these cases, especially the one at L-Corp. With Lena overseas and Kara indefinitely out of commission, you’re our best hope.”

“Of course,” Alex says, though it’s not without a bit of a wince at the mention of her sister. “I will call Lena about it after the evaluation. I’ll see what she has for me to work with and then we can go from there.” J’onn nods, relieved to finally have his best agent back, even if he feels that Alex is not one-hundred percent there at the moment.

“Go see Dr. Walsh,” he says tiredly. “Then we’ll talk.”

Alex is about to turn around and go, but before she can, J’onn’s hand lightly clasps around her wrist again. Alex turns partially, and J’onn can tell that she’s hiding something more than just pain, even if he can't physically read it.

Then, it hits him.

One steady heartbeat in the absence of two.

“Are you… the baby?,” J’onn asks, looking down. Alex tugs her hand free with a shaky pull, and even though she doesn’t reply, J’onn knows. A deep sadness rushes through him as he sees the grief in her eyes, dark and heavy.

“I… I’m sorry,” he chokes out, but he knows it’s not enough. "I didn't…"

Alex only shrugs, a haunted look falling over her hardened gaze.

“Me too, J’onn. Me too.”

* * *

“Agent Danvers,” Dr. Walsh says as Alex walks in and takes a seat on the couch. “I heard you’d come back. Long-time no see, hmm?”

“I had a few things to take care of,” Alex says with a shrug as she fiddles with her fingers. “Besides, with Kara gone and my break-up with Maggie, things were a bit overwhelming. I just needed some space to clear my head, is all.” Dr. Walsh hums wordlessly, jotting down the information on her notepad. She looks back up at Alex warmly.

“And during this absence, what did you do?”

Alex pauses a moment. “I took the time to recover.”

“Define recover.”

“I spent some time in the mountains in an old cabin that my parents used to own,” Alex explains seamlessly, shrugging. “I stayed there and cleared my head by taking walks, rowing on the river,
“That would explain your recent muscular build,” Dr. Walsh observes, noting the notable depth of Alex’s shoulders and the lines bulging around her abdomen and chest. “Though, I never pegged you as a solitary person, Alex. And I don’t ever recall there being a cabin in your file. How did this come about?” Alex’s eyes flash and she stiffens.

“Are you saying that I’m lying?”

The inflection of her tone gets Dr. Walsh’s attention immediately.

“No,” she says carefully, noting the way Alex’s shoulders relax. “I’m simply curious.”

“Not everything in my life has to go in my file,” Alex half-heartedly retorts before slumping back into the couch. “I’m allowed to have something private, aren’t I? My life doesn’t belong to the DEO.” There’s a level of defensiveness which underlies the agent’s tone, and while it isn’t a big cause of concern given the subject, she still feels worried.

“You seem… frazzled, Alex.”

Alex fidgets in her seat, avoiding her gaze. Her hands flex, her fingers clenching and unclenching, clearly agitated with the pace of the session. Dr. Walsh leans forward, setting aside her clipboard as she peers at her curiously.

“Alex?”

A moment later, Alex sighs and says, “Maggie and I kissed.”

“Ah, Dr. Walsh thinks with a small smile. That would explain it.

“And how does that make you feel?”

Alex glares at her with a huff. “I thought this was an evaluation, not a counselling session.”

“Alex.”

“Niamh.”

Dr. Walsh smiles at Alex’s use of her first name, knowing it’s a tactic Alex always used when she deflected answers. She leans back and waits patiently, but Alex seems far away. As much as she wants to pursue the topic, she knows that Alex is right. This is an evaluation and not a session. Reaching for her clipboard, Dr. Walsh clears her throat and scribbles a few things down before tearing off the page and holding it out in the agent’s direction, smiling.

“I’m clearing you for active duty,” Dr. Walsh says, and Alex’s head bobs up as she smiles, reaching out for the paper. Dr. Walsh hesitates, pulling it out of her reach slightly as she eyes her. “But I want you to see me every so often, just to check in. I’m worried about you, just like everyone else is, and there is no shame in seeking help. Agreed?”

Alex just rolls her eyes. “Fine, just give me the damned form so I can get my job done. People are losing their heads without me.”

Both Alex and Dr. Walsh wince at the statement.

“Too soon,” Alex mutters, “I’m sorry.”
Dr. Walsh waves her off. “It’s fine. The DEO needs you right now. J’onn isn’t lying, by the way; you’re the best damned agent we have. If we’re going to have any chance of figuring everything out, it would lie with you.”

“Thanks,” Alex says, taking the paper with a resigned sigh. “And… thanks, for this.” Dr. Walsh smiles up at her, though her gut still churns nervously when she sees something flicker in Alex’s distant gaze. She can see something brewing there, but she decides not to touch on it for right now. Something tells her it isn’t the right time.

Instead, she stands and claps the woman's shoulders to draw her attention before nodding encouragingly.

“Go raise Hell, Agent Danvers.”

Chapter End Notes

as a side note: wonder woman actually is a gung-ho warrior and will rip your head off without asking if necessary sorry but not sorry (she's literally the most violent one between supes and bats in the comics and the animated series lol).
“Administrator Luthor, you have an incoming call from the DEO.”

Lena looks up from where she’s pouring over her files. “Accept.”

When Alex’s face pops up on the screen, Lena is surprised to say the least—especially since the agent is back in her uniform.

“Alex,” Lena says, smiling. “You’re back at the DEO.?”

“Yes,” Alex replies. “After a leave of absence, I came back. They needed me back, more like.”

“How are you?” Lena asks, noting the bags under Alex’s eyes. “You look tired, Alex. Are you sure you’re ready to be back in action?”

Alex just chuckles. “I have no choice. I’m needed here. No one seems to have an idea on where to start on the L-Corp case, amongst other things. I’ve been tasked to help you and J’onn figure it out. He thinks it could be connected to the new might-be alien, might-be super-being which recently cropped up in National City.”

Lena frowns and looks down. “J’onn didn’t mention that to me. But… we saw the news report.”

“Probably to keep it out of Kara’s loop,” Alex explains, before eyeing her carefully from the screen. “It should stay that way. If Kara finds out about this, she’ll only feel more guilty about not being able to step in and help. Until she gets her powers back, she can’t know about it. I don’t want her feeling upset about it.”

“I understand you want to protect her, but Kara is Supergirl,” Lena says, trying not to let bite filter into her tone. “Whether you like it or not, Alex. She’s going to want to know, and I highly suggest we tell her. The least she can do is provide expertise.”

Alex chews at her bottom lip before sighing. “Maybe. But not now.”

“Why not?”

“Because things are raw right now, Lena. There’s too much happening, and we have to take things
a step at a time. We’ve seen reports of energy shifts across the cities, and the electromagnetic patterns match those of the portals prior to their opening.”

"It doesn't mean Kara shouldn't know," Lena argues back, her brows furrowing. "She has a right to know, Alex."

"She's not Supergirl," Alex replies grimly. "Until she gets her powers back, she's just Kara Danvers."

Lena shakes her head, swallowing down her rage. "Well, then, it's a little late for that."

Alex's eyes flash and Lena looks up at her without an ounce of regret in her gaze as the agent pieces it together. "Kara knows... she watched the report with you." Lena pauses a moment before she nods, leaning back in her chair.

Alex looks down again, seemingly more reserved than before. "What does she think?"

"A lot of things," Lena says, crossing her arms. "Whatever it is, Alex, it isn't safe. It beheaded a defenceless man and threw down his corpse like he was nothing. Any being with that sort of power, that unhinged lethality, is dangerous."

Alex bites her bottom lip, looking away. "You don't think it did the right thing?"

Lena frowns. "You do?"

Alex just shrugs, avoiding the topic. "It doesn't matter. What matters is that we're thinking it's connected to the premonitions J'onn has been having about Darkseid's invasion. He thinks this is only the beginning of the end."

Lena digests the information with a frown. "You think more of those para-demons are coming?" Alex shrugs, rubbing at her brow.

"It could be," she says, "but we don’t know. Clark and the rest of the Justice League are busy discussing the new super-being. I managed to talk to Bruce before they left for the Watchtower, but he couldn’t offer much."

Lena hangs her head. "So, we’re on our own."

"Seems to be, Luthor."

"Alex," Lena says quietly, looking back up. "Will you tell me the truth? About what’s happening back home?" Alex frowns, confused. But Lena leans forward, noting the apprehension and guilt and trace amounts of fear in Alex's eyes. She wants to reach through the screen and wrap the other woman in a hug, but she can't. Alex just sighs.

"Maggie and I were taking a patrol through the outskirts of the city a few days ago when we got a call about a hostage situation," Alex explains slowly, looking down. "When we got there, this sick fuck had tortured and murdered a bunch of kids. One of them had a bomb strapped around her waist, which exploded when we got close."

Lena gasps, tears filling her eyes in the rawness of Alex's voice.

"You were there," she whispers hoarsely, "when he..."

"He took away the lives of innocent children and he laughed about it. He enjoyed it. I had to talk to
fourteen grieving, angry parents, while he enjoyed his time in a jail cell. He plead for insanity,” Alex says, ignoring Lena’s interruption. “And he won the case. People were furious. He was to be transferred to Arkham.”

“That’s ridiculous,” Lena growls. “How did he pass the eval?”

“It’s speculated Sanders—the criminal—paid him off.”

Lena scowls angrily. “Dirty bastard.”

“I know,” Alex says, matching her anger as she continues. “On the day of the trial, after he was sentenced, this figure showed up and violently killed him, telling the people of National City that it wanted to bring justice to a corrupted populace.” Lena frowns, trying to push down the violent images of the news stream she had seen only days ago.

“Is it from our planet?”

“No idea.”

“And how did people react?” Lena asks, leaning back in her chair. “I’m sure it didn’t go over, did it?”

Alex only snorts, chuckling. “Surprisingly, after the shock wore off, people were happy.”

“Because they got their revenge?”

Alex’s eyes narrow and her lips form a tight line. “He murdered fourteen innocent children in cold-blood, Lena. He deserved it.”

Lena’s chest tightens at the ferocity of Alex's words. “I’m not saying he didn’t, Alex.”

“That morality is a fickle thing,” Lena explains. “And I know this is something Kara struggles with, and I know you’re aware of it.”

Alex remains expressionless. “Kara wouldn’t have killed him.”

“No,” Lena agrees, “she wouldn’t have.”

Alex rubs the back of her neck, suddenly looking more tired than ever. “This city—the world, even—needs Supergirl. Not just her powers, but what she represents. People need hope, Lena, not violence. They need to stand together, not be torn apart.”

“But you said that the people were angry with her for leaving—”

“They are,” Alex interrupts, “but I hope that changes.”

Lena sighs. “How, Alex? If this new being is here to stay, who’s to say that the world will no longer want Kara to come back?”

“They will,” Alex says determinedly. “Trust me, they will.”

* * *

Eliza parks her car in the driveway before she makes her way up the slope to her front door. She
wrestles with the bags of groceries on her arms as she jangles the keys into the lock. She walks through the foyer once the door is opened, and she sets the bags down on the kitchen table before flicking on the lights with a tired, exhaustive sigh.

She is about to go to unload the groceries, when she turns to see her patio door hanging open, slightly ajar. Frowning, Eliza takes a step back and looks to the nearly-opened door, her nerves twisting as she sees a slight splintering of the door where the lock used to be. She reaches into her back pocket for her phone, gripping it tightly.

"Hello?" Eliza calls into the house, "I'm calling the cops if you are still in here!"

When nothing replies back, Eliza sets the grocery bags down and pulls her phone into her hand.

"It's a lovely family you have."

Eliza startles when she hears the deep monotone of a woman's voice pull her from the silence. She stiffens as she watches a tall, broad-shouldered woman walk into her kitchen from her living room, clutching a photo frame. She doesn't look like she's from this planet, judging by the way her armour is more Amazonian in nature, and how she carries a broadsword on her back, complete with a heavy-looking shield. Eliza darts across the island and pulls open a drawer before reaching in for the service weapon Alex had given her. She wrestles it out and holds it in front of her with shaking hands, her heart beating erratically in her chest as she points it in the direction of the other woman.

"Stay back," she growls as she clicks off the safety, "I won't hesitate to shoot."

"Hmm," the woman murmurs, her lips curling into a smirk as she sets the photo down. "Are all of you like this?"

Eliza holds out the gun with one hand before grabbing at her phone again. Before she dial a number, the woman darts over, faster than the speed of light. She barely gets a warning before she's pinned against the cabinet roughly.

"The tenacity is alluring," the woman hisses, her teeth poking out hungrily. "If only you'd been younger…"

Eliza manages to depress one button on her phone before the mysterious woman shoves her again, sending both the phone and the gun clattering to the floor. The woman hisses, licking at her neck and humming appreciatively. Eliza slams her eyes shut, sweat pooling down her neck as the woman's teeth lightly scrape against her pulsing jugular.

"Mm," she murmurs as she sniffs at her skin, "delicious."

"Release her, immediately."

Eliza lets out a sigh of relief as she hears the familiar rasped voice of J'onn. She looks up to see the Martian in his natural form, decked out in his armour as his eyes glow red at the sight of the woman trapping her in her kitchen.

"Of course," the woman snickers, releasing Eliza immediately. "I'm only here to play, Martian."

Eliza shakes her head, gasping. "Play?"

Before the woman can reply a shattering boom echoes through the air. The woman only smirks as she moves past the Danvers Matriach to the patio door. She swings it open and Eliza gasps as she
looks at the sight outside.

A figure plummets from the sky, landing smack dab in the middle of her backyard.

"Beautiful," the woman murmurs, "isn't it?"

Eliza watches as the figure walks towards the house, and as it approaches, she realizes that this is the same mysterious being she'd seen on the television only days ago. She looks to J'onn, who looks pale despite his green hue. She looks down to the floor and quickly grabs at the gun again, priming the trigger at the mystery woman.

"Now now," the woman sighs drearily, "there's no need for violence, love."

"Who are you?!" Eliza demands, her hand shaking. "What do you want from me?"

The woman purses her lips, before looking back outside at the approaching figure. "I only want one thing."

Eliza waits as the woman turns her gaze back to her, smiling sickeningly as she reaches for the photo frame again. She sets it down on the island and spins it, revealing a photo of Alex and Kara standing side by side, grinning.

"Tell me," the woman says quietly, "where is she?"

Eliza's throat bobs. "I don't know who you're talking about."

"Don't play coy," the woman says as she steps forward, ignoring J'onn's glare. "Tell me where she is."

"Who?!" Eliza snaps, her hands shaking harder now. The woman rolls her eyes as the lumbering figure walks up the steps, growing closer and closer. Eliza looks between them, and then at J'onn, who is staring at the mystery figure.

"Kara Danvers," the woman says, her voice cold. "Tell me where she is, Matriarch Danvers."

When Eliza doesn't reply, the woman steps closer, her lips pulling back into a low snarl.

"Tell me where the Supergirl is, or else everything you know and love will end."

Before Eliza can reply, J'onn steps forward.

"I thought I recognized you," he says as he looks her over, "you were there. You saved her, you saved Alex."

"Ah yes," the woman chuckles, looking out the window to the approaching figure. "The human. Pathetic."

Eliza follows her gaze and watches as the mysterious figure walks up the steps of her porch, its' heavy boots nearly wearing through the wood entirely. Eliza shivers as she takes in the daunting black armour and swirling orb in its' chest. She makes out the intricate lining of silver and lead, the cosmos in its' visor as it approaches, big and broad.

"W-What…," Eliza stammers as she looks up at it in horror and fear, "what are you?"

The figure cocks its' head, but pays her no attention. Instead, it turns towards the nameless woman.
The woman sizes the being up, her eyes narrowed as she takes in the daunting appearance of armour and strength. The being doesn't move as the woman steps forward, looking up and down with rapt interest. J'onn and Eliza remain frozen as the woman reaches out and lightly traces the armour with her fingertips, before hovering over the orb.

"Champion," she whispers reverently. "You are greater than Reign could have ever hoped you to be."

Before anyone else can move, the figure lashes it's arm out, wrapping its' hand around the woman's neck before tossing her through the door and onto the grass a few feet away. J'onn zooms out from beside Eliza as the being shoots after the downed woman, landing with a rough quake beside her prone form. She watches in horror as the being lifts its' fist and lowers it, connecting with the woman's jaw. Before it can land more hits, J'onn collides with it.

The being is flung away by the Martian, and the woman only leaps to her feet, chuckling sadistically.

"Champion!" The woman calls out as she reaches into her armour for a device, clicking it. "Come with me."

Eliza stumbles backwards as electricity cackles and a bright portal emerges in the middle of the field. The being pauses, hovering mid-air as the woman beckons for it. J'onn surges upwards, going to grapple with the figure, but the being only tosses him aside like he's made of paper. The woman frowns, recognizing that her demand is empty.

"You were bred for greatness," the woman urges, brandishing her sword now. "Come with me to face your destiny."

The figure, the Champion, or whatever it is, remains hovering, unmoving.

Before the woman can speak again, another crackling boom pierces the air. Eliza stumbles outside to see the familiar red and blue of Superman's outfit as he lands beside a prone J'onn, his eyes red as he glares at the woman beside the portal. His eyes eventually clear back to their crystal blue as his gaze shifts to where the Champion hovers.

Bored with the situation, the woman sheathes her sword and grunts.

"So be it," she mutters as she steps into the portal, her eyes still on the Champion. "You've made your choice."

Clark turns his head, readying his body to chase after her, but before he can even move, the woman steps into the portal and it closes without a trace. A slight tingle remains in the air, like the tension between the three of them is still charged. Eliza looks up to the figure, which is now staring down at her blankly, unmoving and unfazed.

Clark is the first to move, hovering upwards until he's face-to-face with the being.

"My name is Kal-El. Humans call me Superman," he says, calmly and clearly. "I'm Kryptonian. I just want to help."

The Champion's head remains fixated on Eliza, and the Danvers Matriarch feels a shiver run up her spine.

"I know you speak English," Clark urges as he hovers closer, his cape fluttering out behind him. "I come on behalf of the Justice League of America. We want to talk to you." The Champion remains...
still, unresponsive to Clark's voice.

"Please," Clark says as he follows the being's gaze to Eliza, before looking back at it. "Come with me."

It takes a few moments before the Champion finally turns it's head and faces Superman, unfazed and steady

"No."

Its' voice is low and modulated. Clark frowns and opens his mouth to protest, but before he can, the figure looms over him, its' entire body almost glowing in pure black as the orb in the middle of its' chest starts to pulsate.

"Please," Clark urges again, less calm this time. "If you don't come with me—"

"You don't own me," the figure says, looking past the Kryptonian to J'onn. "The era of the Gods is over."

"I can't let you do this," Clark snarls, "I won't stand by and let you murder—"

"Then step aside," the figure says back coldly. "Don't get in my way, Superman. This is a warning."

Before Clark can protest, the figure darts upwards, going supersonic faster than Eliza has ever seen even Kara go. Clark goes up to follow, but even he knows it's a lost cause. He turns his head and looks at Eliza with a look of pure fear. Eliza shivers, because if the God amongst mortals—the man of steel himself—is scared, then she's horrified.

Clark hovers back down to the ground, his boots touching the soil with a soft thud. He stands under the night sky, looking more lost than Eliza is sure she's ever seen him. She walks out onto the grounds on trembling knees, her eyes watering as she feels the tension and loss coming off of him in waves. J'onn also rises, standing beside him.

Eliza looks between them, and then to the gun in her hand, before glancing back up again.

"What are we going to do now?"

* * *

October 26th, 2018

Kara slams her knee into the heavy bag, huffing as it barely sways with the force of her kick.

"Come on," she goads herself, launching another flurry of hits and kicks at the sandbag, but eventually her muscles scream at her in pain. She delivers one final blow to the bag before she pants and leans backwards, sweat pooling down her chest and her abs, soaking through her thin shorts and sports bra as she glares at the heavy bag angrily.

"Come on," she pleads this time, trying and failing to hold back tears. "Come on, Kara."

But she can't even lift her arms, let alone punch the bag one more time.

"You know, being human for a day isn't as bad as you think it is."

Kara's head snaps up as she looks over to see Alex standing in the corner of the room, a smirk
plastered on her face. Kara's heart leaps up in her chest as she practically stumbles forward. She goes to reach out for her sister when she sees the faint transparency of her frame. She reaches out, and she nearly sobs as her hand goes through nothing.

She curls into herself on the ground, pulling her knees to her chest as she shakes her head.

"I'm hallucinating," Kara whispers as she shuts her eyes tightly, "why—"

"When was the last time you slept, kid?"

Kara tries to block out the voice of her not-sister, but she can't tune her out. She looks back up to see Alex kneeling in front of her now. She sees Alex's pale hand on her shoulder, and for a second, she imagines her soft, calm touch. It's warm, almost too warm, almost scalding to the touch. Kara looks up at her, frowning as feels queasy and sick.

"S-Something's wrong," Kara whispers as she starts to shiver. "Alex…"

"You're feeling it," Alex says softly, leaning down to press their foreheads together. "Let it take you over."

It's an ebb at first.

And then it's like a wildfire.

It starts in her chest and it spreads, and soon enough, Kara feels her limbs start to spasm. It feels like raw power, like she's throwing herself into a nuclear power plant. She writhes on the ground as the pain continues to flow outwards, engulfing her entire body. Kara grips uselessly at the loose rubble on the floor, sweating harder now.

"Stop," she begs as she looks up to her stone-faced sister. "Please… Alex… it hurts…"

"You have to remove yourself from the source," Alex says cryptically, her voice low. "You feel it, Kara. It's in you."

"What?" Kara pleads as she clutches at her head as it starts to pound. "What's wrong with me?!

"Kara!"

She hears Lena's voice in the background, but she can't seem to focus on it because her ears are ringing and everything is muffled and she's sure she's losing her mind. Kara keeps her eyes trained on Alex, who's apparition is beginning to fade as the pain begins to numb again. Her mind is hazy and cloudy, like her thoughts are splitting apart. She claws at the air uselessly as she starts to spasm once again, her body fighting the firm grip on her arms.

"Kara," Lena's voice calls out, breaking her away from the haze. "Kara, you're going to hurt yourself!"

Kara keeps spasming, and before she knows it, she can feel her body and her mind separating.

She barely hears Lena's panicked voice calling for an ambulance, or her girlfriend forcing her onto her side and holding her hands down, or the way she relays the information over the phone —seizure, fever, delirium, help…

But none of that really registers, because all Kara can feel and see is darkness.

* * *
“All units, please be advised, we have a 10-71 and a 11-71 at the BP gas station on the corner of fifth and Broadview. An assailant has shot at the fuel pump during an attempted robbery. We are requesting all available units to respond. Medical personnel are en-route. Multiple injuries and causalities are to be expected.”

“That’s our go,” Alex mutters from where she’s perched atop L-Corp towers, looking down on the city. She taps at her helmet, letting the visor slide into place as she feels her body start to hum. Kelex comes alive on her HUD.

And then, Alex leaps off the edge and flies out towards the call at supersonic speeds. She sees the billowing haze of blackened smoke in the distance as she nears the target destination, a strange pull of anger and need pulling at her bones. She can see overturned cars, as well as the sounds of gunshots, as she dives towards the ground violently.

When she lands, the ground quakes beneath her.

One of the gunmen, who’s standing with a woman against his front, holds out his gun at her and fires multiple times, but the bullets all deflect off of her armour. The pinging noise makes his hand tremble as he nearly empties his clip. When he sees that shooting her is useless, he places the muzzle of the gun against the woman’s head.

“Don’t come closer,” he growls shakily as she the woman cries, “I’ll fucking shoot her, I swear. All I wanted was the fucking money, but this bitch had to go and call the cops. Ain’t it right, cunt?! You fucking bitch, ruined it all…”

“Please,” the woman—a gas station worker judging by her bloodied uniform, “please help me! Please…” Before Alex can move, another explosion sounds, and more gunfire erupts. Alex looks over to see the cops having arrived, opening fire on two other gunmen as the fire rages on, growing more and more close to becoming uncontrollable.

“Let her go,” Alex says sternly, her voice modulated by the scrambler she’d installed in the helmet. “Now.”

“Or what?!” The gunman laughs, pressing the gun tighter to the woman’s head. “Will you kill me, too?”

Alex cocks her head and readies herself, her voice calm as she replies, “I haven’t decided yet.”

Before the gunman can shoot, Alex flies forward at super-speed, managing to pry the woman off the man and grab him as she shoves him backwards. The man chuckles, his voice cracking as he spits the blood from his mouth onto the cracked pavement. Chaos continues to burn around them, but he just keeps his gaze on Alex coldly.

Alex steps closer until she’s standing over him.

“Go on then,” the man goads, “kill me, you monster. It's what you want, right?”

Despite the addicting pull of death, Alex only steps down on his leg and twists until she hears the imperceptible sound of bone shearing. The man screams out in agony as the bone underneath unevenly snaps in two. Alex steps away from him, satisfied he is subdued, before bounding off in the direction of the other gunmen fighting the police.

Alex flies through the flames and grabs one of them by the cuff of his neck before flinging him against the wall of the station. The man grunts as he falls down, unconscious by the non-lethal knock to the head. Alex then turns and grabs at the other man, crushing his arm in a death-grip. He
cries out in agony as the bone snaps and shatters.

A bullet twangs against her armour as Alex lets the man go.

She turns around to see a policeman pointing the gun at her, shooting again and again until he realizes his weapon is useless. Alex cocks her head at him, amused by his desperation as she steps over the man and in his direction.

“W-Who are you?” The cop asks, his knees trembling. “W-What…”

Before either of them can move, something rumbles behind Alex.

When she turns, she looks to see J’onn standing there in his Martian form. He stands and stares at her, his eyes obviously searching for answers, but Alex knows the lead lining in her suit and the Black Kryptonite will prevent him from finding anything out. He steps forward, looking at the madness brewing behind Alex as the station burns.

And then, J’onn’s eyes land on the orb in her chest-plate, finally taking it in for what it really is.

“The Black Kryptonite,” he says in shock. “It was you.”

Before J’onn can ask any further questions, Alex shoots up to the sky, activating the cloaking device on her suit before she disappears through the dark haze of smoke to return back home without another word from the Martian.

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October 27th, 2018

“So, you’re saying the same figure which killed that Sanders guy and injured these gas-station robbers broke into my lab?” Lena asks as she looks up at the screen to where J’onn and Alex are standing in the crime scene that once used to be her underground laboratory. “And that this thing—this being—has Black Kryptonite is embedded in it’s suit?”

“I don’t think it’s just embedded in the suit,” J’onn replies, rubbing at his brow as he looks to the destruction around him. “I think that it’s part of the creature. But no living being could ever withstand the merging of Kryptonite, let alone the black variant. As a result, its powers are insurmountable. I doubt even a peak Supergirl could defeat it.”

“But if it was fighting against the criminals it might mean that it’s on our side,” Alex adds, looking between J’onn and Lena. “Those robbers nearly killed a dozen people. If you and that thing hadn’t stepped in, it would’ve been chaos.”

“It was already chaos and it stayed as chaos. It didn’t help, it only injured the perpetrators. I don’t know,” J’onn says worriedly. “Black Kryptonite is known to affect the mind in questionable ways. There is no knowing at what point its intentions can shift due to the influence of the stone. Our best course of action is to bring it into the DEO for questioning. After speaking with Clark and the rest of the Justice League, we all agree this is the safest option.”

Alex remains oddly silent, and while she knows J’onn hasn’t noticed, Lena picks up on the conflict brewing in Alex’s eyes. Even through the grainy image, she can tell something is off about the other woman. Not only does she seem to be acting differently, she looks different. She chooses to ignore it for now as she turns back to J’onn, hopeful.

“If Black Kryptonite can be used to give someone or something Kryptonian powers, could it also
restore Kara’s powers?” J’onn’s eyes flash with worry as he immediately shakes his head. Even Alex's eyes bug out with concern.

“Black Kryptonite would force Kara into a path of evil and destruction, as its' primary function for Kryptonian DNA is to alter the mind-body interactions,” J’onn explains. “Red Kryptonite is dangerous enough, but if Kara is exposed to Black Kryptonite, then I would fear that this being we’re dealing with will be the least of our problems. Kara has to stay away for right now. I'm sorry, Lena. I know she wants to help, but it is far too dangerous at the moment.” Lena pulls up the schematics and base compounds for the Black Kryptonite, comparing it to the pure Kryptonite.

“What if I could synthesize a similar compound?” Lena asks, looking at the screen as she pulls up Kara’s physiological scans. She looks over Kara’s genetic sequencing and an idea sparks in her mind. “It seems that the fundamental difference between the black variant and its pure source is in a small chemical shift. If I could separate the cells and fuse them with Kara’s DNA, it could work. Instead of sourcing the material, it would be synthesized.”

“No,” Alex says immediately. “I know what you’re insinuating, Lena, but it’s too risky. Exposing Kara to Kryptonite when she doesn’t have her powers will kill her, whether it’s synthesized or not. It’s not a risk I'm willing to take.”

Lena thinks of her girlfriend, writhing in pain and seizing only a day ago. While the situation had been an isolated incident, she’d noticed that Kara had been feeling more off lately than usual. If this plan could help restore her powers, help restore her to at least some degree of normalcy, she couldn't give up on that. “You don’t know that.”

“No,” Alex says again, her voice firmer and colder than before. "I don't want to try, Lena. I want to help Kara as much as everyone, but this isn't the answer. You and I both know that the risks are too high. We’ve never synthesized Kryptonite before. If it goes wrong, radiation exposure wouldn’t just put Kara in danger, but everyone else, too.”

Lena shakes her head in protest. “We would contain it—”

“No—”

“I have the materials in my lab!” Lena fights back, her voice cracking desperately. “I have everything necessary to do the conversion and synthesis. We live far away that a potential radiation leak wouldn’t be dangerous to anyone—"

“I said no,” Alex growls firmly. “That’s the end of it, Lena.”

“Regardless of whether we do it or not, we still have the issue of subduing this being.” J’onn interrupts their tense stare to bring the attention back to the core root of the problem. “Lena, I need you and Alex to find a means of neutralizing the effects of the Black Kryptonite. I’ll consult the Justice League for ideas on non-lethal containment.”

Lena looks back to Alex, who is damn-near glaring at her as J’onn tables their Kryptonite-Synthesis discussion. She senses something more than just protection in the elder Danvers’ resistance to the plan, but she can’t quite figure it out. She masks her suspiciousness with a small nod and agrees to continue working on her research for now.

“Good,” J’onn sighs, rubbing at his brow tiredly before leaning back and observing the lab. “Lena? I would keep this solely between us. This channel is secure and can only be accessed by us three. I don’t want Kara involved until we know more. Is that understood?” Lena and Alex both nod with some hesitance before J’onn lets out relieved breath.
“We’ll talk later, Ms. Luthor. Give my regards to Kara.”

“Will do, J’onn. Take care of yourself. You too… Alex.”

“Likewise, Lena.”

“Goodbye.”

* * *

October 28th, 2018

“Another shot?”

Alex looks up to the bartender, a woman—based on the tag over her breast—named Vickie and nods. Vickie smirks and pours some whiskey into the glass and slides it in Alex’s direction, leaning over the bar. Her breasts push-up, giving Alex a delicious view of her cleavage. But Alex isn’t in the mood tonight, despite the allure and ease of this woman’s flirtation, and only focuses on the drink in her hand. She knocks it back before demanding another.

“Thought I’d find you here.”

Alex doesn’t react to the familiar voice. “Did you ditch M’gann?”

“I figured that if you were coming here it was because you were avoiding me,” Maggie says as she comes to sit next Alex on the bar with a sigh. “I guess it’s my fault, really. We were supposed to talk and I bailed on you. I’m sorry.”

Alex snorts. “Actually, you kissed me.”

“Yeah,” Maggie hums, taking a shot from the bartender. “I did.”

“Why?” Alex asks, glancing over to her. “I broke up with you.”

Maggie just sighs. “Doesn’t mean I stopped loving you.”

“Mags,” Alex whispers hoarsely. “I can’t do this.”

“Do what?” Maggie asks, her voice scratchy. “Alex?”

Alex just swallows thickly, blinking back tears as she looks to her ex-fiancée with a pain-filled expression. She wants nothing more than to take Maggie into her arms, to kiss her senselessly, to love her and to be with her, to forget about the world—but she can’t. She can’t because she’s different now. She's changed. And it hurts her.

Because this isn’t a good change.

There's this heaviness in her mind, this dark cloud that seems to follow her everywhere. The world is bleak and everything makes her angry, so angry to the point where she just wants to tear her own damned head off. Her chest constantly hurts and she feels like she's about to lose her mind, but she can't let anyone know. She doesn't even know the full range of her powers and abilities, but she knows that if she has to power through the pain.

The city needs a protector, and while she's no Supergirl, she'll do what she must to save her people.

No matter the costs.
"Alex?" Maggie asks, drawing her out of her haze with a concerned voice. "You okay?"

“I love you,” Alex blurts out, her mind processing the words before she can stop them. “But I can’t be with you, Maggie. There’s stuff going on you don’t know about. Things I can’t tell you, or anyone. I can’t bring you into it.”

“Alex?” Maggie repeats worriedly. “What are you talking about? Are you in trouble or something? I can help you—”

“No,” Alex says as she leans over and pecks Maggie’s forehead sweetly. “I’m going to be fine, Mags, I just need to do this on my own. I would never forgive myself if something happened to you or to anyone else I love. I’m… sorry.”

“Alex, you’re scaring me now, what’s going on—”

I lost my baby.

I have the powers of a Kryptonian God.

I only have two years left to live.

I lost my baby.

I lost…

“Maggie,” Alex rasps as she places her hand on Maggie’s wrist and gives it a shaky squeeze. She can see Maggie wince, and she knows her grip was tighter than she had intended it to be. “Please… please don’t push it. I can’t.”

Maggie still looks conflicted, but Alex doesn’t give her the time to respond as she rises and grabs at her leather jacket. She kisses the top of Maggie’s head one last time before placing a few bills down on the bar countertop.

“See you around, Mags.”

*I * *

"I'm hallucinating."

Kara doesn't meant to let the words slip, but they do. Lena pauses mid-bite, her eyes widened in concern.

"I'm sorry," she says as she sets down her fork. "What?"

"I said I'm hallucinating," Kara repeats as she pushes her food around. "I can't sleep, I'm hallucinating, I feel sick almost all the time, and I can't focus. I'm losing my mind, Lena. I don't know what's wrong with me, honestly."

"Okay," Lena says slowly, processing the confession. "I can talk to a psychiatrist—"

"I don't need a shrink," Kara growls back, slamming her palm down on the table as her stomach flips. "Something is wrong, Lena, with me. I feel… I feel like there is something inside of me, something poisoning my mind, making me think things I would never usually think, see things… hear things. It's like… it's like something is trying to control me. And I feel angry, all the time, like I want to go out and tear the whole world apart. I can't stop it, Lena. I can't."
Lena looks over at her before she gets up and kneels beside her chair, placing a hand on her thigh. Kara hangs her head, sniffing as she feels her eyelids burning. It's the same feeling she usually gets before she uses her heat vision, only this time nothing is shot from her eyes except hot tears. Her chest aches and clenches with each sharp breath.

"I feel… I feel like I'm dying," Kara hoarsely chokes out, looking over to her girlfriend. "Lena… it hurts…"

"Kara—"

"I overheard you," she interrupts, her voice trembling. "Talking to Alex and J'onn. I heard what you said."

It takes a moment for Lena to understand what she's trying to say, before her face pales worriedly.

"Kara, it's purely experimental at this point, there's no guarantee—"

"I don't care," she growls as she reaches for Lena's hand. "I can't take this anymore, Lena. I'm scared…"

"You don't have powers right now," Lena says as she shakes her head. "I want you better, Kara. I want you happy and healthy, but Alex was right. There's no telling what the process could do to your body. It might make things worse."

"It can't get any worse," Kara tells her as she shakes her head, stifling a sob. "I'm in so much pain, Lena."

Before Lena can reply, Kara hears someone else interrupt their conversation.

"Pain is a human feeling. It's a part of our lives. It's a part of your life, Kara."

She looks up through her blurry vision to see Alex standing on the other end of the kitchen, twirling a knife in her hand. The ghost of her sister looks at her with an expressionless face, her posture relaxed and unsympathetic.

"Stop," Kara mutters as she tears her eyes away. "Get out of my head."

"Kara?" Lena asks, concerned again. "Who are you talking to?"

"She can't help you," Alex says again, despite Kara cupping her hands over her ears. "I exist as a figment of your imagination, Kara. I'm inside of you. There is no escape from whatever I have to say, so you may as well listen."

"Stop," Kara pleads, rocking back and forth as she tries to drown out the voice. "Stop, please…"

"You always thought humans to be weak, to not understand pain or suffering the way you have," Alex continues to say, her voice growing closer and louder than before, drowning out Lena's own. "You're so intelligent, so alien, so far ahead of us primitive beings, aren't you? But now you know, Kara, that there is more to being human than this."

Kara can't hold back as she looks up to see that she's no longer in the kitchen with Lena. Instead, she's on the rooftop, staring at the prone, motionless body of her aunt while Alex stands over her. She looks up to see the Kryptonite sword in Alex's hand, bloodied as it is slowly removed from Astra's cold, dead, body. Kara feels her loss consume her as she stumbles forwards,
collapsing at her aunt's side as she lets out a roar of grief.

"You think humans to be ruthless because we are so quick to take," Alex continues to say as she lets the sword clatter to the ground. "We never give, we always take. Isn't that right, Kara? But tell me, what have you given lately?"

"Nothing," Kara sobs out as she collapses over Astra's body. "I have nothing left to give."

"You think that your powers are all that you are," Alex says calmly, and this time the scene changes and Kara looks up to see Alex dressed in white, standing in an empty room with nothing but a small knife in her hand. Alex smiles.

"You are more than a cape and a suit," Alex says as she grips the knife tightly. "You are a God, Kara."

Kara's throat bobs dryly as Alex raises the knife over her exposed forearms, grinning sadistically.

"But Kara," Alex whispers softly before she plunges the knife down and cuts upwards, "even Gods bleed, too."

* * *

October 31st, 2018

Maggie always hated patrol on Halloween.

Most of the time it meant drunk kids engaging in far too much vandalism and noise complaints, and an unhealthy amount of public urination or nudity for her liking. But that was before Supergirl vanished and the city went off the rails. Now, Maggie would take the boring and gross reports over murder investigations any day of the week.

It’s ironic, because before, murder used to be her favourite to investigate. It’s in her blood as a detective and a cop to solve crimes and bring people to justice, but lately it feels too heavy.

Since the arrival of the mysterious super-being, Maggie had been called out to a lot of newly propped up murder cases. Typically, she’d show up to the scene of a criminal with his arms broken or his body twisted grotesquely. The nights were filled with bringing in perps with various injuries or mental scars. Some were killed, but they were lucky.

The ones who survived… not so much.

It is amazing how much things change in the span of less than a week. People went from confusion surrounding the mysterious being, to suddenly drawn between fearing and worshipping it for its actions. People flocked to televisions to proclaim their newfound safety, to rejoice in the justice delivered to criminals who had taken from them.

Meanwhile, the criminals had a less exciting time.

Maggie’s feelings towards the super-being is still bordering on indifferent, but perhaps that’s because she’s a citizen bound by the law. Granted, if she dug deep within herself, she’d uncover the nasty part of her which loathed watching criminals who got away with murder or rape because of a flawed justice system. That same nasty part of her would crave to bring an end to them herself.

Maggie sighs. Is this what the world has come to?
An eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind.

Alex had said that to her once, but she’s not so sure that the same Alex she knows now, battle-hardened and cold, would agree.

Maggie puts Alex aside, not wanting to think about the agent as she draws her attention back to her patrol. She’s about to turn the street corner when she hears a woman screaming ahead of her.

Maggie looks up from the wheel to watch as three beefy men drag a young woman into an alley. Maggie powers off the car and grabs at her gun. She radios in the call before she bounds out of the car and in the direction of the alley where the woman had been taken.

“Help! Please, someone help—”

“Shut the fuck up, bitch. Get on your knees.”

Maggie looks around to see one of the men roughly shoving the woman onto her knees. He chuckles at her sadistically, his free hand reaching for the buckle at his belt as he looms over her.

“Hands up!” Maggie shouts, “let her go, now.”

Maggie stands tall, shoving her gun up as she confidently walks into the alley. The man barely reacts as he undoes his zipper. His two friends look over at chuckle, before reaching behind them for their own guns. Maggie gulps as she realizes she’s outmatched.

“A friend for our friend,” the first man chuckles. “Convenient.”

“I love me a fucking cop,” the man closest to Maggie says with a sadistic grin. “More like, I love fucking a cop. Get over here, bitch. If you listen to what I say, I swear you might even get a kick out of it, too.”

“Please!” The woman shouts again, sobbing. “Help me!”

“I won’t hesitate to shoot,” Maggie threatens, but stands her ground as she doesn’t waver her gun. “Let her go immediately.”

“Or what?” The first man asks, smirking. “You’ll arrest me? You don’t look like you could even arrest a fly, bitch.” Maggie gulps as the other two men start stalking forward, sizing her up.

Where the fuck is her back-up?

“Let go of the gun, or I’ll make my boys do it for you,” the first man says coldly, nodding to his thugs, who cock their guns loudly.

Maggie hesitates, and it costs her.

Before she can fire off a shot, one of the men grapples at her arm, twisting it down into an unnatural angle, forcing her to drop the gun. Maggie screams as she’s shoved into the pavement, her brain going fuzzy as she makes out the sadistic laughing of the man behind her. The two men tear at her clothes, attempting to get at her skin. Maggie puts up a fight, punching and kicking harshly.

But it’s no use. The men are heavy and she’s smaller.

Tears burn in Maggie’s eyes as one of the men gags her, placing his sweaty hand over her mouth while the other claws at her belt.
But before any of them can make a move, there’s a thundering boom.

Dust clouds Maggie’s vision before the man who’d been gagging her is suddenly flung off of her. Maggie blinks and coughs, choking as she feels the other man promptly get flung off as well. The sounds of groans and moans echo through the alley before the dust clears.

And standing in the middle, its’ back ramrod straight, is the super-being.

“Boss,” one of the men chokes out, “run, it’s that—”

Before he can finish speaking, the being moves and juts its' arm out, protruding a dark blade from its forearm. Maggie gags at the gurgling sound which leaves the man’s throat as the blade tears through his chest before slicing downwards, splitting him in two.

The second man shouts in horror at the sight of his dead body.

The being is quick to act. It flies up to the man and grabs at his shoulders, and pulls, violently separating its arms from its body before carelessly tossing them aside. The man is still screaming, blood spouting from the protruding white of his bone as the being lifts him up by the neck before it snaps it and throws it down.

Only the last man remains, his pants still half-on his thighs.

“Holy shit,” the man whimpers as he crawls backwards, moving past the cowering woman as the being stalks in his direction. “Please… please don’t hurt me, I’ll never have sex again, I swear, please just spare me I’m sorry I—agh!”

The being stamps its' foot down on his thigh, trapping him with a wailing scream. The being remains standing, blade still extended from its' arm and dripping blood as it stares him down menacingly.

“Please,” the man begs, sobbing. “Please… I'm sorry. Please just stop…”

The being waits a moment, and for a second Maggie thinks it will let the man go. She eyes her gun and quickly scrambles for it, pulling the object into her hands and cocking it at the being.

When she pulls the trigger, the bullet ricochets off its armour.

The being doesn’t react, other than to tilt its head slightly over its shoulder to look at her. Maggie breathes heavily, her hand shaking as she fires another shot, which does absolutely nothing.

And then, while their eye-contact is made, the thing juts its bladed-arm downwards, piercing the man in the genital area before twisting hard. The man screams, writhing as the being then removes the blade and grabs at his collar. Maggie watches in horror as the being carries his squirming, bloodied body over to her, throwing it to the ground at her feet. He continues screaming painfully.

“You want something to shoot?” The being asks, its’ voice deep and almost space-like in nature. It kicks at the man, though its' head never moves from where it's fixated on her face. “Shoot him, Detective. Give him what he deserves.”

Maggie is almost hyperventilating now with panic as her eyes flicker from the being to the man on the ground. Her hands still tremble, but before she can shoot, the being’s hand clasps over her gun. Maggie looks up, lost in the cosmic swirling of the super-being’s visor.

She can hear murmuring behind her, and Maggie turns to see a small crowd ammassed at the mouth
of the alley, looking at the scene in a mixture of horror and awe. People have their phones out, 
taking videos and pictures of the events. Maggie swallows as she sees them piece together the 
narrative, from her ripped clothes to the dead men.

Then, Maggie turns back to the being.

It lowers Maggie’s hand, not pointing the gun to the man, but the ground. Maggie follows the 
motion shakily, before looking up again.

Finally, Maggie finds her voice, shaky and unsteady.

“Who are you?”

The being only takes as step back before it kneels to the ground where the man is sobbing. It 
places its’ thumb on his forehead, pressing down gently, until the man starts screaming and his 
skin begins to sizzle. Maggie gasps as she watches the flesh underneath be burned. Eventually, the 
being steps back and stands up, its’ visor tipped once again in Maggie’s direction, blank and stoic.

But Maggie can’t look at it.

Instead, all she sees is the symbol branded into the man’s head.

It’s the emblem of a sword, encased in an omega symbol.

At first, Maggie doesn’t know what it is. But then she finds herself sitting by Alex and Kara, 
listening to the two of them discuss other-world histories and folklore. Suddenly, Maggie looks to 
the burning black of the mark, knowing it’s not from fire.

It’s something far more painful, but the mark isn’t of violence.

It’s the Kryptonese symbol for justice.

Maggie looks back up to see the figure staring back at her, waiting. She swallows thickly, dropping 
her gun. The air remains silent as the metal clatters to the ground, before Maggie finds the will to 
speak. Her voice is breathy and weak when she whispers.

“What is your name?” Maggie asks, her voice raw.

The being remains paused for half a moment before it looks to the crowd behind them.

“My name,” it says stoically, “is Invictus.”
**Executioner**

Chapter Summary

A new threat arrives.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warnings for Graphic Depictions of Violence.

THIS IS A BIG ASS CHAPTER Y’ALL. It was heavily edited so that's why it took so long to post (I swear I say Sunday/Wednesday, but it always ends up Mon/Thurs, lol).

We're officially through the first arc of this story, and it only gets better from here.

For mood music, play the song, "In Every Dream Home, A Heartache" by Roxy Music (also known as the opening song for Mindhunter: Season 2). It's Dark!Alex's theme and y'all can fight me on that, but I really love the creepiness of it + the lyrics.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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**November 1st, 2018**

Some days, it feels like she's floating in an endless rivers.

Some days, it feels like time just passes and she barely exists.

Some days, she wakes up and forgets she ever fell asleep.

"Dissociation."

Kara looks up tiredly as her psychiatrist, Dr. Mitchell, uses the word in a calm voice. She feels a squeeze in her hand, and when Kara looks down, she sees a pale, smaller hand gripping her own tightly. She follows up the arm to her girlfriend's face, and she notes the mixture of tiredness and worry on Lena's face as they sit in the stuffy room together.

"Usually, the root cause is trauma." Dr. Mitchell continues speaking as he scribbles something down on a prescription pad. He tears it off and hands it to Lena, giving Kara a gentle, encouraging nod. "I'm prescribing anti-depressants. Specifically, Ciprolex, about 50mg to start her off, and we'll work our way up from there. I've also added an anti-anxiety med for when she has a panic attack. Based on the differential, we're looking at some complex Post-Traumatic Stress and Depression."

"I… I don't know if these will work," Lena says, trying not to arouse suspicion. "Is there a therapy you can prescribe?"

"Drugs are usually a first-line treatment, Ms. Luthor. And I know you have an impressive IQ on you, so you should also know that unless your friend here is not human, these drugs will work," Dr. Mitchell says, eyeing Kara carefully. "I must tell you, her case is quite complicated. If she is
dissociating, we don't want this to develop into something more debilitating."
"Mental illness is what it is," Lena replies coolly, "but you also know then, that therapy and medication works best."

Dr. Mitchell sighs and nods. "Yes. I can recommend CBT for the Depression, and Exposure for the PTS."

"Exposure?" Lena echoes. "But—"

"It is the gold standard treatment for trauma-related disorders," Dr. Mitchell continues, his gaze back on Kara now as she remains sitting, staring forward blankly. "You must get at the root of the trauma, expose it, and then deal with it in increments. If Ms. Danvers trauma is unable to be recreated physically, as often is the case with military trauma or cases of sole survivor syndrome—for example, a plane crash, we can try something called Narrative Exposure Therapy. It would require Kara to write or say aloud the trauma she has gone through multiple times in order to desensitize herself to it."

"I'm not sure that would work," Lena says, rubbing the back of her head. "The trauma is… confidential.""Unless Ms. Danvers intends to hurt herself or others, it will remain confidential."

"You'd be surprised how little and NDA means, Doctor."

"If you want, we could try—"

"No," Kara mutters as she takes the prescription from Lena's hand and stands abruptly. "The drugs are fine."

"Kara—"

"I said the drugs are fine!" Kara snarls, whirling on Lena as her chest starts to burn. Rage billows through her, hot and screaming, and for a moment, Kara feels like her bones are melting. She wants to tear out her hair, tear out these walls, tear down the whole damned world, but she can barely lift her fingers. She shakes her head and looks to the paper sadly.

"I'm human," she mutters, shrugging. "It'll work. It has too."

Lena's eyes flash worriedly. "Kara—"

"Enough," Kara murmurs, her head throbbing as she looks over to her girlfriend defeatedly. "I'm tired, Lee. Please."

"Today has been a long day," Dr. Mitchell cuts in slowly, trying to diffuse the tension with his calm voice. "I think it would be best if you both went home and rested. Perhaps take the rest of the day off to consider what we've talked about."

Lena looks ready to argue, but then she looks away and her shoulders slump in defeat. Kara wants to reach out, to give her comfort, to tell her that she's sorry that all of this is happening, that she's losing her mind, that she's losing herself—

But instead, she stays quiet.

Their drive home is long and tense, and Kara swears she can hear Lena's heart beating against her
chest in concern.

When they pull up on the driveway, Kara practically leaps out of the car, the new pill bottles rattling in the opaque paper bag in her hand. She doesn't wait for her girlfriend as she rushes through the house and towards the main bedroom. She doesn't bother grabbing water as she shuts the door behind her and slides against the door, holding her head in her hands as she feels the first round of sobs take her over. She trembles against the wood, her teeth clenched tightly.

"You're okay, you're okay, you're okay…," she murmurs to herself, rocking slowly. "It's okay…"

But it's not okay.

It hasn't been okay in months.

"Okay," Kara whispers as she unfurls the paper bag and reaches in for the pill bottle. She shakes out the anti-depressant and looks over at it in the palm of her hand. As a Kryptonian, drugs were essentially useless against her genetics. As a Kryptonian, emotions were a thing, but mental illness, the chemicals in her brain, the neurotransmitters and hormones, they didn't exist. Feelings were separate entities and pain was non-existent. She still could develop reactions to trauma.

But nothing on a purely neurological, curable level.

"I'm not Kryptonian anymore," Kara murmurs as she raises her hand. "Am I?"

Without further ado, she knocks back the pill and swallows it dry.

* * *

"I think we've delayed this long enough, Alex."

"We're not doing it, Lena."

"She needs to know."

"She does not."

Lena rubs at her face tiredly as she looks at a frustrated Alex on the other end of the screen. After the day she's had, the agent's obstinance is the last thing she wants or needs right now. She can see J'onn pacing in the background, also annoyed with the turn of the conversation, but she isn't sure if his annoyance is towards her or his subordinate.

At this point, Lena could not give a damn what either of them think.

Kara had locked herself up in the room hours ago, and she knows that her girlfriend is suffering in more than one way. She knows that trauma was not a new story for Kara—for God's sake, her entire planet was destroyed before her eyes. It was that now there were new symptoms. The pain, the confusion, the dissociation, the anhedonia, the panic attacks.

This is all uncharted territory, and despite being a certified genius, Lena feels incredibly out of her element.

"Lena," Alex says again, "focus. I told you, we're not doing it. That's final."

"Alex," Lena sighs, trying again. "I know she’s your sister and you want to protect her but trust me, keeping all of this from Kara is worse. She already knows about this so-called Invictus character, and she already knows the state of affairs in NC."
“Lena, no—”

Lena slams her hand on the table. “Alex, for fuck’s sake stop!”

Alex’s mouth opens and closes before she turns away. Lena doesn’t have to be in the same room to feel the heartache in the elder Danvers’ chest. She can see the fear in Alex’s eyes, and it’s not at her raised voice, but the intonation of it. She knows of Alex’s conflict—it’s one she feels similarly about, but she knows Kara would hurt more knowing everyone tried to baby-proof her world knowing she’s without powers. Right now, Kara needs reality, not a soft fantasy world.

“What's going on?” Alex asks, her voice hoarse. "What aren't you telling me, Lena?"

Lena looks to the side, combing through her hair with shaky fingers. She can hear Alex’s bated breath, can feel the worry from miles away just from the glare she sees in her periphery. She takes a moment to compose herself before she replies.

"Kara is sick," she mumbles as she dejectedly looks up at the redhead. "Something is wrong with her mind, Alex."

J’onn frowns. "Mind control?"

"No," Lena replies as she looks to where Alex is now avoiding her glance. "She gets bursts of pain from her chest, and she's complaining that her mind is hazy and unclear. She's dissociating. It's a response typical of someone with PTS, but you told me that with her genetic sequencing, there is no physical scarring on her brain due to it's invulnerability."

Alex bites at her bottom lip worriedly. "Did you... take her to someone?"

Lena sighs and nods. "We saw a psychiatrist today. Kara got meds."

Alex's eyes flash and she nearly leaps from her position beside J’onn. "What kind of meds?"

"Anti-depressants and an anti-anxiety. It's low dose—"

"She can’t take them," Alex blurts out as she starts pacing. "Dad and I created an anti-depressant that specifically works with her genetic sequencing. Kara used to take them after she came here, before we moved to National City." Lena frowns.

"You created a new experimental drug at only fifteen?"

Alex rolls her eyes incredulously. "That’s all you got from that?"

"Sorry," Lena says as she rubs her brow. "But Kara already took a dose. I can have a shipment flown out tomorrow. I'll just get a carrier to come to the DEO to pick it up. Do you have them on-hand at the lab?" Alex nods, sighing with relief.

"One dose shouldn't do anything, but keep an eye on her for the next twenty-four hours."

"I will," Lena says reassuringly. "I love her, Alex. I would do anything for her, you know that."

Alex sighs before she nods. "I know. I'm sorry I snapped, I'm just worried. I... I can't lose her, Lena."

“You won’t lose her, Alex. I swear,” Lena urges her. "Kara is the strongest woman alive. Literally."
Alex sighs. “She's going to be pissed that I'm trying to keep this all from her—obviously not well, either.”

Lena smiles half-heartedly, trying to convey some sense of encouragement. “Yeah, she will, but it doesn’t mean that you can’t make it up. You two have the strongest bond in this entire world, Alex. But she'll get over it eventually. You know she will. Alex, that woman loves you more than she'll ever love anyone else, including me. I know it's also reciprocal.”

Alex blushes and looks down. Lena smiles at the bashful expression on the agent's face before she sighs. "Besides, did you really think that Kara wasn't going to find out about this eventually? She's not dumb, Alex. She's perceptive."

Alex ponders this for a moment, and once again, Lena sees more than just the worry of keeping Kara safe. There’s more to the conflict in her eyes, to the twitching of her fingers, and even though J'onn seems a bit oblivious, Lena sees right through it. Mostly, because Kara has a very similar tell, and despite the two being unrelated, they are still truly sisters.

“Fine,” Alex eventually sighs, rubbing her brow. “We’ll tell her about everything… eventually.”

Lena lets out a relieved breath as she nods. “Thanks, Alex. I'll send a note out for that carrier.”

“Don’t,” Alex says as she raises her hand. "I'll make arrangements from here. Just… keep her safe, Luthor?"

Lena holds Alex’s gaze confidently, trying to make her trust known.

“I promise, Danvers.”

* * *

J'onn sits at his office in the DEO, looking over the scans of Invictus and trying to connect it to the events of the past few months. From the para-demon attacks, to the recent interaction he had with the being at the Danvers' residence in Midvale. He runs the pads of his fingers over the computer screen, frowning as he looks at Invictus' armour with interest.

"Sir?"

J'onn looks up to see Alex, donned in her civvies—a well-worn leather jacket, some Doc Martens, and a pair of ripped black skinny jeans—staring back at her. He leans up in his chair and nods, acknowledging the agent. Alex sighs tiredly.

"I put out a word out for one of the agents in the Delta team to deliver the drug. It'll be there by tonight."

J'onn nods appreciatively before he takes in her body. "How are you holding up, Alex?"

"My sister is struggling and she's halfway across the world," Alex says as she shrugs. "We've got a potential maniac on the loose, and there might be a world war brewing that we might not have the firepower to stop. Safe to say I'm doing fine."

"Are you?" J'onn asks, arching his brow. "How have your sessions with Dr. Marsh been going?"

Alex flinches and J'onn sighs. "Alex—"

"I know," Alex says as she raises a hand. "It's just, I don't think that therapy is all that crucial right
"Contrary to your belief, Alex, but your mental health is just as important as your physical one," J'onn says as he looks back to the screens with rapt interest. "Whatever this thing is, we have to be in our best shape to bring it to light. There's a leak somewhere in the DEO, I know it. I trust you, Alex, and I also trust that you can't hide anything from me." Alex chuckles.

"You can read my mind, sir—"

"But the thing is, Alex, I can't. Ever since you came back, I haven't been able to access a single thought," J'onn says as he looks up at her mysteriously. He tries now, but still nothing comes clear. It's almost as if there is some physical block.

Alex only frowns. "That's impossible. I'm human. We're the easiest species for you to read."

"And yet I can't read your mind," J'onn finishes, leaning back in his chair. "Which makes me question what exactly happened in those weeks you had been missing." J'onn looks back to the screen, Alex following his sight with concern.

"J'onn, you don't think that I could have anything to do with it, do you?"

J'onn looks at Invictus' visor, to the swirling back cosmos. "How did it know to come to your house?"

Alex swallows thickly. "J'onn, I think you're reading into things. I'm human—"

J'onn cuts her off gently. "Then you'll have no issue if I request a full physical exam for you tomorrow morning."

Alex stiffens, crossing her arms in disbelief. "Seriously? I wouldn't slice a guy's balls off, J'onn. Come on."

"I've already booked you a slot with Dr. Hamilton in the morning," J'onn says as he looks at her gravely. Alex swallows thickly, and J'onn knows that the unsettling feeling he had swimming in his gut only adds to his worry. He doesn't need the ability to read minds to be able to read Alex's posture and feelings right now. He sighs, rubbing his forehead gently.

"Alex," J'onn murmurs, "what Invictus did—"

"It's not me," Alex says again, her voice low and hard. "I'm leaving now. I'll see Dr. Hamilton in the morning."

J'onn doesn't get a chance to say goodbye before Alex is rushing out the door and towards the parking garage. He sighs as he follows her retreating form before he turns back to the computer, typing up some notes in an encrypted document. If his suspicions are correct, he will need to find a way to explain Alex's actions to the Justice League. What Invictus did to those men, to Sanders, is worthy of capital punishment, vigilante or not. All the more reason J'onn wishes to be wrong.

It's just before midnight when he finishes up his report. He saves it onto a drive before powering off his computer and making is way downstairs to his own car. The DEO is quiet now, except the odd agent here and there working the late shift. J'onn bids them farewell before he makes his way through the garage and towards his old, baby-blue Chevy.

Just as he is about to put his key into the lock, he hears something from behind him.
J'onn turns, frowning. "Hello? Who's there?"

When nothing replies back, J'onn hesitates. Must be hearing something. Should go home and rest…

But then the noise sounds again, a small, quiet moan.

"Hello?" J'onn calls out again, walking towards the source of the noise. "Is someone there?"

The soft, almost crying-like sound keeps getting louder as he approaches an old Camero in the corner of the garage. J'onn jogs over, his muscles tensed and ready to shape-shift if needed. He approaches the car and frowns as he sees a small trickle of blood coming from behind the car. J'onn moves around the front of the car and gasps at the sight before him.

"Vasquez?" J'onn exclaims in surprise as he kneels down before the bleeding woman. "Who did this?!"

But Vasquez only shakes her head, eyes wide with fear. "N-No… t-trap…"

"Trap?" J'onn asks, "what do you mean—"

He doesn't get to finish his question before everything goes black.

* * *

November 2nd, 2018

Alex hovers in the clouds above the small farmhouse, the rain pelting down against her armour as she listens to the gentle crashing of the waves against the cliffs only a few miles away. The world here is quieter, less bustle and noise than a city. A small smile creeps up on her face as she realizes why Kara likes it so much. It reminds her of home, of the mountains.

I would advise against this, Kelex says in her ear. Your arrival with the drugs will arise suspicion.

"J'onn already knows," Alex sighs as she hovers down towards the bedroom window where she knows her sister is sleeping. "I don't think I need to keep this act up anymore, Kelex. I know she'll be disappointed—horrified even—but I can't keep doing this to her. She's not okay, and a big part of the reason she's not okay is because of me. I can accept that."

You are not her keeper, Alex.

"But I am her sister," Alex replies as she hovers outside the cracked-open window. "And I'll always protect her."

She creeps into the room, landing soundlessly on the carpets as she drips water all over the floors. She keeps her mask on as she reaches into the compartment of her suit to retrieve the small case of pills. She walks over to where Kara is sleeping—and it's then Alex notices the other side of the bed is empty. A quick scan of the entire house reveals Lena in her lab, asleep atop her desk, surrounded by schematics and formulas for synthesizing White Kryptonite. Alex sighs sadly.

She turns her attention to her sister, who's looking pained even in sleep.

It makes her heart break, because the only time Kara ever found peace was in sleep.

Alex steps forward and kneels, her armoured hand reaching out and hovering over Kara's head. She swallows thickly, watching as water droplets roll off her fingers and onto Kara's forehead. She goes
to pull back, but it's no use.

Kara's eyes blink open to half-slits.

Alex expects her to scream, to run, to call for help, but instead, Kara only stares at her with dull blue eyes.

For some reason, this reaction is more terrifying than any other one she could have possibly imagined.

But then, Kara speaks, her voice cracking as she asks, "are you here to kill me?"

Alex remains speechless, her vision blurring quickly with tears as Kara looks over in the direction of the pills she set on the desk drawer. Alex follows her gaze, her heart clenching inside of her chest as she takes in the defeat in Kara's eyes.

Kara doesn't just look tired.

She looks exhausted.

"No," Alex replies, her voice modulated as she turns her gaze back to her sister. "They're from… a friend."

"Friend?" Kara echoes, eyes glazing. "Alex…"

"She's okay," Alex assures her, taking a leap by placing her hand atop Kara's own. "I promise."

Kara just shakes her head and lets her eyelids slide shut again. All Alex wants to do is take off her mask and reveal herself, to pull her sister into her arms and hold her close and ward off whatever is trying to wear her down. But she can't, because right now, Kara needs normalcy. She needs hope, and everything Invictus has done so far hasn't been for hope or help.

"I'm sorry," Alex whispers, but she can tell that Kara's already fast asleep. "I love you."

Alex, Ms. Luthor is awake and is coming towards the bedroom. You must leave immediately.

Sniffling, Alex blinks back her tears as she stumbles towards the window. She hovers outside of it, taking one last look at her sleeping sister before she quietly flies up towards the sky. It's only when she's at a safe distance away from the house does she go supersonic, flying through the thunderstorm and pelting rain in the direction of National City. It takes less than fifteen minutes for her to get back into her own airspace, flying over massive skyscrapers and bustling traffic.

Within moments, Alex hears a scream for help and she feels the pull in her mind, urging towards the cry for help.

It's like an addiction, and Alex knows she's powerless to the pull.

* * *

Kara sits at the edge of the Cliffs of Moher once again, listening to the soothing sounds of the water splashing up against the rocky base as she tries to settle the cloudiness in her mind. Her eyes settle on the coastline, to where storm clouds are rolling in over the turbulent water. Her hands weed through the long grass, feeling the silky texture in her palms.

She'd taken one of the pills this morning. She hadn't told Lena that it wasn't a carrier that had dropped it off, because she's still unsure if she really saw Invictus in the flesh, or if it was another
hallucination she's been having. While the drug worked quickly, she's still not feeling one-hundred percent. It's certainly better than the prescribed anti-depressant.

Alex knew to make the pill before Jeremiah had come up with the idea. After she'd been traumatized by the popcorn-maker, Alex had made it her mission to protect her. Kara never saw it then, the amount of things Alex had given up and sacrificed to make her life easier, to make her life more comfortable even at the expense of her own comfort. She remembers Alex slaving over formulas while simultaneously studying for every other exam and course under the sun.

When Kara had told her not to worry, that she'd be okay, Alex had only held her close to chest.

Okay isn't good enough, she'd murmured before kissing her head. You deserve more than just okay, Kara.

Kara sniffs as she thinks about the memory, of Alex proudly presenting the finished pill. Jeremiah's hand was clasped proudly on her shoulder as she held it out, told her seriously of all the potential side-effects, as well as what to expect. Kara remembers leaping forward and wrapping her sister in a bone-crushing hug which left bruises for a few weeks.

Bruises which Alex wore proudly, Kara distinctively remembers.

"Thought I would catch you out here."

Kara smiles softly at the sound of her lover’s voice. She turns, facing “Hi, Lena.”

Lena comes to sit beside Kara, tucking her knees up to her chest as the two of them look out over the horizon with the wind blowing gently in their hair. The grass is still wet from the morning’s rain, but her girlfriend doesn't seem to mind the dampness. Lena’s hand lightly places itself over her own. Kara takes a deep breath and closes her eyes, finding peace.

“What are you thinking about?” Lena asks, kissing her shoulder. "Baby?"

“The world is in trouble,” Kara says, not opening her eyes. Lena’s breath hitches, and Kara opens her eyes to look at her lover sadly. "I know you and Alex are trying to protect me, but I can't hide away from the truth, Lena. I can't be treated with kid-gloves just because I'm powerless. I may not have been born here, but those are my people. I protect them."

"Kara," Lena says gently, "you don't need to—"

“National City needs Supergirl back,” Kara tells her, reading Lena’s mind by the expression on her face. She takes a deep breath and steadies herself as she thinks back to Invictus at her bedside. “I know you’ve been keeping things from me. I know it probably is because Alex told you to, but I know, Lena.” Lena gives her a sympathetic look as Kara looks back up to the horizon, letting herself breathe the ocean air in one more time. She memorizes the final sensation of freedom.

“Kara, if you aren’t ready—”

“I am,” Kara says, “but there’s somewhere we need to go first. And I think it will help me get my powers back.”

* * *

“Judge, Jury, and Executioner: has National City’s new superhero taken it too far, or is the change needed? The latest report reveals crime levels in city have seen a dramatic drop since the introduction of Invictus, a vigilante super-creature taking charge of dealing punishment to
criminals across the city. Its' signature brand, the Kryptonian symbol of justice, is hung and etched into each street and building, reminding us of its looming threat on every corner and wall in the city...

“It’s almost as terrifying as The Bat, I heard.”

Alex looks over her whiskey glass to where bar patrons are discussing the news report. She'd spent the whole early morning zipping through the town, helping with everything from carjackings to muggings. She knows she was supposed to report into work this morning and see Dr. Hamilton, but the way Alex figures, if J’onn already knows, there's no point.

He’ll come get her eventually.

Until then, she can do her best to help as much as she can.

“I heard that The Bat used to do the brand before Superman made him change. I think this Invictus guy is the real deal. I mean, I would never want to be caught by him. That dude is one next level of crazy. Did you see what it did to that man?”

“What makes you think it’s a him,” his friend chuckles as he chugs back a long sip of beer, “only women are capable of dealing that rigorous of a punishment. I mean, surely, you’d hesitate to cut a dude’s dick off, wouldn’t you?”

“Yeah,” the first man says with a grimace, “it’s probably a chick, you're right.”

“I wonder if it’s a Kryptonian,” the second ponders. “Or what if—get this, it’s actually Supergirl, but she’s gone dark on us.”

"What, like some sort of alter-ego thing?"

"You never know, man. Aliens are weird."

"Ha! I'll drink to that."

Alex chuckles, chugging down the rest of her whiskey before tapping the counter for more. She continues drinking, tuning out the conversation happening beside her as she looks up to the news. She feels her stomach turn at the new report.

“Breaking news out of National City. Some kind of portal has just opened up near CatCo Publishing. It seems to be the same aliens that were attacking the city only days ago. Police are advising all citizens to remain calm and not to—"

Suddenly, the television cuts out as the power in the bar goes.

Alex sets her whiskey down. Kelex?

Aerial and satellite images confirm the news-caster’s report. They are para-demons, counting at least twelve near the main office. The portal is larger in magnitude than before. I believe this threat is more than some harmless para-demons.

“Right then,” she mutters to herself, “let’s suit up.”

* * *

Maggie fires a shotgun shell into an oncoming para-demon, panting as she struggles to find cover as another one comes flying in her direction. She quickly ducks out of the way, sending the creepy
bug-like creature careening into the wall. She huffs out a breath as she reloads her gun and ducks out of cover to assess the situation, only to see more portals opening.

Great. Maggie just rolls her eyes and sucks in a deep breath, pumping her shotgun again.

“If I’m not getting too old for this shit, man.”

Maggie goes to break cover when a whoooshing sound bursts through the air. She looks up and watches as Invictus cuts through the air and grabs at two of the para-demons before launching up into the sky and plummeting back down. Maggie watches, jaw slack in awe, as Invictus literally throws them down, smashing them into the concrete violently. Even if Maggie had thought the demons were dead, Invictus slams downwards, its' boots snapping their backs upon impact.

Invictus stands from the rubble, its' legs coated in black blood and wiring as it looks in Maggie’s direction blankly.

“Well don’t just stand there!” Maggie shouts, eyes-wide as she watches another portal open. “Kill them!”

Invictus doesn’t reply as it shoots through the air in the direction of the portal, ripping apart and tossing aside para-demons in its path like they're made of paper. While her relationship to this mysterious vigilante is now bordering on neutral, there is something relieving about having a bigger degree of fire-power for such a fight. Maggie huffs good-naturedly (and a bit bittersweetly, if she is to really admit it) that she misses Supergirl and her cheery crime-fighting.

The sound of para-demons screeching pulls Maggie from her thoughts as she looks up to see Invictus taking on four at once. One of them is climbing on the vigilante's back, attempting to claw through its' armour. She can see Invictus scrambling at it, trying to pry the damned thing off, but is too distracted by the other demons to deal with it.

"That suit armour better be bullet-proof," Maggie calls out, "turn around, you metal bastard!"

Invictus turns just in-time to watch as Maggie cocks her gun and fires at the para-demon, sending the slug straight through the demon's head and splattering blood and flesh everywhere. With the bug finally off its' back, Maggie watches as the being rips apart the last three with ease, throwing their limp bodies aside without a glance. It looks at Maggie.

"Thank you," it says, voice modulated. "Go. I will take care of the rest."

Not one to argue, Maggie just nods and scrambles from cover. She watches as more portals open up overhead, releasing more of the damned bastards. She shakes her head in awe as Invictus zooms up towards them without hesitation, blades protruding from its' armour as it starts slicing through the onslaught of para-demons emerging from the portals.

Stepping away from the vigilante, Maggie goes through abandoned apartment buildings, radioing in the police to start the evacuations while Invictus continued to slay demons and buy them some time. Maggie clambers through rubble, helping shell-shocked citizens as they run from the danger.

Maggie is about to move onto another building when she freezes.

A high-pitched whirring sound erupts, drawing Maggie’s attention back to the centre of the make-shift battlefield. Her eyes widen as she sees a stream of black shooting from Invictus’ visor. It’s similar to Kara's heat vision, only black.

Maggie gulps, a cold sweat breaking out on her neck as she looks to the searing black stream.
"What are you?"

But her question goes unanswered, because she's interrupted by a high-pitched scream.

“Help!”

Maggie turns her head to the side to see a little girl trapped under some rubble. Eyes wide with fear, Maggie bolts to her side, heaving as she lifts the rock off of her damaged leg and pulls the girl into her side, wrapping her in a gentle hug.

“Ssh,” she coos gently, rocking her in a soothing motion as the girl starts sobbing. “Hush, it’s okay, you’re safe.”

But Maggie eats her words then, because a para-demon lands in front of them, its' massive jaw parting to reveal sharpened teeth and gleaming eyes. Maggie reaches for her shotgun and pulls the trigger, but the demon only gets shot backwards a few feet before it spreads its wings and darts forward. Maggie quickly angles her body in front of the girl.

Maggie braces for impact, but instead, she gets a gush of wind.

She watches, in awe, as Invictus flings the para-demon aside like it’s made of paper, before holding its hand out for Maggie and the little girl. Maggie can see the spots of blood from the demons on its armour, tinting the glowing silver accents a gruesome crimson. Its' blades are retracted now, but the spots of black splattered across steel is unnerving.

“Come with me,” Invictus says calmly. “I will take you to safety.”

“I'm scared,” the little girl whimpers, curling closer to Maggie as it looks up at the daunting figure warily. Invictus wiggles its fingers, trying to be more urgent. Maggie holds the girl tighter to her chest, ready to answer for both herself and the little girl, but then an earth-cackling boom shatters the moment, causing Invictus to turn around at the source of it.

Maggie follows its' gaze and her mouth opens in shock.

There, standing at the foot of the biggest portal that's opened so far, is a massive man-like giant, with an intricate ornate helmet and an electricity-buzzing axe. His armour, glinting in the mid-evening light, is gold and bronze, making him to appear like royalty. He looks at them both, before his gaze flits over to where Invictus is now standing, fists clenched.

“Finally,” the new man growls with a grin as he brandishes his axe, “The Champion.”

* * *

“You’re sure this is the place?”

“These are the coordinates your cousin gave me, so yes.”

Kara looks over to where Lena is shivering, a parka wrapped around her frame. Even she is cold, now that she doesn’t have her powers to regulate her body’s temperature. She walks up to Lena and looks out into the frozen tundra, trying to figure out what about this place could be so special to Kal. All she sees is ice and snow. She trembles in her jacket warily.

“Kara,” Lena says, her teeth chattering, “you’re positive?”

“I think so,” Kara says, before digging deep as she closes her eyes. “I know so.”
Without thinking, Kara takes a step forward.

At first, nothing happens. She waits, but then when she feels everything stay the same, she opens her eyes and turns to Lena. Her mouth opens, ready to say something to her girlfriend about turning around, but then the ice beneath her cracks. Lena’s eyes widen in fear and Kara steps back, not wanting to fall into the icy water just in case it fully cracks.

But instead of the ice giving way to cold water, it shifts and lowers until it’s a ramp, leading towards a large white door. Kara looks at it in awe, before turning to Lena, who looks like she’s just witnessed a miracle. Kara reaches out, extending her hand. A new hope flutters in her chest, one that she’s not felt since she’d lost her powers all those months ago.

“You ready?” Lena asks, looking to the hand. Kara nods bravely.

“I am.”

The two of them walk down the snowy plane until they reach the door. Kara steps forward, placing her hand against the snow. A blue light gently hums to life beneath her palm before the door slides upwards, revealing a long stretch of hallway under the ice.

They continue walking forward, looking at the random things encased in clear ice around them. Kara can tell Lena’s mind is running a mile a minute trying to take it all in as the air around them suddenly grows warmer and a bright light pours into view.

Before, it’d been ice, but now it feels like a jungle.

Wildlife of all kinds surround them, but something about it off. Kara pauses as she takes in the sight of two familiar lizards climbing up a tree branch before disappearing into the greenery.

“These aren’t Earth creatures,” Lena says, unzipping her parka as she looks around. “Neither are the flora or soil. This is…”

Kara feels tears burn in her eyes as her chest bursts in bittersweet joy. She kneels down and places her hand in the soft soil, clenching it tightly in her fist before she looks to Lena.

“It’s Krypton.”

* * *

“You must be wondering who I am.”

Alex steps a few feet in front of Maggie to face the titan of a man, her hands flexing at her side. She scans him, assessing his vulnerably body parts as he stalks forward, unabashedly confident and arrogant. She stays quiet, wary of him.

“My name is Steppenwolf,” the man leers, “and I was sent here by Lord Darkseid himself to slay Earth’s Champion.”

Steppenwolf, Alex thinks, Kelex, you got anything on this guy?

Steppenwolf is the uncle and herald to Darkseid, Kelex replies as a series of images flash up on her visor, he commands Apokolips’ army of para-demons, which would explain why they are not fighting against him. He is here to kill you, Alex.

Alex only rolls her eyes inside her helmet. Who isn't at this point?
“So, Champion,” Steppenwolf bellows, extending his axe in a show of bravado that only makes Alex want to gag. He grins in her direction, eager and curious. “Show me what the Gods have boasted about. Let me test your powers myself.”

Alex quickly turns to Maggie and the little girl.

"Run."

* * *

“It seems to be that this is a piece of the planet that must have landed on Earth when it was destroyed,” Lena notes as they walk around the jungle area before entering a new hallway made of glass walls and arching ceilings. “It looks like items from Krypton were stored here, kind of like a time machine, so they could be seen.”

Lena is rambling now, she knows it, but she can’t help it. To have the remains of a dead planet in what could be considered your backyard was a marvel. She can’t believe her eyes as she looks around to the works of art and scriptures in Kryptonese.

But then Kara comes to a halt abruptly, causing Lena to smash into her back. She rubs at her nose painfully, ready to ask Kara what’s wrong, when she follows Kara’s watery gaze to two marble statues.

“Who are they?” Lena asks, but from Kara’s reaction, she knows.

Kara’s hand reaches out, her fingers gently touching the marble.

“My parents.”

* * *

Maggie doesn’t hesitate at Invictus’ command.

She grabs the girl by the waist and sprints just as she hears Steppenwolf start to laugh again. Maggie cocks her head over her shoulder to see him whirling his axe around in the air to draw lightening to its blades. Maggie gathers the little girl in her arms and heads towards and abandoned building, settling them both down behind some rubble. Maggie makes sure the girl is okay before she peaks back out to see Invictus staring Steppenwolf down, dwarfed by his lumbering gait.

“They say you killed Kryptonian gods,” Steppenwolf grins as he circles Invictus, eyeing up the being appreciatively. “They say you ripped their hearts from their chests, their heads from their necks, like they were made of nothing at all.”

Invictus keeps watching him pace, undeterred by the jabber.

“Kryptonians are weaklings compared to those born from the blood of Apokolips,” Steppenwolf sneers, brandishing his axe. “And now, Champion, I will taste the blood of a world-killer on my lips as I suck it from your veins, drop by drop, as you scream for mercy.”

He jolts forward, his axe-blade pointed outwards as he heads full force into Invictus. The super-being only grabs at the blade and twists its’ hands, swinging the man around before throwing him into an opposing building. Invictus leaps into the air and flies after Steppenwolf’s path of destruction with its’ blades extended fully, leaving Maggie in the dust.

Just as she’s about to break for cover, another whooshing sound startles her. She looks to the side
to see J’onn standing in front of her in his Martian armour, concern on his face as he looks between her and the girl, and then to the fight ahead.

“Are you injured?” He asks calmly, turning back to her. “Can you walk?”

“We’re fine,” Maggie breathes out, relieved to see a friendly and trust-worthy face. “Invictus went after that huge axe-man, Steppenwolf. I don’t know either of their game, but right now it seems to be defeating our enemy so let’s keep it that way. Can you fly us out? I don't think it's safe here and we need to find this girl's family. As much as I'd help, I can't do it.”

J’onn nods and extends his arms. “I'll take you to the DEO.”

Maggie turns back to look at Invictus, watching as Steppenwolf throws its' body into a building.

"What about Invictus? Where's the Justice League?" Maggie asks as he takes the girl first. "It needs help, J'onn!"

"It will be fine," J'onn says reassuringly, reaching out for her. "Come on now. This is no place for you, Detective."

* * *

“You look like your mother.”

Kara smiles tearily as she looks to the careful engraving of her mother’s face in the stone. She can’t help her heart from beating in her chest wildly at the sight of her looking so young and free.

It helps ease the pain of the last memory she had of her, a face morphed by fear and love, as she’d sealed the door on her pod.

“She’d be proud of you,” Lena tells her gently, placing a hand on her shoulder. “You are the hero this world needs, even if it doesn’t not always deserve it.” Kara sighs and closes her eyes.

I am proud of you.

Kara’s eyes blink open at the familiar voice, but when she does, suddenly she’s not in the sweeping hall with Lena at her side.

Kara’s in her home, at Krypton, standing before her parents.

“Mom?” Kara asks, her voice cracking. “Mom!”

“Oh Kara,” her mother sighs as Kara runs forward and burrows herself into the mother’s grasp. “Look at how much you’ve grown. You’re so beautiful and strong.” Kara sobs into her mother’s arms, clutching onto the soft fabric of her robe as she’s held gently.

“My little bug,” her father beams from beside her, laying his hand atop her back with a proud, emotional smile. “You’ve done so well.”

“I tried…,” Kara continues to cry. “I tried so hard…”

“Ssh,” her mother coos, pecking her hair, “we know, baby.”

“My powers,” Kara sniffles, leaning back as she looks to her mother and father desperately. “I lost them, Mom, I lost them and I… the world is in trouble… and just like on Krypton, I can’t save them…”
“Kara,” her mother tells her gently, reaching up to curl some hair behind her ear, before placing those fingers upon her chest. When Kara looks down, she sees she’s in her suit, with that emblazed S.

“What does this stand for?” Her mother asks softly. Kara swallows.

“I know what it stands for, but it doesn’t—”

“Kara,” her father interrupts kindly. “What does it stand for?”

Kara’s throat bobs as she holds back tears. “Hope.”

Her father smiles. “What was one thing we always taught you, Kara?”

“To have hope,” Kara says, standing taller. “To stand strong.”

“To stand strong,” her mother echoes loving, “to stand together.”

“This universe has taken much from you, sweetheart. You have seen pain and agony beyond what you deserve,” her father says, placing his hand on her shoulder as he kisses her hair. “But you have weathered this storm, and you will weather many more. Krypton may be gone, but your home will always be here, on Earth, with your new family, your friends, and your love.” Kara blushes at that.

Her mother only smiles wider. “She’s lovely, Kara.”

“A real looker,” her father jokes, “you picked well, Kara Zor-El.”

“She’s everything,” Kara says proudly. “She’s my anchor, Dad. So… so is my sister, Alex. But we’ve had a falling out recently and…”

“We know of Alexandra Danvers, Daughter of Eliza and Jeremiah Danvers,” her mother replies, her expression full of love as she speaks. “We watched her shape you into the person you are today. Kal might have picked Eliza and Jeremiah to be your guardians, but we know that the real person who raised you is your sister. And for that, we are forever grateful. She loves you very much, Kara.”

“She’s in trouble,” Kara says worriedly. “All of Earth is.”

“Yes,” her father sighs, “but this was to happen. It is why we destined your pod to be there alongside Kal’s own. Krypton was dying, yes, but there were greater forces at play in the universe.”

Kara frowns, looking up at her father in confusion. “What?”

“You will find out in due time,” her mother assuages, “but for now you are needed back in National City.” Kara frowns sadly, sighing.

“I don’t have powers, I—”

“Come here,” her mother says, beckoning Kara into her embrace. “We do not have much, but we are able to give you this at least.” Kara frowns against her mother’s shoulder as her chest starts to burn.

“What?” Kara blurts out, pulling back in fear as she watches the light haloing around her parents’ figures start to fade. “Mom? Dad? What are you doing? Stop! We can find another way; we can do something else. Please… stop, I can’t lose you again. Please.”
“Stand strong Kara,” her mother whispers, “stand together.”

“Wait!” Kara whimpers as she throws herself into her mother’s arms, memorizing her warmth and scent. She feels her father’s arms wrap around them, cocooning her. “I love you, Mom. I love you, Dad.”

“We love you too, Kara. Until we meet again, my love.”

* * *

Alex grabs at Steppenwolf’s helmet and yanks it to the side, throwing him into another building before flying up after him.

_Kelex, give me something to work with here._

_He is a formidable opponent, and he speaks true. His powers surmount those of both Reign and Ruby. You will need to at least partially harness the power of the Black Kryptonite to defeat him. It would, however, mean faster degeneration._

Alex punches Steppenwolf in the jaw, sending him hurtling backwards again. _What does that mean, Kelex? I thought I was already harnessing the power of this stupid rock. Are you saying that I've not gotten the full juice of this thing?_

_You are correct,_ Kelex replies as Stepphenwolf stands back up with a belly-deep laugh, _partial integration with the stone has not been achieved, let alone full. The integration between your cell and the UHEN tool was to simply stabilize you._

“Finally,” Steppenwolf bellows as he reaches for his axe and brandishes it proudly, grinning. “An opponent worthy of my blade. Come, Champion, show me how you made those Kryptonian whores suffer at your fingertips. Give me your power!”

Alex watches as he rushes forward, changing tactics as he grabs at her arm with one hand and juts the handle of the axe into her ribs with his other, sending her hurtling backwards and colliding with parts of an abandoned building with a pained gasp. Alex rolls onto her side, feeling her ribs protest as she struggles to breathe. Alarms sound in her suit.

_Warning,_ Kelex, _armour is at eighty-percent capacity. He has found your vulnerable zones._

The Kryptonite in her chest flares and she feels strength re-enter her bones, filling her with a new sense of energy as she leaps back up to her feet before flying forward, barrelling into Steppenwolf’s chest, throwing him back a few dozen feet. Her eyes burn as she feels heat filling them, before she lets out a guttural scream and lets the stream blaze free. It sears into his shoulder, pushing the man backwards even further. He grunts as he's tossed back into some chunks of rubble.

_Alex, perhaps he could provide us with information on Darkseid._

Alex nearly choked at the voice in her head. She turns her head, as if she were talking to Kelex in the flesh.

_You seriously want to do an interrogation right now?!_

Before Kelex can reply, Alex feels her body slam down into the pavement with a harsh thud. Alex gasps as Steppenwolf’s large hand wraps around her chest and throat before tossing her up into the air like a rag doll. He leaps from the ground and catches her on the way up around the waist, sending them both hurtling into the air as he laughs maniacally.
Alex twists in his grip, grabbing once more at his helmet before angling their flight back downwards. The force of gravity, coupled with the tight grip, has more alarms flaring inside the suit. Alex struggles to stay conscious as she feels pressure build up in the helmet. She barely is able to turn her body to the side as the hurdle towards the ground violently.

The two of them crash through multiple buildings, leaving fire and destruction in their wake as they both collide with the ground in a trembling plume of dust and debris. Alex feels her body tumble and roll a few times before stopping. She stumbles to her feet before she extends the blade from her arm and stabs into the lower back of the man beneath her.

“Tell me about Darkseid,” she growls, jabbing the blade deeper as blood gushes around the wound. Steppenwolf growls in agony as she twists the blade. Fury fills her bones, intensified by the pulsing Kryptonite. “What does he want with Earth?”

Steppenwolf just chuckles, pushing his body up and further into the blade until he is standing, the tip jutting out from his stomach and dripping blood. He twists, shearing the blade from Alex’s arm and causing her to stumble backwards in shock. Steppenwolf eyes her then, takes in her armour, and then looks to the black stone. He cocks his head, smirking.

“What he wants with everything else,” he says, “to conquer it.”

Before Alex can react, Steppenwolf grabs the blade and rips it from his side before slashing it outwards, catching Alex’s armour and slicing a deep enough gash to penetrate the lead lining. Alex screeches in pain as Steppenwolf pulls up his leg and then kicks her backwards in the exact place of the laceration, causing her protesting ribs to scream in agony.

She is sent soaring backwards, crashing through pillars until she finally comes to a halt in the ruined plaza.

Alex, your armour has been breached and as a result, your vitals are at dangerous levels. You must allow partial fusion to occur. The effects will be temporary until you can meld the UHEN tool to the stone permanently. It will save you, Alex.

“Do it,” Alex grits out as she watches Steppenwolf flying towards her at a fast pace. "Do it now, Kelex!"

Initializing fusion process. Get ready, Alex. She scrambles to her knees, her eyes closed as she sucks in a breath.

All Alex feels next is an inferno blazing through her skull.

* * *

When Kara opens her eyes again, she sees Lena looking back at her in worry. Kara looks down to her palms, flexing her fingers with a testing grip. She closes her eyes and focuses within herself, feeling for that familiar thrum of power. She feels it extend from her chest into her extremities, building deeper and stronger until Kara can feel it in her mind.

And then, with a deep breath, she hovers off the ground.

* * *

“Shouldn’t we be helping it?” Maggie asks, growing worried as they watch the aerial coverage of the fight between Invictus and Steppenwolf. She doesn’t understand why she’s so drawn to the violent super-being, but there is something familiar about it. When J’onn doesn’t reply, Maggie
turns her head to see the Martian watching the scene unfold with a blank stare. It’s… unnerving.

“No,” J’onn says monotonously, “we must not interfere.”

“It’s tearing apart the city, the least we can do is—”

“No,” J’onn says coolly. “We must see the full extent of its power if we are to understand the process.”

“The process?” Maggie asks, bewildered. “What process? J’onn, they’re tearing apart the city. We need to help!”

“No,” J’onn says, turning back to the screen. “We must observe, Detective. And we must wait.”

"Wait?" Maggie guffaws. "What exactly do you want to wait for, J'onn?"

But J’onn doesn’t reply, and the unsettling pit inside Maggie’s gut grows with each second that passes.

* * *

Alex feels every nerve ending in her body. It’s like a wave of energy, lighting her up from inside out.

Just as Steppenwolf is millimetres from her face, she juts her fist up, landing it in the soft of his throat and sending him flying back with a tumultuous uppercut to the jaw. The hit is harder than she's ever hit in her life, and it sends more energy careening through her body. Alex rises to her feet, hovering above the ground as she lets the Kryptonite take over. Something sickeningly sweet churns in her gut, and Alex is hit with the sudden urge to rip the man into minuscule shreds.

“You dare defy me?” She asks, speaking the first words since their battle began, her voice growing dark and heavy as she hovers around him menacingly. “You are not even a speck in the light of my strength. You are scum beneath my boots.” She hovers over to where Steppenwolf is still on the ground, holding his broken jaw and gurgling as air fights its way down his airways. Alex can see that her hit has crushed his windpipe, and that he’s well on his way to death in mere seconds.

“Tell me,” she demands coldly as she kneels at his side, her hands reaching for his helmet as she lifts him to his knees without even breaking a sweat. “Where is Darkseid?” Steppenwolf gurgles, his eyes flitting as he struggles to breathe.

“Tell me!” She roars, planting one knee on his shoulder while her hands remain firmly grasped on his helmet. Her visor burns a bright black, the heat of it sizzling brightly. “Or you will die a coward’s death. Tell me where he is, now!”

“H-He… H-He is c-coming,” Steppenwolf chokes out, his lips curling into a smirk. Alex's grip tightens on his helmet, twisting slightly so his head cranes at an awkward angle. “H-He w-will destroy t-this p-planet… and y-you.”

Alex leans her head down and plants her foot deeper into his shoulder, her eyes locking with his acceptance-laden ones.

“When he comes,” she hisses, “I will deliver him your head.”
Without another word, Alex burns his eyes out with her heat vision, leaving two gaping, singed holes in his head, before she reaches for the helmet and kicks down with her foot, ripping his head straight from his shoulders. A mess of muscle tendrils and bone fragments splatter against her armour and his decapitated chest as she kicks his body backwards, holding out the head. She takes a deep breath, feeling that familiar, addictive humming coursing through her entire body.

* * *

"Alex, the Kryptonite is unstable. I would recommend immediate extraction."

Alex turns to see a mob of people standing around her, some of them looking on in awe, while others look on in fear. She looks to the head, before she places her thumb atop the middle of Steppenwolf’s brow, signing the brand into place. A sick sense of satisfaction burns in her gut as she looks up at the crowd. She holds out the head, feeling almost proud.

"I am proud, Alex thinks as she looks to the decapitated body. *I defeated an alien twice my size with my bare hands.*

Alex, Kelex repeats her name worriedly. *Your vitals are spiking. You must go, now.*

Without another word, Alex lets Steppenwolf’s head drop, before vanishing into the air.

* * *

Kara looks over to Lena with an expression of pure joy.

“*They’re back,*” she gasps as she looks to her feet above the ground. “*I can’t believe they’re back.*” Lena looks equally surprised before she leaps forward, grabbing at Kara’s face.

Kara chuckles as Lena’s lips find hers, and suddenly, even the warmth of a thousand suns wouldn’t compare to the burning she feels right now, basking in Lena’s love and support. She deepens the kiss before she glances up at the statue of her parents, smiling.

*I’ll make you proud,* she thinks, *just you wait.*

* * *

Alex practically tumbles into her apartment.

She crashes to the ground of her balcony, heaving as she feels the Black Kryptonite’s power lacing through her. She heaves, but nothing comes out but pained coughs as she crawls into her bedroom. She rips off the visor, sending it clattering across the floor. She rolls onto her back as her chest burns again, the stone pulsing and throbbing painfully.

“*Kelex,*” she gasps as she clutches at her chest, “*run… r-run…*”

“Diagnostics are being run,” Kelex replies, her face lighting up her bedroom as the computer powers on. “*The Black Kryptonite is regenerating your wounds, which is why you are experiencing pain. It is also attempting to breach your mind, which would account for the personality shifts you are experiencing. It is imperative that we stabilize it immediately.*”

“*Fuck,*” Alex gasps as she continues to writhe on the floor in agony. Her brain feels like it’s simmering in a volcano now. “*How long will it take?*” Another shot of pain courses through her as she feels the wound on her chest stitch together.

“*Roughly fifteen minutes,*” Kelex says, “*pulling up the scans now.*”
Alex is barely able to lift her head to look at the flashing red warning signs covering her body’s scans. Sweat pours down her head and neck as she swallows down another wave of nausea. She reaches up and claws at her bed, crawling up to her knees as she keels over once more with a groan. She lets herself take a breath, before looking back up desperately.

But then, her eyes drift to something more devastating.

“Kelex,” Alex says shakily, “can you zoom in on those scans near my abdomen?”

The pictures are enlarged, and Alex gasps. She looks at the one spot on the scan in disbelief.

“No,” Alex croaks as tears well in her eyes, “no, that’s not…”

“I apologize, Alex, but the scans are accurate.”

Alex just stares up at the Kryptonite-infested spot on her abdomen, just above her pelvis. Her hands immediately fall to her stomach, and she palms the armour there, heartbreak unleashing in full force. It’s grief in all of its’ stages as she finally breaks down. She lets out a primordial cry, throwing her head back as she mourns the implications of the results.

She thinks of Maggie.

She thinks of what she let go for this.

Alex lost one child already, but now?

Now, she doesn’t even have the chance to have another.

Chapter End Notes

WHOOOOOO next chapter we have the long-anticipated Kara & Alex reunion!
Flight

Chapter Summary

Remember, remember, the Fifth of November, gun powder, treason, and plot…

Chapter Notes

No Trigger Warnings Apply!

SORRY THIS TOOK SO LONG I HAD SOMETHING YESTERDAY AND COULDN'T UPDATE BUT HOPEFULLY THE LENGTH + REUNION MAKE UP FOR IT!!

also that little section of the speech kara gets during her flight is from man of steel because that scene is literally the best 4 minutes in any comic book movie ever made and y'all can all fight me on that!!!!

November 2nd, 2018

Maggie looks out at the crowd of people amassed in the centre of the ruined city centre, waiting for their mayor to step forward and deliver a speech addressing the events of the battle between Invictus and Steppenwolf. She looks to the side to see Vasquez and J'onn standing side-by-side, their gazes blank as they stare up at the empty podium.

Something about both DEO employees seems off, but Maggie chalks it up to dealing with catastrophe.

"Do you really think it's bad?"

Maggie turns her head to see Mendez approaching her, a grim look on his face. "Invictus?"

"Obviously," Mendez replies as he adjusts his holster. "Do you think it'll show up today?"

"Doubt it," Maggie replies, her eyes scanning over the crowd as the mayor's entourage shows up. "It doesn't seem like a people person. Reminds me of the Bat in Gotham. I don't know what it is with vigilantes and the need to be broody and dark. That being said, the twins of steel are a bit too energetic for me. I need a good medium, honestly."

"Maggie," Mendez says her name with a degree of disbelief. "You almost died yesterday and you're joking?"

"Gallow's humour," Maggie offers, shrugging. "Alright, pay attention. Mayor's heading up to speak."

Mendez follows Maggie's gaze to the podium, where the mayor stands, gripping the podium tightly. The crowd hushes, and while they're behaving for now, she knows that any moment can
turn into something deadly. Her eyes remain scanning through the collection of confused, angry, and hopeful humans and aliens alike. She only returns her gaze back to the mayor as he taps on the microphone, testing the volume, before he clears his throat.

"Not too long ago, an alien entity by the name of Steppenwolf attacked National City," the mayor begins, his voice scratchy as he addresses the people. "I am here to tell you that his threat has been neutralized by the new vigilante that has decided to inflict it's own system of justice in our populace. While the defence of the city is appreciated, Invictus should still be considered a threat to National City, and I am urging anyone who has information to come forward. I know we are all scared and missing our resident superhero, but violence and death is not the answer."

Immediately, the crowd roars in a mixture of displeasure and fear.

"It doesn't follow any laws!"

"It protected us!"

"Where was Supergirl when we needed her?"

"Please," the mayor urges, "I understand you are all upset—"

Before he can finish, a cackling boom cuts through the air. Maggie looks up to the flash of red and blue, and her stomach sinks as she watches Superman land in the centre of the stage with a slight billowing of dust around him. The crowd hushes again as the Man of Steel walks forward, taking a stand beside the awestruck mayor calmly.

"People of National City," he says into the microphone. "I know you are scared, but I assure you, the Justice League is looking into this incident." The crowd goes into uproar again, but Superman quickly raises his hand, sighing.

"I, Superman, urge the masked-vigilante itself to come forward and present itself at the Hall of Justice for a formal hearing with the Justice League," Superman says as he looks into the crowd. "If you do not obey, we will take action."

"Take action?" One citizen scoffs, arms crossed. "Like you did with that alien?"

"Yeah! Where was the Justice League when we needed you most?"

"Is riding that high horse more important than protecting us?"

"All fucking aliens are the same!"

"Forget the Justice League!" One man yells out. "Invictus is our hero!"

"Yeah! Invictus saved us! It protects us while you ride around pretending to be heroes!"

"We don't need you anymore!"

Maggie watches as Superman's face sets grimly, clearly not expecting this wild response from the crowd. Maggie twitches uncomfortably as the crowd grows more aggressive, calling out lewd things to the caped Kryptonian. Superman looks to mayor, who looks equally as terrified, before he looks out into the crowd and finds Maggie.

"Tomorrow night the hearing will be held at the Hall of Justice," Superman says as he looks back out to the crowd. "If Invictus does not show up to atone for its' crimes, then it will face deposition."
That will be all, National City."

Before more people can ring out questions, Superman takes as step back and flies up into the crowd.

Maggie sighs, shaking her head as the crowd erupts into chaos once again.

* * *

November 3rd, 2018

Clark stands at the front of the Hall of Justice, flanked by Bruce and J'onn as they wait for Invictus. He looks beside his friends to see some more of the Justice League starting to emerge from the hall, donned in their uniforms crisply.

A crowd has formed at the bottom of the steps, their cameras flashing as they take pictures and talk amongst themselves. The night sky is clouded and grey, and the first spatters of rain start to fall. Clark blinks as water droplets land on his hair and slide down his face, catching in the faint stubble of his jaw before dripping down.

"It's not going to show," Arthur mutters bitterly. "It doesn't care for any of this. It resents the League."

"We cannot afford a war on two fronts," J'onn says as he crosses his arms. "It would be impossible to control."

"Maybe that's what it wants," Diana says, frowning. "There could be evidence it works for Darkseid."

"Steppenwolf was Darkseid's uncle," Clark sighs, "I highly doubt he would be trying to kill his own soldier."

"Greed and power can twist even the most moral men into tyrants," Diana responds, the grip on her lasso tightening. "Just because they were fighting against each other does not mean they both do not want the same things, Clark."

"What are we going to do if it doesn't show?" Barry asks nervously. "I mean, you weren't serious, were you? About killing it? I mean yeah, it did some really corrupt things, but I highly doubt that entails getting rid of it entirely."

"Barry's right," Bruce gruffly replies, "death is not an answer."

"Should we break it into submission, then?" Arthur snorts. "You think you're above the law, Bats, but you're just as lethal as the rest of us. You may not kill, but you maim, and that is more than often worse." Bruce hardly reacts.

"I don't deny the force behind my actions—"

"No, you just pretend that you're riding the moral high ground—"

Before Arthur can finish, a cackling roar of thunder interrupts them. Lightening cackles overhead as rain starts to pour down. The crowd mumbles their discomfort, but doesn't attempt to move from where they stand, waiting. Diana looks up, her face setting grimly before she turns to look at Clark with a worried expression.
"The Gods are uneasy," Diana says ominously. Clark sighs, looking back out to the crowd.

More thunder claps roll overhead, before lightning strikes again.

Only this time, it illuminates the dark, armoured figure standing in front of them.

"Invictus," J'onn says calmly. "You came."

Invictus' head cocks to the side slightly, its' visor unreadable.

"I was summoned, wasn't I?"

"Come," Clark says as he gestures to the Hall. "The rest of the Justice League is inside."

Invictus doesn't do much other than to step forward and to follow them into the Hall. Diana and Arthur lead their little convoy, with Invictus sandwiched between J'onn, Clark, and Bruce. Invictus looks up at the statues of all of the Justice League members in the Hall, its' visor impassive as it continues to take in its' surroundings silently.

Before long, they approach the podiums where the rest of the Justice League are sitting.

"Invictus," Clark says as he hovers over to his spot at the head of the podiums. J'onn and Arthur join his side, leaving Bruce and Diana in front of Invictus at the base of the steps. Clark nods and continues, "we're holding this hearing to determine the accurate punishment for your crimes against humanity and alien life. We want to determine if you are a friend or a foe to Earth. Therefore, you will be asked a series of questions while under the influence of the lasso."

Clark watches as Invictus' head turns towards Diana, who already has her lasso out, golden and glowing.

"Do you object?" Clark asks, drawing back the being's attention. Invictus juts its' head up.

"Do I have the option to object?" It replies coyly. "The only other decision is death, is it not?"

Clark goes to reply when Diana twirls her lasso and wraps it around Invictus' wrists, snagging tightly on the rope. Invictus looks to the lasso before looking back up at the Amazonian, hardly a reaction present in its' cosmic visor. A shiver goes down Clark's spine as he realizes that Invictus doesn't try to wrangle itself free from the rope's grip.

It's oddly… complacent?

"Well then," Invictus says coolly, "what is it that you wish to know, Superman?"

Clark shakes off the discomfort as he clears his throat. "Very well. First, are you an alien?"

Invictus remains still as it replies, "no."

J'onn leans forward from where he sits beside Clark, intrigued. "Are you a human?"

Once again, Invictus replies, "no."

Clark looks to J'onn in confusion, before he looks back to Invictus, swallowing thickly.

"You are a hybrid?"

Invictus stiffens slightly. "Something like that."
"Your brand," Clark says next, his voice wavering. "It's the symbol of Justice where I am from. Why choose it?"

"Because," Invictus replies, "I bring to these people what you cannot: justice."

Arthur chuckles, shaking his head. "You kill people—"

"Tell me," Invictus interrupts calmly, "is the life of a murderer worth the lives of fourteen dead children?"

"Death does not do anything other than cause more conflict," Bruce mutters from beside the vigilante. "No one in this room, not even us, gets to decide who lives or dies. We are not Gods, Invictus." The being only chuckles lightly.

"You think yourself as upholders of the law," Invictus sneers, "you, the Dark Knight of Gotham. You, the Man of Steel. You, the Princess of Themyscira. You, the Last Son of Mars. And you, the King of Atlantis. These names, these figureheads you've created for yourself, do you recognize what you've done to the people? How much you have taken in your need to provide some sort of legal system? You can't see above the statues you've forged. You live in denial."

"We swore an oath to protect this planet," Arthur cuts in, slamming his trident into the ground. "I will—"

"What?" Invictus asks, shrugging. "Kill me? What happened to absolving yourself of that decision?"

Clark holds up his hand, preventing Arthur from cutting out his own reply. "Enough. This is not what we came here to do. This hearing is not about us, Invictus, it is about you. Since your reign, you have killed over fifty people."

"And how many have you killed?" Invictus asks back. "When you fought Lex in Metropolis, when those buildings were destroyed, when all those people were displaced, how many did you kill, Superman? When you burned through skyscrapers and tossed debris into the sky, how many people did you kill?" Clark shakes his head, swallowing hard.

"That wasn't—"

"Your fault?" Invictus finishes, cocking its' head. "We're not all bulletproof, Superman."

"I protected the city from that tyrant—"

"Just as I did from Steppenwolf," Invictus interrupts calmly. "I don't see the difference, Superman."

"Why are you here?"

J'onn's calm voice snaps Clark from his revere as he turns to see the Martian leaving his seat to hover in front of Invictus. He touches the ground, his cape slowly billowing out behind him as he rakes his eyes up and down its' frame. Invictus doesn't appear to be fazed by the inspection, or at least, it doesn't show that it is intimidated.

"I'm here for the same reason you are," Invictus says. "To protect the people of Earth."

J'onn doesn't seem to buy it as he asks, "where is Darkseid?"

Invictus stiffens and looks away. "I don't know."
"But you know of him?"

"Yes."

Clark's brow raises as he looks to the other members, before glancing back at Invictus. "Tell us what you know."

Before Invictus can speak, something projects from the pulsating stone in the middle of its' chest. Clark stands, ready to fight, but instead of attacking, a hologram of multiple scans, pictures, and data appears in front of Invictus.

"Darkseid is the leader of the planet Apokolips," Invictus explains calmly, "it seems as though he is obsessed with world domination. Apokolips' power is generated through the destruction of other worlds, hence why he sent out world-killers, such as those two dead Kryptonians, as well as Steppenwolf, to pursue his agenda of annihilation."

A picture pops up of an eight-foot tall figure, seemingly made of rock and metal. Invictus cocks its' head.

"The power he possesses rivals that of all of the Justice League combined," Invictus explains as the lasso around its' wrists glows. "There is no knowing his intentions with Earth, but based on his previous history, it would seem Earth is next in line for total world domination." Clark's chest aches as he hovers back down, slumping in his chair.

Before anyone else can speak, a cackling sound bursts through the air.

Clark's head jerks up as he watches a portal open up in the middle of the Hall, right behind Invictus. Immediately, the entire League is on their feet as they watch someone step out of the portal. Clark recognizes the figure instantly.

"You," he says as he hovers down and bunches his fists. "You were there—"

"Yes," the woman says as she holds her hands up in surrender. "I know what you must be thinking."

She looks to Invictus and eyes it carefully before turning to face Clark. "My name is Barda. I come in peace."

"I find that incredibly hard to believe," Clark growls, his cape billowing behind him. "You wanted my cousin."

"My interests have changed," Barda replies coolly. "I was one of Darkseid's furies—an elite group of assassins and world-killers crafted to scout out planets and retrieve their champions." She glances at Invictus coolly, swallowing.

"Why are you here?" Diana asks, whipping the lasso from Invictus' wrists before lassoing them around Barda's own. "What brings you to the Hall of Justice, Barda of Apokolips?" Barda winces under the slight burn of the golden rope.

"The Champion—Invictus, as you call yourself—is correct," she wheezes as sweat builds on her brow. "Darkseid is coming for Earth. He doesn't want to just take it, but destroy it. Your entire civilization is in danger, Amazonian."

"And what?" Arthur snorts, confused. "You came here to warn us? You're on his side, aren't you?"
Barda hisses as she trembles under the power of the rope. "I used to be, but then I saw his power, his darkness, and I could no longer stand by and let him do what he has always done. I came to provide you with advice and help."

"Can we trust her?" Clark asks, looking to Diana. The Amazonian only looks to the rope and shrugs.

"The lasso works on everyone and everything," Diana says, "she is telling the truth, Superman."

"Please," Barda says, voice cracking as she looks to the League. "The entire universe is at stake, Superman. Taking Earth is only the beginning of the end. Every planet, every species, every form of life to ever exist, will die if we do not stop him. I defected from his troops. I owe him nothing, and he hunts me. I can give you knowledge on him."

"You will fight with us?" Diana asks, stiffening. Barda swallows and nods.

"You must come with me to Apokolips," Barda explains as she looks up at Clark. "The final fight will come to Earth, but if we do not delay him, there is no telling what he will be able to achieve. Earth is not ready for him yet. The Champion is not ready for him yet." Barda turns her gaze towards Invictus with a knowing, sad smile as she sighs.

"You know what you must do, Champion. Earth needs you. We all need you."

"We can't be considering this," Arthur says incredulously as he looks to Clark. "To leave Earth unprotected?"

"It won't be unprotected," Invictus says calmly, chin jutted upwards. "I'll be here."

"Not alone," J'onn cuts in, a tone of suspicion hinting at his voice. "I will stay behind."

"You're not serious," Arthur guffaws. "You really want the rest of us to go to Apokolips?"

"Earth does not have time," Barda says, swallowing hard. "We must delay the invasion."

Clark looks around at the rest of the Justice League before his eyes land on J'onn. The Martian nods solemnly. Clark's shoulders slump before he glances at Invictus, who is staring back at him impassively. He eyes it carefully, sighing.

"Very well," Clark murmurs as he looks back at Barda, "we will come with you to Apokolips."

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**November 4th, 2018**

Kara stands in the centre of the Fortress of Solitude, donned in her super suit and bathing in the last rays of light cascading in through the building. She looks up at the statue of her parents, staring at their intricately carved faces, before she hovers over to where Lena is waiting patiently. Her heart thrums like a war-drum inside her chest.

“I don’t feel comfortable with this,” Lena says worriedly, looking Kara over in her super suit. “The last time you tried this, you almost broke all of the bones in your body because of the fall. There’s no medical help out here, Kara.”

“I have to do this,” Kara tells her quietly, “I need to do this.”

Lena looks hesitant, but she nods before she leans forward and takes Kara’s face into her hands.
Kara leans down and captures their lips in a soft kiss. Lena's hands remain on her cheeks, her breaths warm and soft against her lips.

“Go on then,” Lena whispers encouragingly, “fly, Supergirl.”

Kara grins and leans back, putting some distance between them as she looks up to the small opening in the top of the icy arches. The sun pours down over her face, and she feels the energy singing with newfound power.

And then, with a deep breath, Kara leaps upwards.

She catapults upwards, breaking through the opening and into the icy air. Her face sets determinedly as she feels herself start to fall again. She looks to the ground, extending her foot out and catching in the ice before using that momentum to propel her back upwards. She gains further in height before she comes back down, but she doesn’t let it deter her; instead, she lets it drive her. She grunts through the discomfort, closing her eyes to focus harder.

She doesn’t stop reaching higher and farther.

Kara growls as she opens her eyes, pushing through the clouds as she feels a laugh pulling at her throat as she ascends. She keeps climbing and climbing, trying to feed the energy of the sun into her veins, drawing upwards…

But then, Kara feels her energy start to wane and she crashes again, colliding with the side of an icy cliff and tearing straight through it until she smashes shoulder-first into the ground. The impact of her fall leaves a crater in the ground, singed and ashen by the heat of her momentum. She lays crumpled, breathing hard in the ice and snow.

“I can’t do it… I can’t…”

But then, she hears that soothing whisper of her mother's voice in her ear.

*You’ve grown stronger here, more than I could ever imagine.*

Kara opens her eyes, staring into the sun. She lays there, her chest heaving as the sun bathes over her skin and her suit. She reaches up and climbs to her feet, taking a deep breath as the energy she’d just lost begins to replenish itself once again. She lets her eyes slide shut once more, focusing on the familiar whisper as it guides her.

*The only way to know how strong is to keep testing your limits.*

Kara flexes her fingers, focusing on her energy.

*You give the people an ideal of hope to strive towards.*

Kara breathes in deeply, smelling the ice and dirt.

*They will try to follow you. They will stumble, they will fall.*

Kara listens in on the sounds of the wind whistling.

*But in time, they will join you in the sun, Kara.*

Kara opens her eyes, staring back up at the sky with determination.

*In time, you will help them accomplish wonders.*
Kara kneels down, pressing the knuckles of her fist flat against the ice as she focuses her energy on every sense. She feels the pounding of the Earth’s core beneath her fist, the sounds of people laughing and crying, the smell of fresh snow, the taste of love on her lips, the sight of her parents, beaming down at her proudly as they'd cradled her…

And so, Kara draws her head back up, and she shakes off again.

Only this time, she doesn’t come back down.

Kara zooms through the sky, her jaw set as she pushes herself higher and higher, faster and faster, until the imperceptible boom of her breaking the sound barrier roars through her ears. She levels out and flies further, passing from the icy plains of the tundra to the salty cracks of the desert, the warm jungles of the Amazon, the concrete cities of North America. She flies over the water, bringing waves up behind her as she rockets forward quickly.

And then, once she’s made her way around the world, she tilts her head back up and pushes herself up towards the dusky outline of Earth’s outer atmosphere. She feels the heat lining her suit as she breaks through, before she finally passes the last layer.

But then, she just hovers, her cape flowing behind her lightly.

Kara looks down at Earth, staring at the infinite blues and greens of a planet ripe with life and potential. She drinks it all in as the tranquility of space surrounds her. Then, she looks over to the sun, feeling the direct impact of the heat on her skin. She closes her eyes and lets it rejuvenate her tired and broken soul.

And for the first time in a long time, Kara feels alive.

* * *

Lena waits anxiously, pacing up and down the Fortress’ walls as she looks at her watch. Kara had been gone nearly an hour now, and Lena couldn’t help but stress after she’d heard those crashes and booms before the place had gone silent again. She feels herself starting to lose it as she imagines Kara’s dead and bloodied body.

“Hey, Lee.”

Lena’s head snaps up to see Kara—no Supergirl—standing in her full glory with a beaming, full grin, the light illuminating in a halo. Her hair billows out behind her like she's made of royalty, a God in front of a mere mortal.

“Kara…,” Lena breathes out, “you did it.”

“Yeah,” Kara says as she hovers over, hooking her hands under Lena’s waist before hoisting her into her arms. Lena sinks into the bridal-style carry, laughing with glee and happiness. There are tears in her lover's eyes, but Lena knows by the way Kara’s smiling, they are happy ones. She cups Kara’s face in her hands, leaning in to kiss her.

“My hero,” Lena hums into her lips, “take me home, Kara.”

Kara just grips her tighter and grins.

“Hold on tight, darling.”

* * *
Maggie arrives to the DEO with two coffees, one for herself, and the other for Alex. She walks through the doors to see J’onn standing near the balcony, his arms crossed behind his back. Maggie frowns and pauses, taking in his ramrod posture with suspicion. Ever since the attack on National City by Steppenwolf, the Martian had been acting strange—stranger than usual—and it’s been stirring feelings of discomfort inside the younger woman.

Yesterday, after J’onn had pulled her aside to let them know of the secretive meeting with the Justice League, he had been acting oddly obsessive over investigating the Black Kyrptonite creature, Invictus. Apparently after the hearing, the Justice League had been visited by the same woman who’d attacked Kara and Alex, and were convinced to leave the planet in search of Darkseid’s home, Apokolips. Maggie hadn’t understood the absence, but when J’onn had mentioned that only Invictus would be left behind, alongside the Martian, Maggie understood.

Earth was left vulnerable with only a morally-grey vigilante and the Last Son of Mars to protect it. Anyone in their right mind would be nervous as Hell, even if they had super-hero powers.

“He’s been there all day.”

Maggie turns at the sound of Alex’s tired voice. “Oh, hey.”

“Hi,” Alex greets her, taking the coffee from her outstretched hands and taking a sip, ignoring the scalding burn. “Thanks.” Maggie watches as her eyes flit over her shoulder to where J’onn is still standing, mumbling to himself.

“No problem,” Maggie says, arching her brow as she takes in the bruises and scratches on her ex-fiancée’s face with worry. She didn't remember Alex being in the fight against Steppenwolf. “What happened to you? It looks like you were mauled by a bear.” She eyes the particularly long scar which creeps out under the woman's clavicle, humming.

“Ha,” Alex grunts, flinching as her frown pulls at an scabbed cut above her eyebrow. “It sure as Hell feels like it. I was helping evacuation efforts downtown during the fight and got cornered by para-demons. I wasn't in the main fight.”

Maggie winces in sympathy, but still feels unsure. “Those things are the worse.”

“At least we weren’t fighting that guy,” Alex says, pointing up at the televisions screen hanging over the command centre playing the news coverage of the fight. Invictus has Steppenwolf’s helmet in its palms as it chucks the alien across the courtyard and into a building. “I would hate to be the victim of those blows, right? Jesus…”

Maggie looks at her and nods, arching her brow at the screen. “Right.”

But before either of them can talk further, another boom rockets through the air. Alex tenses from beside her, and Maggie’s hand immediately reaches for her gun. They both turn to face the source of the sound, only to see that it isn’t an enemy in the slightest. They look up to where J’onn is now watching the approaching flash of red and blue.

Beside her, Alex drops her coffee.

“Kara?”

* * *
When Kara first sees Alex, she can’t hold herself back.

After safely setting Lena down beside a shocked-looking J’onn, she zooms forward and wraps her arms around Alex’s shoulders, burrowing her head into the crook of her older sister’s neck. She feels Alex’s arms immediately wrap around her own tightly, and Kara starts sobbing at the familiar comfort it brings. Alex is warm and safe.

Alex is home.

“I missed you so much,” Kara chokes out, nosing against Alex’s pulse, finding that familiar rhythmic beating of her heart. “I still haven’t got everything back yet, like my super-hearing or x-ray vision, but I had enough to come back. I couldn’t hide anymore. I spent every day worried I had lost you. I’m so worried, Alex, with everything happening…”

“Ssh,” Alex hums, pressing kiss after kiss into her hair as she cradles her neck closer. Kara can feel her older sister's muscles trembling with the force of her grip as she hugs her even tighter. “Look at me, Kara. I’m here. I’m safe.”

Kara pulls away for a moment to look at Alex’s tired eyes. She sees the mottled bruises and cuts upon her face, and judging by the whistling of her chest, her sister has a few banged up ribs. She notices a few things are different—for one, Alex looks… taller? Her shoulders and arms are more buffed out, but she knows that Alex's coping mechanisms often involve working out to the point of exhaustion. It's no surprise then, that her sister has gotten stronger.

But when Kara looks closer, she notices black flecks in her sister's brown irises. She frowns and loosens her grip, but before she can pull away, Alex hugs her again, this time burrowing her face in Kara's hair as she sighs in relief.

“I’m sorry,” Alex whispers, her voice trembling. “For keeping this all from you.”

“I know,” Kara mumbles back, rubbing her sister’s back as she kisses her temple softly. “I know that you were only trying to protect me, Alex. Just like you’ve always done. I never appreciated what you did for me when we grew up. You sacrificed so much for me; I never thanked you for it. No matter what I did, you always forgave me. I owe you that and more, big sis. You're my hero, and being away from you for so long made me realize how much I…”

Alex’s lips tremble against her cheek when Kara squeezes her, choking on her words.

“I love you, Alex.”

“Hey Little Danvers…,” Maggie’s soft voice pulls Kara away from her sister for a moment. Maggie smiles at her warmly, crossing her arms as Kara smiles back. "You look good, kid. I'm glad you're doing better now." Kara smiles, but doesn’t let go of Alex entirely, just enough so that she can look at the detective with joy and relief at her safety.

“The world can wait a few minutes,” Maggie says, glancing between the two reunited siblings warmly. “Why don’t you two spend some time alone and come back? I’ll take Lena down to the lab and we’ll start a bit later. It's good to see you, kid. We all missed you so much—I missed you, too. Even the Supergirl-shaped holes you leave everywhere.”

Chuckling, Kara separates herself for a hot second to wrap Maggie up in a crushing hug before drawing Alex back into her arms. Neither sister protests at the detective's suggestion, as Kara gently wraps her arms around Alex’s frame, lifting them both in the air. Alex chuckles as they float upwards, and Kara can see the familiar light returning to her eyes. It reminds her of their younger
days, when Alex was happy and carefree, when Alex would laugh.

Kara vows to never stop making Alex laugh like that again.

Kara carries Alex and flies them both up to the roof of the DEO, their old go-to spot when they just needed a moment to themselves. Sometimes it was to talk, but other times it was to just sit in silence, comforted by each other’s strong presence. They would most often find themselves staring at the sunset, watching the world go on.

Today, it’s more like the latter.

Alex and Kara watch the bleeding oranges and reds set over the National City skyline, the stars peaking out in the dusky sky as they sit at the edge of the building, legs dangling over the passing cars almost fifty floors below. Alex’s hand is gently clasped in her own, and Kara’s head is resting lightly on Alex’s shoulder, her eyes closed contently.

“I saw my parents.”

Alex’s body tenses in confusion. “You… what?”

Kara smiles as she remembers her father’s proud gaze and her mother’s warm smile. She looks to Alex wistfully.

“I saw them,” she says again, still smiling as tears well up in her eyes and her voice cracks. “I went to the Fortress of Solitude, the one Kal told me to visit long ago. I refused him then, thinking it would be too painful. But then I forgot about it until he visited me in Ireland and gave me its coordinates. Lena flew us there and I… it was beautiful, Alex.”

“Yeah?” Alex rasps, reaching up to curl Kara’s hair behind her ear. Kara leans into the touch, nuzzling Alex’s jaw as her sister’s fingers start to card through her hair at a familiar pace. Alex pecks her forehead gently. “How so?”

“It wasn’t just a reminder of Krypton,” Kara explains, “it was Krypton. During the destruction a piece landed here.”

Alex digests the information with awe. “That’s… amazing, Kara.”

“Lena said the same thing, too.”

Alex nudges her shoulder and smirks. “I’m jealous you took her there before me, Kara. If anyone is interested in Krypton, it’s me. Remember when we used to read those stories together, the ones we found in your pod?”

“Oh yeah,” Kara laughs as she thinks back to the memory with fond nostalgia. “Mom used to yell at us for staying up late. We’d build a pillow fort and spend hours poring over them, and every time I was sad, you’d pull me into your arms and hug me. You’d fabricate weird stories about Earth until I was laughing again, and the pain was gone.”

Alex snorts. “Some of them were ridiculous, though. Remember the one I made up about the miniature purple hippos in the Amazon?”

“Yeah I do,” Kara chuckles as she blushes. “I remember that one extremely well because you convinced me it was real and then I told Lucy French in the eighth grade and she teased me about it until we got into high school.”
“And then I beat her up and threatened to tell her parents that she made the whole thing up,” Alex replies with a shake of her head. “Man, I was such a disaster back then, wasn’t I? Mom used to call me a little Hellion. I get it.”

Kara grins mischievously, ribbing her sister. “And you aren’t now?”

Alex just gives her the side-eye she knows so well. “Kara…”

“Alex…”

Before Kara can react, Alex tickles her side, pulling a symphony of giggles from the base of her throat. Kara squirms at her sister’s fingers before Alex eventually relents and pulls her back into her arms. She nuzzles her head against Alex’s chest, her hands woven around her older sister’s waist as she holds her closer. Alex sighs into her scalp.

“I love you,” Alex whispers, kissing her hair. “I love you so much. I missed you, more than you’d ever know.”

But Kara did know.

Because she felt the same way about Alex, too.

* * *

“How was the flight?”

Lena looks up from where she’s sitting on the couch in Alex’s office at Maggie’s shit-eating smirk. Lena rolls her eyes fondly at the knowing look in the detective’s eyes. She picks at a piece of fluff on her suit pants absently.

“Rough.”

“Ooh, I’d bet.”

“Get your mind out of the gutter, Sawyer.”

“Only if you spill the details, Luthor.”

“Like I’d ever,” Lena teases. “A woman doesn’t kiss and tell.”

Maggie rolls her eyes and smiles, taking a seat beside her as they wait on Alex and Kara to finish their reunion. Maggie doesn’t mind the lapse, honestly. The past few weeks have been a whirlwind. Between Invictus, Alex and the recent shift in the city’s populace, she’d only gotten a wink of sleep. She’s tired, aching, worried, and lonely.

“So,” Lena drawls tentatively. “You and Agent Danvers…”

Maggie sighs, rubbing at her brow. “Are not a thing.”

Lena eyes her, observant. “But something happened, though.”

“What makes you say that?”

“You act differently around her, like she’s made of glass.”

“She’s been through a lot,” Maggie defends Alex, crossing her arms. “Losing Kara took a toll on
her. None of us saw her for weeks. And when she came back, she was different. Not just emotionally, but somehow also physically.”

Lena digests that information with a pensive look. “Is that so?”

“Yeah,” Maggie says, remembering when she’d first seen Alex after the initial attack. “She’s stronger now, and she looks like she’s taller, but that could be my imagination. She’s more quiet and reserved, and she’s cold, Lena.”

“I know.”

Maggie’s head whips up in confusion. “You know?”

Lena looks over to the door, watching as Kara and Alex come back to the ground, smiling and laughing into each other’s arms as if the world wasn’t almost completely destroyed not even four days ago. She sighs pensively.

“She’s hiding something,” Lena says, “but I don’t know what.”

Maggie goes to question it, but Lena sends her a look that makes her think better of it. In the next moment, Kara and Alex walk in, their arms looped together as they look at the room joyfully.

It’s the first time Maggie has seen Alex look at peace.

“Alright,” Kara says, looking to Alex. “We’ve had our reunion. Now I think it’s time to talk about this Invictus thing. J’onn’s on his way down with Winn. I heard something about Black Kryptonite and Invictus being a hybrid?”

Maggie chuckles airily, rubbing her hands together as she hops up on the counter of one of the lab stations. “Oh yeah, there’s a lot you need catching up on, Little Danvers. J’onn has a theory that Invictus is a hybrid world-killer.”

“I still don’t get it, a hybrid?” Kara asks, cocking her head. “I mean, that’s impossible. Theoretically, only a Kryptonian can fully fuse with Kryptonite, and even then, it could kill them if they’re not directly from Krypton. Any other species would instantly die. The genetic structure of human DNA would never allow for a direct fusion. It would combust.”

“I don’t know,” Lena says, and Maggie watches as her gaze flits over to Alex questioningly. “Analysis of the traces left at my lab suggested the DNA also contained human-like sequencing effects. We think it must be partly human.”

“Lena, your scans must be off,” Kara says warily, removing her arm from Alex’s to cross her own together. “I know you trust in your technology to be accurate, but it can’t be. A human wouldn’t survive a fuse of the metal to their organs. It’s physically impossible. The structure of Kryptonite alone is enough to render a human to radiation poisoning. In moderate doses, sure, but not at a complete physiological level. It would kill them within milliseconds.”

“Well, whatever it is, we need to figure it out fast,” Alex says, cutting in as she pulls up some of the scans. “Invictus is still out there somewhere, and it’s impossible to tell its’ full powers. Besides, the Justice League are unavailable.”

“What?” Kara asks, looking over to her sister. ”What do you mean?”

“They have gone after Darkseid, on Apokolips.”
All four of them whip around to see J’onn walking down the steps, Winn in tow. The man behind the director looks nervous, and Maggie frowns when she sees the serious, stone-faced expression of J’onn. Even Alex looks perturbed when J’onn steps up next to her at the screen, peering at it curiously as he drinks in every detail.

"Darkseid?" Kara echoes. "What are you talking about? Where's Kal, J'onn?"

"Superman took the Justice League to Darkseid's home planet, Apokolips," J'onn explains as he comes to stand before them with his arms-crossed. "On the night of the hearing we held for Invictus, this woman showed up."

J'onn clicks at something on the device, showing a familiar figure on the screen.

"That's the woman who almost killed Alex and me!" Kara exclaims furiously. "What was she doing?"

"She's defected," Alex explains as she places her hand on Kara's, calming her. Maggie watches as Alex flicks at the screen, pulling up more information about the woman. "Barda used to lead Darkseid's most coveted warriors. She recently discovered his plans to annihilate Earth and no longer agree with his tactics. She's got a lot to lose."

Kara still looks unimpressed. "How do we know we can trust her?"

"Diana used the lasso," J'onn says, "she wasn't lying, Kara."

Maggie watches the Kryptonian mull it over before she turns to J'onn again. "What about Invictus?"

“Invictus has proven that it can destroy Darkseid’s elite. Steppenwolf was no ordinary villain,” J’onn explains, a faint smirk pulling at his lips. “The sheer power of the Black Kryptonite is enough to pull down a New God. If we get our hands on it, we could learn how to harness the power for when Darkseid invades Earth and stop him before he can.”

“Whoa whoa whoa,” Maggie says, frowning as she catches on to what J’onn is saying. She can see Alex looks just as unnerved by the suggestion. “What are you going on about, J’onn? You want to capture it and what? Run tests?”

“Simulations,” J’onn answers, cocking his head to look at Maggie blankly. “Invictus could be the key to saving us.”

“Invictus is still a person,” Alex says before quickly correcting herself, “—thing. Alien. Whatever. It’s a sentient being that clearly has an actual life. We can’t capture it and run tests on it like it’s some sort of animal experiment.”

Maggie looks over to Lena, noticing the other woman’s eyes flash when Alex started to ramble and justify her opinion on the masked vigilante. She doesn't need to be close to see the cogs churning in the Luthor's brain. She follows the younger woman's gaze to where Kara is staring at her sister. Maggie looks back to Alex, who is now droning on about re-investigating L-Corp for clues. She takes in Alex’s injuries again, and the recent distance.

The physical changes, the emotional changes, could there be a connection?

Before she can start questioning things, Kara interrupts.

“Maybe I can talk to it,” Kara suggests, “as Supergirl.”
“No,” Alex says firmly. “Invictus is too strong and too unpredictable, and you just got *some* of your power back. Clark tried talking to it and failed, Kara. It’s too risky. I’m glad you are feeling better, honestly, but this is too far.”

Kara furrows her brow. “I just want to talk to it, Alex. What's the big deal?”

“The big deal? Kara, what makes you think it’s the talking type?” Alex asks, looking up at the screen. “You haven’t been here. It destroys everything it encounters. It will destroy you if given a chance. You can’t do it, I won’t let you.”

“You’re not my keeper, Alex. I know I’ve been gone for a while, but I need to do something to help,” Kara urges, going to stand in front of Alex. She crosses her arms and Maggie can tell that she's trying to use the signature pout. “Just give me the chance to talk to it. I won’t engage in combat; I just want to see if I can get a read of its power. Black Kryptonite shouldn’t be that harmful to me if I don’t get directly exposed. If it gets hot, I’ll pull out. I swear.”

“Kara has a point,” Maggie adds, watching as Alex grows more frustrated. She winces at the ire in her ex’s expression, but powers through. She hops off the counter and walks over to where Kara is standing, resting a hand on her shoulder. “Out of all of us, she has the best chance of talking to it. If it’s half-Kryptonian, they can relate.”

“I agree,” J’onn chimes in, arching his brow at Alex. “Kara is our best bet, Alex.”

“I… also agree,” Lena says cautiously, and Maggie can see she’s still looking at Alex in a weird way. Alex avoids her gaze after Lena doesn't stop staring, prompting the younger woman to nod at Kara. “We should send Supergirl.”

“Invictus doesn’t hurt innocent people,” Winn says, scrolling through their information before beaming up at Kara with approval. “It only goes after criminals. I also don’t see the harm in sending Kara, either. I don’t think it’ll see her as a threat. It didn’t hurt Clark or you, only intimidated you. Plus, I think that it would look good for the city, too.”

“The world needs Supergirl back,” Kara says, reaching up to hold Alex’s cheeks in her own, offering a faint smile. Maggie watches as Alex huffs something out under her breath, clearly displeased, but Kara wraps her arms around her sister's broad shoulders tightly. “You have to let me go, Alex. I know you’re scared. I am, too. But I can do this.”

Alex’s head is still hung, but eventually she relents.

“Fine,” she murmurs, glancing up at Kara sadly. “You can do it.”
Meeting

Chapter Summary

At last, Supergirl and Invictus meet.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning for Graphic Depictions of Violence.

Sorry about the delay -- I'm busy helping with O-Week at my university for incoming graduate students + my job got extended so I was swamped with projects.

November 6th, 2018

Alex nurses her drink steadily, watching as Kara and Lena putter about in her kitchen. Maggie is off to the side with Winn, talking in low voices as the television drones on in the background.

“You seem troubled, Alex.”

Taking another sip of her drink, Alex looks back up to see J'onn walking over to her with a concerned expression. He cocks his head at her before taking a seat at the table, eyeing her drink warily. Alex half-expects him to just blurt it already, to tell her that he knows that she's harbouring a secret. After all, she never ended up going to see Dr. Hamilton for a check-up. Keeping it inside of him seems redundant, but Alex assumes the secrecy isn't much for her, but for her sister.

Not that it's going to matter anymore.

So instead, Alex takes a sip before nodding at her mentor. “I'm fine.”

J'onn’s lips purse as he remains quiet. Thinking that’s the extent of their conversation, Alex returns to sipping at her whiskey idly. If J'onn didn't want to prod deeper, so be it. Besides, it's better for her. Kara's super-hearing might be gone, but she's still Kara Danvers, the nosy little sister that always manages to get herself into some kind of trouble.

But all of her thoughts are led askew when J'onn peers at her curiously.

“You are oddly close to this Invictus character.”

Alex nearly splutters on her drink. “W-What?”

J'onn remains expressionless as he leans forward. “What do you know about it, Alex? What is it that you are hiding?” Alex frowns. Didn't J'onn know? She looks him over, wondering if this is all a ruse of some sort. He already knows, doesn't he?

Alex leans forward, arching her brow. “J'onn, I'm not hiding anything.”
J’onn keeps staring at her, imploring her to give up the truth, but Alex resists. She was trained by
him, after all, taught to withstand any form of interrogation in order keep a secret. Maybe J’onn
really didn’t know her secret? Maybe he deflected. Besides, Alex thinks, he’d been acting odd since
the day Steppenwolf attacked. Even Vasquez had been acting off, too.

Kelex, she thinks, can he read my mind?

No. The Black Kryptonite prevents telepathic invasion.

Shit, he’s going to be suspicious, if he wasn’t already.

“Fine,” J’onn says, though his eyes remain clear and knowing. “But if you do know something,
you would come to me, right?” Alex nods, still confused as to the direction of this conversation.
Something feels… off, and she doesn’t like it.

“Yeah, yeah,” she says, masking her nerves, “of course.”

Alex watches as he stands and grabs at his coat, before turning to the rest of the people in the
room. “I apologize, but something has come up which demands my attention. Have a lovely night.”

“Bye J’onn,” Kara beams from where she’s wrapped in Lena’s arms, “Take care. We’ll see you
tomorrow at the office.” J’onn nods, before he looks back to Alex with an imperceptible look, but
she doesn’t waver under his blank gaze.

“Goodbye Alex,” he says blankly, his voice low. “I’ll see you soon.”

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November 7th, 2018

Lena steps into the crime scene of her lab, her heart breaking in her chest as she sees the damage to
the equipment from months ago. She knows Maggie wasn’t kidding when she said she had millions
of dollars worth of repairs, not to mention the scrutiny of her board-members for admitting to a
secret lab in the first place. Lena sighs and continues forward, careful not to step on broken glass or
shards on the floor before she manages to make into the main room.

“I’m sorry Lena,” she hears Kara say as they walk through remnants of broken glass and stained
floors. Lena comes to a halt in front of the computer, noticing the multiple error messages flashing
on the cracked screens. Kara gulps, looking guilty. “I wish I could’ve stopped this. I don’t know
who would do such a thing… it’s horrible. Your work… it’s… gone.”

From the corner of her eye, Lena swears she sees Alex wince.

“Computer, activate security logs.”

“Activating security logs,” the computer parrots, “error, request unable to be processed. Error
report: security logs are corrupted.”

“Someone didn’t want us finding out what was happening here,” Lena mutters as she tries to
bypass the system, but it locks her out. Kara runs her fingers over the destroyed keyboards, her
eyes glazing over at the faded bloodstains.

“Do you think it was Invictus?”

Lena looks over her shoulder to face her girlfriend, who’s voice is soft when she asks the question.
She follows Kara’s gaze, looking to the dent into the locker responsible for housing the UHEN tool she’d made.

“All leads point to it,” Lena says, walking over to the vault. “Its’ suit is powered by Black Kryptonite, and the last searched filter on the computer is about the same subject. I just don’t get how the UHEN tool or Project X is related to it all.”

She turns around to look at the agent, and Alex simply nods, crossing her arms as she moves to the other end of the room to examine the scratches in the walls. After inspecting it with a slow drag of her finger, Alex turns back to her with an unreadable expression. They all look to the vault doors, before Lena turns to face Kara with a grim look. “I know you said your powers aren’t fully recovered, but I might be able to help restore them—possibly even make them stronger, Kara.”


Lena turns back to the screens, the red error messages lighting up her face as she steps closer to them. “If my guess is correct, I should be able to synthesize a form of Kryptonite which could augment your powers, thus making you stronger, faster, and more durable. It would be doing the same thing this Invictus character did, but not to the same extent. Shame, what it accomplished was truly a magnificent feat, but I suppose all that power was not easy to funnel into a proper state. My synthesis would restore what you’d lost, such as your super-hearing, the x-ray vision, heat vision, and cold-breath.”

“Really?” Kara exclaims, practically hopping from foot-to-foot. “Lena, that sounds amazing.”

“I haven’t worked out the kinks yet,” Lena says disarmingly, not wanting to give Kara false hope. “But the lab still has the materials I need to synthesize the Kryptonite. Once I figure out the compound, I will be able to fuse it to your DNA.”

“It’s still risky,” Alex interjects, and Lena eyes her carefully as the other woman stands beside her lover. “I don’t like it.”

“Alex,” Kara sighs, rolling her eyes with the fondness of an annoyed little sibling. She pokes her sister in the shoulder, grinning widely. “Anything that puts me in danger, you don’t like. It’s the same way around for me, you know.”

“This is different,” Alex says in a firm tone, “this could kill you, Kara.”

“But we won’t let it get to that,” Lena counters, noticing the anger rising in the agent. She knows Alex wants the best for Kara, but her devotion and love is misguided in this moment. Lena knows she could never trump Alex’s position and role in Kara's life, but she'll be damned if she's not considered in big decisions. Kara is more than just a girlfriend to her—she loves the woman for God's sake. “I would never try anything with Kara unless I was one-hundred percent confident, Alex.”

“See,” Kara says, pointing in Lena’s direction. “I’ll be okay. Please, Alex?”

Before they can argue further, a cackle springs to life from Alex’s radio. Lena watches her as she picks it up.

“Agent Danvers, we have a situation at the DEO, we need you.”

Alex looks up to Lena and Kara as Vasquez's voice sounds on the radio. “On it. I’ll be there soon.”

“What's going on?” Kara asks, cocking her brow. “Do they need me?”
“No,” Alex says, moving to the door. “I’m sure it’s nothing. I’ll see you guys later.”

Lena watches her go, her arms crossed warily. "You're sure, Agent Danvers?"

Alex gives her a pointed look before turning away without another word. Lena follows her back until she fades from view, and all she can hear is the faint echoes of her footsteps. Something is off, but she can't quite put a thought to it yet.

She doesn't have to, however, because Kara's voice interrupts her.

“Alright,” Kara says, “walk me through the procedure, Lena. I need to know what I’m getting myself into.”

* * *

Kara finishes spitting out the foamed toothpaste from her mouth into the sink before rinsing her mouth. She looks at herself in the mirror, taking in her haggard features, remembering her conversation with Lena only hours ago.

Lena said that she had to separate the dangerous chemical components of pure Kryptonite, the parts which gave the compound a greenish-hue, before individually fusing them together with a synthetic formula. Lena explained that the end result would be something she termed ‘White Kryptonite’—a direct counter to Black Kryptonite.

Lena did warn that Alex was right—it was a risky move.

But the world is in trouble, and Kara can’t hide anymore.

She sighs, turning away from the mirror as she heads back into the bedroom. Kara smiles at the sight of Lena working in the bed, her glasses falling to sit at the bridge of her nose as she types away on her tablet. The sight has Kara’s heart bursting with joy.

She pads forward quietly, gently taking the tablet from Lena’s grip and settling it on the bedside. As Lena protests, Kara leans forwards, capturing her lips in a soft, barely-there kiss. She knocks Lena’s glasses askew, before reaching up to remove them and kiss her deeper. Lena’s hands tangle in her hair as she gasps.

“Kara?”

“I love you,” Kara murmurs, moving to straddle Lena’s lap as she kisses her again, deeper and more passionately than before. “I love your strength… I love your brain… I just love you so much.”

“Oh yeah?” Lena asks, tipping her chin up as she looks to Kara’s gaze. “Care to show me how much you love me, Supergirl?”

Kara only grins, before she sets about doing just that.

* * *

Alex sits atop L-Corp, staring down at the city as she listens for people in trouble. She knows that her vigilante services have steadily decreased since her violent battle with Steppenwolf. Her brand, the symbol of justice, has been posted everywhere by the people, for the people. It reminds them of the force that watches them, a power which exists to protect them, but also to stop them. As a result, those who used to perpetrate crime no longer conduct their lucrative businesses.
Her system, as harsh and cruel as it may seem, works.

“Calling all units, requesting assistance on a 10-89 at National City Bank. We have a hostage situation with multiple causalities on scene. All officers are advised to proceed with caution.”

Alex leaps off the building and flies through the air in the direction of the bank, following the sounds of sirens and police chatter on the radio. It takes a matter of minutes before she lands in front of the bank to where the police have formed a blockade. The minute she lands, the gaggle of police officers and SWAT members hush and they look on in awe and fear.

But Alex pays them no mind as she looks to the bank.

Kelex, get me a scan of the inside.

Alex watches as a live security screen pops up inside her visor. She watches as the holographic outline of four gunmen threaten the hostages inside the banks. They’re tied up, but when Alex looks closer, she can see something trapped between their hands. She frowns at the sight in confusion. She can hear the murmuring behind her, but she tunes it out.

Can you zoom in on that video?

Yes. Zooming in now.

And then Alex sees what’s in their hands.

Grenades.

Alex turns around to the police, who are staring at her, unsure of what to do next.

She grunts, her voice modulated as she gives them an order. “Stay here. Do not enter the bank.”

She doesn’t wait for a response as she flies up to the roof.

Kelex, give me a game plan here. These guys are more than just robbers. Based on their arrangements of the grenades, they know what to do. I need to minimize hostage casualties.

Kelex hums in her mind, processing the information. So it would seem. Grenades are depressed, which means the minute they are removed from their hands, they will explode. I would recommend a chain-link approach with your super-speed.

Alex runs through the possible scenarios quickly. What’s the likelihood they survive?

Calculating. Chance of successful operation is 65%.

“That’s not enough,” Alex mutters as she looks down to the roof of the bank. “I need another option.”

But then it hits her and she grins.

“I got it.”

Before Kelex can reply, Alex shoots down into the bank, breaking through the concrete of the ceiling and landing in front of the hostages. The bank robbers pause in their work as the dust settles to reveal her form, and Alex quickly scans to see that all of the hostages have string attached to the grenade pins. She realizes that the strings are all connected to one of the robbers, standing in front of the vault, grinning as he cocks his assault rifle on his shoulder proudly. He nods at her.
“Invictus,” the man says with a smirk. “At last, we meet.”

“Let the hostages go,” she replies coldly, “now.”

“Are you so sure about that?” The man asks, lightly tugging on the strings. All of the gagged hostages’ screams are muffled as they look to her in pleading worry. Alex’s back stiffens at the sight, knowing that she cannot afford to misstep now.

Alex looks over at the two bank robbers, analyzing their threat levels while the first gunman drones again.

“Well then, Invictus. What are you going to do?”

Alex takes a deep breath. “I’ll give you one more warning.”

“Ooh,” the robber chuckles. “Gonna give me a time-out? Your brand doesn't scare me. I've faced The Bat.”

His smile drops into a glare as he raises his gun and fires the gun into the leg of one of the hostages, almost causing him to drop the grenade in his hand. "Now," the man growls as the hostage screams, blood flowing from his leg, "how about I tell you what I want? Let's start with the money." Alex scans the injured hostage, pulling up his physiology and assesses it.

*Arterial bleeding. He needs medical attention. Kelex?*

*You have roughly two minutes to make a decision, Alex.*

“I don’t need two minutes.”

The robber cocks his head, cut off in the middle of listing his demands. “What—”

Before he can finish his sentence, Alex juts her hand out and activates the magnetic sensors in her suit. Within a few seconds, all the grenades are ripped from the hostages’ hands and into Alex’s arms. She leaps up through the hole she caved in the ceiling before throwing the grenades up in the sky, watching as they explode, before she flies back down and head-butts the lead robber in the chest, sending him hurtling backwards into the vault wall. She hovers above the ground.

The gunman coughs and splutters, looking up to her in astonishment as Alex growls, “I warned you.”

Not waiting for a response, Alex then zooms to the other two robbers, throwing them aside and knocking them out. She quickly scans the rest of the room, pleased to recognize that there are no more robbers throughout the place.

She quickly turns and aids the man who’d been shot.

“Stay still,” she orders gruffly, “this will sting.”

The man doesn’t get a chance to protest before Alex sears the wound shut with her heat vision, before she lifts him to his feet and beckons at the other hostages. “Take him,” she orders, “I will take care of them. The police and EMTs are waiting outside. Go. You are safe now.”

The hostages all thank her in a flurry of cries and sobs before filtering out of the room. Once they are gone, Alex turns back to see the lead robber staring up at her, chuckling as blood pools down his face. He looks at her with wide, crazy eyes, as he grins.
Alex doesn’t see the switch in his hand.

The bank explodes in a raucous bang, erupting flames everywhere. Alex is just barely able to throw her arm over her head and kneel, preventing her from taking too much of the explosion. When it dies down and all that’s left is the smouldering flames, Alex sighs. Even with the filtered oxygen in her mask, she can still smell the burnt flesh amongst the smoke.

But then she senses something behind her, and she straightens, her jaw set determinedly.

She barely cocks her head to the side as she calmly says, “I was wondering when you would show up.”

There’s a pause before a soft voice replies, “I wanted to talk to you.”

Alex turns then, but only slightly. “Then talk, Supergirl.”

“What are you doing in this city?” Supergirl asks as she hovers over to where she’s standing above the scattered remains of the robbers, Alex kneels and grabs at the man’s head, tilting it up. Supergirl looks on, horror filling her gaze as Alex grips the man’s jaw and smacks it aside. She kicks at the gun in his hand before she rises and scans the rest of the empty room.

“Same reason as you.”

Supergirl only scoffs, and Alex can tell her arms are crossed petulantly. “I don’t kill people.”

“No,” Alex muses as she stands back up to face Supergirl. She looks over at the caped crusader with a smile. “You don’t.” Supergirl crosses her arms tighter, head cocked to the side. Alex can tell she’s trying to analyze her, but with her depleted x-ray vision, there’s nothing she can seek. Besides, her suit is lined with lead—so, even with her powers, it wouldn’t work.

“What do you want?” Alex asks blankly. "Why did you really come here, Supergirl?"

Supergirl stiffens at the bluntness of her question. “What do you mean what do I want?”

“What do you mean to achieve with this?” Alex asks, walking past her towards the other two robbers. “Are you here to apprehend me? Send me to the Justice League for another hearing? What do you want to do with me now you've found me?”

“Nothing,” Supergirl blurts out, “I'm not here to do anything to you, I just want to talk.”

Alex growls, shaking her head. “You said that before, but I’m running out of patience.”

“Are you Kryptonian?” Supergirl asks. “Because if you are, I can help. My name is—”

“You shouldn’t say it,” Alex growls, turning her head. She is frustrated at Kara’s naïve expression, and even though she understands Kara’s urge, she still feels worried. You’re better than this, Kara. No matter what, never reveal your identity.

But Supergirl only looks confused at her interruptions, blue eyes wide. “But I don’t need to hide it from you if you’re from Krypton, don’t I? It’s the only explanation. No other species can withstand the power of Black Kryptonite. You have to be from Krypton. I mean, how else would you know the Kryptonese symbol for Justice. So, who are you? Did you work with Astra and Non? Is that why you're here?” Kara’s voice grows more shrill as she continues her barrage of questions.

When Alex doesn't reply, eventually Kara concedes with a huff and a slouch of her shoulders.
Alex looks down to the stone in her chest, before glancing back up at Supergirl.

“Does it affect you?”

Supergirl pulls at her lip worriedly. “It’s... tempting.”

“Tempting?”

“Like... like a pull,” Supergirl says, her voice waning as she inches closer. “It's almost like I know you.”

*Because you do.*

“If you have nothing else to speak about, then I will leave.” Alex mutters as she glances down to one of the robbers who is still alive, looking up at her with wild eyes. She kneels, watching the blood seeping from the multiple shrapnel wounds.

“P-Please... p-please...,” he chokes on his own blood, “s-save—”

Before he can finish, Alex punches him in the throat, crushing his windpipe to collapse. She stands, watching his eyes gloss over as he draws his final breath and crumples in on himself. She hears Supergirl gasp behind her, causing her to cringe.

*I'm a monster,* she thinks as she reaches out to close his eyes, *they're right... this isn't justice.*

“You didn’t need to kill him!”

Alex doesn’t react to the snarl. She just looks to her fist as the stone pulsates in her chest, her mind darkening.

“Tell me,” Alex says, still avoiding Supergirl’s gaze as her thoughts start to muddle with the familiar, tempting lull of the Black Kryptonite in her mind. She can hardly hear her own mind screaming at her from the abyss. She stares at the man as she starts to speak, her voice low and firm. “If one of these hostages had been your friends, your family, your *lover*...”

“Don’t—”

Alex turns, cocking her head as she interrupts Supergirl’s interruption. “Wouldn’t you want to kill him, too?”

“I don’t kill,” Supergirl states again, her voice wavering. Alex only chuckles as she takes a step forward slowly.

“If that man was your *sister*,” Alex says coldly, “then would you kill?”

“Sister?” Supergirl asks, bewildered. “I don’t have a sister.”

Alex cocks her head as she faces Supergirl, looking at the fear written on the her sister's face. A part of her feels guilty, but she can’t help it. She needs to instil strength back into the hero. She steps forward, getting directly into Supergirl’s face.

“What would you do,” Alex whispers, her suit's height making her tower over her, “if he killed your *parents*?”

Supergirl’s face flashes in anger as she rears her fist backwards, screaming. Alex juts her hand up, her fingers capturing that extending fist in her palm. The air between them vibrates at the force of
the contact, and Alex winces slightly at the painful tremor that shoots up her arm. Her suit quickly calibrates the difference in power and redirects to her own body.

Supergirl looks down at the first in shock as Alex tightens her grip and sighs.

“You aren’t ready, Supergirl.”

“I can’t let you hurt innocent people,” Supergirl says, her voice trembling as she pushes against Alex’s grip with no luck. Alex only looks down at their hands, watching as Supergirl’s hand quivers when she clenches her fingers tighter.

“What part about them is innocent?” Alex mutters as she looks back up blankly. “Why save the lives of criminals when all they do is take from others?” Supergirl continues to fidget in her grasp, growling and huffing as she tries to free herself.

“You don’t get to decide who lives or dies,” Supergirl snarls, a familiar determination returning to her eyes as she pauses in her struggle to glare at her. Alex watches as her lips curl and her teeth bare viciously. “You aren’t a God, Invictus.”

“No,” Alex says, releasing Supergirl’s fist. “But neither are you, Supergirl.”

Alex steps back, watching as Supergirl collapses to the ground, out of breath. Her free hand wraps around her injured one, drawing it to her chest. Alex watches as Supergirl sucks in a deep breath, trying to ward off the pain. Unable to stare at her, Alex looks back to the three dead men, her expression blank beneath her visor as the fire around them burns brighter.

“You say you stand for justice,” Supergirl pants as she stumbles to her feet unsteadily. “But all I see is a monster… a murderer who thinks it’s above the law. You don’t protect these people. You don’t give them justice. They fear you!”

Alex turns around, hovering above the ground as the stone continues to pulse, the darkness more tempting than before.

“Good,” she says coldly, staring into the rubble and destruction with a grim smile. “They should.”

Supergirl’s reply isn’t verbal, and Alex isn’t prepared for the full weight of the hero’s punch as she flies into Alex’s back. Alex snarls as she’s thrown forward, crashing through concrete and fire. She stands back up but is shoved in the chest by Supergirl. On the second punch, Alex reaches up and grabs at Supergirl, disarming her and deflecting the punch by turning her to the side. She throws the Kryptonian through the stone like she’s made of paper, not impenetrable skin and bone.

“You cannot defeat me,” Alex growls, standing over Supergirl splayed out on the ground, guilt coursing through her. “You are not who you once were. Concede!” She tries to pull back, but the pull of the Black Kryptonite is too strong. Supergirl snarls and darts forward, catching Alex around the waist before flying them both backwards through concrete and steel.

Alex juts her arm out, disparaging her metal blade into the floor, grinding their flight to a halt before she twists her body and grapples at that red cape. She grips it firmly before flinging Supergirl off of her once more with a frustrated grunt. She watches as Supergirl's body tumbles through more debris before she lays flat on the ground, heaving in exhaustion and pain. Alex hovers over to her, the blade on her arm still extended as she glares down at her, shaking her head angrily.

“Enough, Supergirl! You are outmatched.”
“No,” Supergirl pants, struggling to her feet. “I can’t… I won’t…”

“I will not hurt you,” Alex says, swallowing hard as she fights temptation once again. “You aren’t ready to come back, Supergirl.” She watches Supergirl try to get to her feet, but she stumbles and falls back down weakly, breathing uneven.

“N-No,” Supergirl murmurs, eyelids drooping as she collapses back down again. “I w-won’t give up.”

Alex walks over, kneeling beside her as she murmurs, “I’m sorry.”

But the words fall on deaf ears as Supergirl falls unconscious, finally taken out by the excessive use of her powers. Alex hangs her head, feeling tears burning in her eyes as she swallows down the remorse which slices at her heart. The fog which had been crowding her mind has now faded into dull throb. She takes in the weight of her actions at the sight of her downed sister. She takes a breath, looking back to the fallen hero—her baby sister—and she barely holds back a sob.

“Come on,” she whispers softly, reaching under to gather the unconscious Kryptonian in her arms. She hovers, Supergirl protectively cradled in her arms as she slowly rises above the debris and into the sky. “Let’s get you home, Kara.”

* * *

The next time Kara wakes up, she’s back in the DEO.

The calming warmth of the sun-bed washes over her, easing the pain from her shoulders and back. She feels like she's been hit by a train, and she doesn't understand why. She is supposed to be impenetrable, a figurehead of strength and power to rival a God, and yet she feels as fragile as a human. Eventually, Kara leans up and realizes she’s alone. She glances outside glass windows to see Alex, Maggie, Lena, and J’onn huddled together and whispering. Kara’s lip quivers.

She remembers facing off with Invictus.

She remembers failing.

“It wasn’t enough,” Kara says, hanging her head. “I wasn’t enough.”

The door opens, but Kara doesn’t look up when she hears Lena’s concerned voice calling out, “Kara, oh thank God, you’re awake. We were so worried, you've been unconscious for several hours. I never should have let you go face it. I'm sorry.”

Lena comes to her side, wrapping her arms around her shoulders as she sobs apologetically. “I’m so sorry, baby, we should have done something, sent back-up or had air-support. We shouldn’t have let you go in there alone to face it. I'm sorry—”

“But it wouldn’t have mattered,” Kara scoffs bitterly, shrugged Lena off with a shake of her head. “I lost. Easily.”

She hears another pair of familiar footsteps. This time, Kara raises her head, only to look into the sad, troubled gaze of Alex. They stare at each other for a minute before Kara breaks down, her resolve finally wilting under her sister's eyes.

“A- Alex.”

Within seconds, her big sister is at her side, taking her from Lena’s grasp to hold her tightly in her
embrace. Kara sobs into Alex’s shoulder, pulling her closer as Alex rocks her gently, just like she’d used to whenever Kara would be scared in their youth. She murmurs sweet nothings in her ear, calming the storm inside her as she feels her insecurities continue to build.

“It’s okay,” Alex whispers, kissing her hair. “It’s okay, Kara.”

“No,” Kara growls, pulling away weakly. She hates how her limbs feel like string, how her muscles are worn and achy. She feels useless. “I couldn’t stop it, Alex! It… it killed those bank robbers. It has killed so many people. That’s not what humanity should be about—the death, the wars, why can’t they all stop? What do people see in the fighting and the blood?”

“Oh Kara,” Alex hums sadly, “this is the way Earth has always been, even before you landed on this planet. People—humans—do shitty things to other people. Revenge and vengeance are a way of life. Violence is a part of us that we can’t take away, no matter how hard anyone tries. I’m sorry, sweetheart. You picked one shitty fucking planet to land on.”

“No,” Kara snarls, shoving Alex off. “It’s not good enough, Alex.”

“Alex,” Lena warns as Alex’s mouth opens, “maybe we should talk about this later.”

Before Alex can reply, Kara swings her legs over the sun-bed and stumbles as her knees threaten to give out from exhaustion. Alex goes to help but she shakes her head. She limps to Lena, looking to her girlfriend determinedly.

“I want it,” she says, her eyes narrowed and focus. “The White Kryptonite. If it’s possible to fuse to me or my suit, do it.”

Alex’s eyes widen, “Kara, wait—”

“No,” Kara says, jutting her chin up. “I’ve waited long enough. I won’t stand by and let this monster terrorize my home.” She looks outside to see the news playing clips of Invictus lowering Supergirl into a field a few paces away from the fires.

"Wait," she says as she watches the image carefully, "why didn't it kill me?"

Kara turns around to look at Alex and Lena. "It should have killed me. Why didn't it?"

"Maybe it knew what you meant to this city, to this world," Alex supplies with a shrug, but there's something in her tone of voice which suggests more than just a nobility at play. Alex swallows thickly and looks up at the screen. "Maybe, it's just as misunderstood as you are, Kara." She watches as Lena turns her head to Alex, looking at her almost incredulously.

"Misunderstood?" Lena splutters. "Kara doesn't kill people, not even criminals!"

"Those criminals were monsters—"

"And so what?" Lena snorts, shaking disapprovingly. "Killing monsters absolves you of the same fate?"

"Lena—"

"Enough," Kara cuts in, her voice firm as she looks back up to the screen, listening to the muffled words of the reporter trying to discern the relationship between the return of National City's resident hero and its' mysterious new vigilante.
"Kara," Alex whispers softly, reaching out to touch her arm. "I'm just saying, we shouldn't rush into this. Lena is smart, smarter than anyone I know, but this White Kryptonite stuff? I just… I have a bad feeling about it. I don't want you hurt."

"News flash, Alex." Kara mutters, ignoring her sister's warm touch. "I'm already hurt."

Alex gasps slightly, her hand falling away at Kara's admission. Kara takes a breath before turning back to her family.

“This ends now.”

* * *

**November 9th, 2018**

Lena looks up at the ceiling of Kara’s bedroom. Beside her, her girlfriend is sleeping, exhausted by the day’s events. When Kara usually solar-flares, it means bed-rest for at least a few days before she’s back on her feet. But right now, Lena thinks, as she glances to Kara’s relaxed face, it doesn’t seem like even a few days are going to be enough to bring her back to where she’d once been. The fight with Invictus had knocked her down more than a few levels. She had already begun drafting formulas for the White Kryptonite, but she’d been stuck on how to safely remove the harmful element from the source. Nothing she is doing seems to work.

Her thoughts, however, are interrupted by a soft beep.

“Administrator Luthor,” her computer states from beside her, “unauthorized access detected at the L-Corp basement lab.”

Lena frowns and quickly grabs the computer from the desk, angling it away from her girlfriend. She casts one last glance at Kara before she walks to the other room and shuts the door. She types at the keys rapidly. “Pull up security feed, now.”

The video pulls up on the screen, still grainy considered they’d yet to have been replace since the B & E a few months ago, but Lena doesn’t need high definition to recognize the figure standing in her lab. She swallows thickly, before glancing back at the bedroom. She knows that Kara can sleep like the dead, but she doesn't want to risk her getting involved yet.

Instead, she sighs and looks down at her computer, issuing one final command.

“Get the car ready downstairs.”

* * *

Lena steps through the forced-open doors of the private lab, a gun loosely held in her hand as she pads through to the main room. Lena knows the weapon is useless against the hybrid being that almost obliterated her girlfriend, but still.

Lena Luthor isn't a woman to go down without a fight.

Padding further into the lab, Lena looks up to see Invictus standing at the main computer frame, its' back to her as she continues to walk in. Her gun hangs at her side, and she knows she’s making noise, but Invictus doesn’t seem to react.
Then, Lena takes a breath.

“I thought you would come here.”

Invictus still doesn’t turn as it speaks, its’ voice muffled and low even with the modulation. Lena keeps pressing forward even further until she’s only a few feet behind the armoured being, her throat bobbing nervously as she stops. She looks up to the screen to see the chemical formula for White Kryptonite written out on the display. The realization sinks in painfully.

Lena gulps. “You’re here to destroy it.”

Invictus doesn’t reply. Instead, it presses a key, pulling up Kara’s physiology on the screen. Lena’s grip on the gun falters, and she gasps as she makes out the calculations and notes next to the scans. The gun clatters from her grip as she leans into the space, her eyes scanning over the computer in awe. She compares them to her own White Kryptonite schematics.

“You…,” Lena breathes out, “you figured it out?”

Invictus’ shoulders sag. “You had a mathematical error. It was small—easy to miss.”

“Wait,” Lena says, shaking her head. “This… you’re helping her? You almost killed her!”

Invictus remains quiet, and so Lena takes the advantage of coming to stand at the being’s side. She takes in its’ powerful frame, from the imposing armour, to the swirling black inside the oval which sits atop its’ chest. She looks up to its visor, blank and dark, like a galaxy as the light from the screens reflects off it. Invictus' gaze remains glued to the screen as Lena drinks in the sight of the hybrid with awe and wary. She glances between the screen and the vigilante, still confused.

But then, Invictus finally speaks.

“I came to terminate it.”

Lena follows Invictus’ gaze to where a flashing ‘terminate’ sign now hovers over the work Lena had been slaving towards the past few weeks. Lena tries to shoot forward, but Invictus’ arm juts out, the metal somehow both cool and hot to the touch against her chest. Lena looks down at the arm and pushes again, but it’s no use. She’s only human, after all.

She feels tears well up in her eyes as Invictus stands still. "Please, don't do this."

"I am a protector," Invictus says, ignoring her as it still looks to the screen. "I have to protect her."

“You can’t do this,” Lena pleads, tears welling in her eyes. “The world needs Supergirl. If you want to protect her, you have to stop this.” Invictus’ free hand hovers over a button. Lena pushes
harder against its’ arm, crying now. “Please… stop.”

Invictus’ hand stills, and Lena tries again. “Please… I love her. I love her and this would kill her if you did this.”

Lena sobs, collapsing against the metal hand, “I love her…”

“As do I.”

Lena’s head jerks up as she watches Invictus’ hand slowly lowers itself back to its side. It releases its’ grip on Lena, its’ head bowing in defeat as it takes a step back, putting some space between them. Lena swallows thickly, looking back up. She stares at the swirl in its’ visor, the slouching of its’ shoulders, the slight tremble in its’ hands as it clenches them.

Finally, Lena finds her voice as she asks, “who are you?”

Invictus’ head doesn’t rise. Lena looks back up in confusion.

“It doesn’t matter,” Invictus says as it finally raises its’ head. “Because you're right. The world needs Supergirl. And I…”

Lena's feels apprehension spread throughout her at the slight tremble in Invictus’ frame as it continues to speak.

“I can’t protect her from it anymore.”

“You…,” Lena trails off, her brow furrowing. “Who are you to her?”

Invictus’ head turns in her direction, still expressionless.

She gazes up, her hand reaching out to cup the side of its’ visor as she asks again, "who are you, Invictus?"

The vigilante leans into her touch, and its' voice is low as it starts to reply, "I—"

“Luthor? You in here? We got the tip about the break-in!”

Lena startles and turns around at the sound of Maggie’s voice.

But when she turns around, Invictus is gone.

Lena stiffens as she looks up at the screen, only to see that the project she’d started isn't terminated. Invictus chose not to wipe the files. Lena frowns, stepping closer as she makes out a small note at the bottom of the formulas and calculations.

*Fuse it with her suit, not with her.*

“Lena!” Maggie calls out again, and Lena turns to see her entering the room flanked by a few NCPD members and J’onn. They both look concerned as they approach her, guns drawn and powers blazing. “Are you hurt? What happened here?”

“Invictus,” Lena says, looking back at the screen. Maggie curses from behind her, ready to call for backup, but Lena shakes her head and raises her hand to stop them. Maggie cocks her brow in confusion, looking to J’onn next. He looks surprised.

“What did it want?” Maggie asks, holstering her gun as she comes to stand beside her warily. Lena
looks back up at the screen, her mind replaying the conversation with the hybrid. She tries to figure out the connection to Supergirl.

But before she can answer, another voice interrupts.

“I came as soon as I heard,” Alex’s panting voice calls out as she runs into the lab, “are you okay, Lena?” Her eyes are focused and clear, and Lena can tell that her breathing is forced, not natural. She doesn't look particularly winded.

So why would she fake it?

“Everything’s okay,” Lena says, eyeing Alex carefully before she turns to look at the screen again. “It was just… Invictus… it…”

“That’s the complete formula for White Kryptonite,” Alex finishes as she comes to step beside Lena. “You… you don’t have to merge it directly to Kara’s DNA, that’s amazing. Lena, this could work!”

J’onn steps up beside them next, analyzing the formulas and calculations carefully. He grunts, “Alex is right. It works.”

“Are you telling me it is helping us now?” Maggie guffaws. “Really? Didn't it just try to kill Supergirl yesterday?”

“I don’t trust it,” J’onn says coldly, turning to look at Lena. “Regardless of whatever its’ motive was for providing the completion to your work, Invictus is a threat and must be neutralized.” Lena frowns, crossing her arms as she cocks her head. She’s about to mention that Invictus said it’d known Kara, but then she catches Alex’s expression and her voice dies in her throat. Their eyes meet, and for some reason, whatever Lena’s about to say is suddenly cast aside without thought.

Alex is looking to J’onn almost… sadly?

“We can figure out a way to lure it out,” J’onn continues to say, ignoring the painstaking looks Alex is trying not to display. “In the meantime, I need you to configure Kara the new suit. Alex, Maggie, you will work with me on figuring out a way to draw it out and bring it in. This is good work here, now let’s not jeopardize this chance. It has given us an advantage.”

Before anyone can reply, J’onn turns on them both, heading towards the door. All three women look at his retreating form suspiciously. Maggie clears her throat, adjusting her holster as she turns back to look at the two women with confusion.

“I don’t know what to feel about this,” Maggie says, looking back at Alex. “I mean, if Invictus is a friendly, we don’t want to piss it off by going after it. But if J’onn is right about the whole ‘posing a greater threat thing’, then maybe we should capture it. But then there's this: cracking the code to Kara's new super-suit. This doesn't seem like an enemy move.”

“Whatever we decide, we have to do it soon,” Alex sighs, rubbing at her brow as she looks over to Lena. “We can’t dwell any longer.” Lena watches her carefully, taking in stressed crinkle between the elder Danvers' brow with suspicion. Alex's devotion to the being was worrisome at first, but now it's raising questions Lena isn't sure she even wants answers to.

"Come on," Alex says, snapping Lena from her inspection. "We'll figure this out in the morning, Luthor."

Lena looks over, noticing an almost knowing look present in the agent's gaze. Lena gulps and nods,
looking back to the screen. Her mind keeps replaying Invictus standing there, ready to reveal its’ secret, to tell her its’ identity. When she looks back to Maggie and Alex, she sees something flicker in the latter woman's eyes, and Lena's gut twists nervously.

"Right," Lena chooses to say instead, her voice cracking. "Let's go, Agent Danvers."
November 7th, 2018

Lena lies awake in the early morning hours, staring up at the ceiling as Kara snores beside her. She hadn't mentioned her meeting with Invictus to her girlfriend, and she'd urged the others to do the same. She knows Kara's views on the vigilante is precarious considering her near-death experiences, and she doesn't want to add to her plate. Besides, Lena has a strange feeling about the masked anti-hero. Something about its' voice and mannerisms were oddly familiar, but she can't place it.

The sun starts to spill through their blinds, bathing them in warm orange light. Lena rubs at her eyes tiredly as she looks to her clock, swatting down the 'off' button on her alarm before it can even ring. Kara snorts in her sleep and shuffles, throwing an arm over her waist before tucking her nose into the back of her neck. Lena sighs at the warm breaths on her skin, her hands immediately coming up to cover Kara's larger one, her thumb absently stroking the pale, smooth skin.

"Mm," Kara mumbles, burrowing further into her back. "Too early."

"I know," Lena murmurs, turning her head to peck Kara's forehead. "Go back to sleep, honey."

Kara hums something unintelligible before turning her head into the pillow, lost to the land of her dreams. Lena watches as Kara falls back into a deep sleep, the gentle rumbles of her snores filling the quiet room. She gently removes Kara's arm from around her waist before replacing herself with her pillow. Kara snorts again, but doesn't stir at the replacement.

Lena reaches for the robe on her dresser, pulling it around her and tightening it. She pads out of her bedroom, snatching up her tablet on the way. She unlocks the screen and starts pulling up the information on the White Kryptonite, her eyes zeroing in on her miscalculation that Invictus had fixed. She wanders into the kitchen and turns on the coffee machine.
"You're overthinking it."

Lena turns at the sound of the familiar modulated tone. She gasps as she looks to Invictus standing in front of her balcony, the warm sunlight blaring over its' dark armour in a juxtaposition that almost makes her laugh. She goes to call for Kara when Invictus shakes its' head, following her gaze to the steps with a blank stare from its' visor. Lena closes her mouth.

"If you do this, you cannot go back." Invictus' voice is low, barely audible as it turns back to her. "Are you ready for that?"

Lena gulps, setting down her tablet. "You didn't erase it. Why?"

Invictus pauses for a moment before it replies, "I didn't have a choice."

"You did," Lena says as she steps forward. "You could have terminated it. And clearly, coming here, you know Kara."

Invictus doesn't respond as Lena cocks her head and finishes with, "only a select people know who Kara is."

"I did what I had to," Invictus says, its' voice grating. "The world is ending, Ms. Luthor."

"And what?" Lena asks, throwing up her hand in frustration. "Kara is the means of stopping it?"

Invictus looks down, its' fists clenching before it nods its' head slowly.

"What about you?" Lena asks, arching her brow. "What is your interest in all of this? You're clearly powerful enough—"

"No," Invictus interrupts coldly, looking back with its' blank visor. "I'm too powerful. My mind…the corruption…"

Lena frowns, her heart sinking nervously. "Corruption?"

Invictus looks down to its' chest, to where the stone pulsates. "It makes me think things… do things…"

It doesn't speak, unable to continue as it turns its' head away almost in shame. Lena feels sympathy for a moment, because she knows that this being in front of her is not a cold-blooded murderer. After all, it had multiple chances to end Kara's life, to bring Hell to National City—to the entire world—but it has shown relative constraint until recently. Lena sighs.

"Something is coming," Invictus says, its' tone solemn. "The world needs Supergirl, more than ever before."

"Why?" Lena asks, her voice cracking. "Aren't you supposed to bring the world justice?"

Invictus scoffs, looking back up to her as its' visor swirls. "The world doesn't need justice, Ms. Luthor."

Lena swallows thickly, cocking her head in confusion. "Then what does it need, Invictus?"

There's a rustling upstairs, catching both their attentions. "Lena?" Kara's voice rings out. "Who are you talking to?"

Lena looks back to the balcony to see nobody standing there. She goes to step forward when she
feels something weighing down in her hand. Frowning, Lena looks down to see the familiar Kryptonese symbol for the House of El in her hand. It's a small metal key, almost like the ones Superman had used to access Zod's ship years ago when the Kryptonians invaded Metropolis and nearly caused the end of the world. She fingers over it curiously, faintly listening to Kara's soft footsteps.

She knows what Invictus wanted to say.

The world doesn't need justice.

It needs hope.

* * *

Kara watches as Lena works on her computer silently. The morning had been tense, and while Kara was almost certain she heard someone else's voice, Lena denied anything of the sort. In moments like this, her anger is paramount to her loss as she remembers that some of her powers might just be permanently gone. She hasn't regained her super-hearing, nor has she been able to engage her super-vision, either. It's not powerlessness that's getting to her, however, it's everything else.

It's the forlorn looks. The pity. The sadness.

It's the way the news reporters have gone on and on about how she came back, but she didn't really come back at all.

The DEO looks at her like she's a failure.

And honestly, Kara thinks as she watches Lena slave over her new suit design, she might as well be.

She's a half-baked Kryptonian, a pale imitation of her cousin, the inferior Super…

Her parents lied.

She would never lead humanity into a new world.

She never could.

* * *

"Justice vs. vengeance: has Invictus gone too far? Latest reports show the masked vigilante has turned its' gaze from known criminals to corrupt police officers and government officials. This morning, the body of police commissioner Arnold Yaeger was found strung up outside the courthouse. Yaeger had been known to be involved with gangs across the city, supplying them arsenal and helping budge their appeals and trials with the local prosecution. The president is calling for the arrest and detainment of Invictus by any means necessary and is currently urging citizens to remain in their homes after dark…"

"What do you think?"

Alex blinks from her desk to see Maggie saunter in, her eyes glued to the screen as the news reporter continues to provide more information about Invictus' dark turn of events, and how the people have gone from viewing it as a hero to viewing it instead as a potential danger to society. Something inside of her mind growls with distaste and she clenches her fists.
"I think they're misguided."

Maggie sighs, turning her head to look back at her. "Alex. What's going on with you?"

"What are you talking about?" Alex asks, unclenching her fists as she cocks her head. "I'm fine."

"Really?" Maggie asks, crossing her arms. "Because based on how you've been acting, I'd think you're Invictus."

Alex flinches, her lips pursing into a light scowl. "I'm not a murderer."

"I never said you were," Maggie says calmly, arching her brow. "But you defend it a lot. I'm curious as to why?"

"Because it's taking a stand."

"Bullshit," Maggie grumbles, taking a seat on Alex's desk. "There's more to it than just that—which I don't fully believe."

Alex cocks her head, confused. Maggie rolls her eyes and sighs, relaxing her shoulders before rubbing her neck.

"Look," she says nervously, "you're a great agent, Alex. You take risks that others aren't willing to take, and some of them are borderline suicidal. But if I've learned anything about you in the last two years, it's that your morals aren't black and white. Invictus seems to fall along the same line. Murder is not corrected with murder. Death is not corrected with death."

"What are you trying to say?" Alex demands, her voice low as she holds back a growl. "I am not a killer."

"But you have killed," Maggie finishes bluntly, "and you haven't regretted it."

Alex looks away, clenching her teeth tightly. "Make your point quickly, Sawyer."

"I'm worried about you, Danvers. More than usual," Maggie says as she leans forward and gently reaches for Alex's fist. She thumbs over her knuckles before taking a deep breath. "You're on the fritz. You look like you haven't slept in weeks."

"I'm fine—"

"Don't lie to me," Maggie snaps, pulling her hand back. "I swear to God, Danvers—"

"Enough," Alex says as she stands to her feet, glaring at the other woman. "I'm fine. Drop it, Maggie. Seriously."

Maggie just looks at her like she's been slapped. "Did it do something to you? Alex, we can help you—"

"I don't need help," Alex says as the stone pulsates against her chest, her anger growing. "Leave me alone."

Before Maggie can reply, Vasquez appears in the doorway with a blank expression on her face. Alex and Maggie both turn to face the younger woman as she snaps a salute before nodding at Alex. "Ma'am? Ms. Luthor wishes to speak with you."

Panic stirs inside of her chest, but Alex swallows it down as she nods. She looks to Maggie, who
avoids her gaze, before she brushes past her and joins Vasquez. Her fellow agent leads her through the crowded DEO hallways until they reach the labs. She looks to see the blinds covering Lena's lab to be closed. Vasquez snaps another salute before walking away.

Swallowing thickly, Alex takes a deep breath and unlocks the door.

The room is mostly bare and dark, with most of the light being shone down in the middle where the beginning of a suit is being made. Lena stands at the side next to a computer, watching as the UHEN tool starts to interact with raw Kryptonite.

"You work quickly," Alex says, her voice light. Lena doesn't turn around, only keeps her focus on the computer.

"I had help."

"Help?"

"Invictus came by again today," Lena says calmly, "gave me a Kryptonian key. Helped the finalization process for the suit."

Alex gulps as Lena turns her head slightly, her green eyes sharp. "You wouldn't know anything about it, would you?"

"Kara didn't mention anything," Alex replies, keeping the nervous waver out of her voice. Lena hums, turning back to her computer. She keeps clacking at her keys as Alex takes a few more steps further. She looks to where the high-frequency laser from the UHEN tool is blaring through the Kryptonian key and onto the raw Kryptonite. She watches as the flecks of green start to disintegrate, leaving a glowing layer of white. Alex feels her mind temper slightly, her thoughts quietening.

"Kara doesn't know," Lena says, breaking Alex from her daze. "The less she knows about Invictus, the better."

Alex frowns, confused. "Why?"

Lena keeps her gaze on the screen, her voice unwavering as she replies, "because I think you're hiding something, Alex."

Alex pauses, sweat beading along her hairline as Lena continues clacking at her keys. The tool whirs a few more times as the last layer of green comes off, revealing the White Kryptonite compound. She swallows thickly, avoiding Lena's silence.

"I'm not hiding anything."

"Only one person knew where my lab was," Lena says calmly, "only a handful know Kara's identity. No one else I know would be able to deduce that altering a minute detail in the formula for White Kryptonite would result in successful conversion. You have a PhD in Kryptonian biology, and out of everyone aside from your parents, you are the field's expert."

Alex looks back up to the outline of the suit. "What's your point, Lena?"

"Invictus," Lena says its' name coolly, "who is it, Alex?"

Alex looks back down to see Lena staring at her calmly. "How would I know?"
Lena sighs, removing herself from the computer as she steadily walks over to Alex with an arched brow. "You know," she says as she eyes Alex up and down, "I may not be as conniving or vile as my mother, but I know how to find the truth."

"Ignorance is often bliss," Alex says as Lena stops in front of her. "Perhaps this is one of those situations."

"Alex," Lena says her name in a low growl. "If anything happens to Kara, and if I know you were involved—"

"Don't you dare," Alex hisses, leaning down to press her forehead to Lena's own. "I would never hurt Kara."

To her credit, Lena hardly flinches. "Not intentionally."

Alex reels back in confusion, shaking her head in disbelief. "If you honestly think I'm Invictus—"

"I don't know what to think," Lena replies as she keeps her gaze on Alex, steady and true. "But I have suspicions."

"So does the rest of the city—"

"But the rest of the city doesn't know you," Lena cuts her off calmly. "At least, not how I know you."

"Stop," Alex warns her carefully. "You don't want to do this, Lena."

Lena looks her over carefully, cocking her head as she takes in Alex's defensive stance. They stare at each other in tense silence, the air between them charged and heavy. Eventually, Lena leans back and looks her over, a softer expression in her eyes as she reaches up and gently cups Alex's cheek. Alex's chest heaves with every breath as she struggles to keep it together. She can see something in Lena's eyes, something akin to understanding, and she knows Lena isn't buying it.

"Please," Alex whispers as Lena rubs her thumb over her jaw. "Don't look into Invictus."

Lena swallows before whispering back, "are you afraid of what I'll find?"

"It's not about what you'll find," Alex says as she closes her eyes, "it's about what you won't."

* * *

November 9th, 2018

Maggie lowers the sheet over another mutilated body left from Invictus' rampage. This time, it's the body of the leader of the crime syndicate known for controlling a vile human-trafficking ring on the outskirts of National City. Though Maggie would hardly consider it a body, especially since Invictus had torn his limbs and scattered them the crime scene.

"This is getting out of hand," Mendez says from beside her as she stands to her feet. "It has to be stopped."

"It hasn't harmed any innocent people," Maggie sighs as she looks at the officer. "But... you're right. It's dangerous."

"Where's the damned Justice League?" Mendez spits out as he watches the coroners arrive. "They
promised to take it in, to provide a hearing, but I haven't heard a peep from any of them. Do you think they've given up on us? Are we alone?"

"It doesn't matter," Maggie mutters, rubbing her brow. "We're not super-humans. If this is the beginning of a war, it's one we can't win. Right now, Invictus is the least of our concerns. It saved us when Steppenwolf attacked. That's something."

"Is it though?" Mendez gulps. "I mean, it is far stronger than even Supergirl. Sure, she came back, but she was knocked aside like she was made of glass. If anyone could take down Invictus, surely she'd be the one, right?" Maggie looks over at him, watching as Mendez shakes his head. There are tears in his eyes as he looks at her desperately, swallowing hard.

"I have a daughter," Mendez chokes out. "Two-years-old. She's scared to go to sleep at night because she thinks Invictus will kill me the same way it killed the commissioner." Maggie sucks in a deep breath, reaching out to rub his shoulder.

"The commissioner was wrapped in a lot of bad stuff, Mendez. His death wasn't warranted, not in the way Invictus killed him, but he wasn't innocent. Tell your little girl that she has nothing to worry about. Invictus wouldn't hurt you."

"You don't know that," Mendez spits out, reeling back from her touch. "It's not a hero, Maggie. It's a monster."

Maggie watches as he storms off, wiping at his eyes hastily. Maggie looks back down the to bloodied sheet again. She watches as the coroners take the remains away in bags, and even though the sight should make her gag, she's numb. She's seen far too many cases now, is desensitized to the mindless killing. She sighs and rubs at her forehead tiredly.

But then, something crosses her periphery.

Instantly, Maggie draws her gun and holds it out in front of her. She looks into the darkness of the alleyway, her gun trembling in her hand as she peers into the unknown. She hears a rustle and she pads forward, her gun drawn. She contemplates calling for backup, but if it is who she thinks it is, she knows she won't need it. She continues forward slowly.

Finally, once she's shrouded in the shadows of the buildings, she lowers her gun.

"You can come out now," Maggie says roughly. There's a moment of silence before more rustling. And then, the being of the hour—Invictus—steps out from the shadows.

Maggie holsters her gun and shakes her head as the towering figure comes into view. She crosses her arms over her chest as she peers up at its' armour, her emotions warring inside her mind as she struggles to figure out a way to convey her thoughts. Invictus is patient and silent as it waits for her to speak first. Eventually, Maggie manages to find her words.

"Isn't this too much?" Maggie asks, her voice hoarse. "Don't you feel remorse after you've taken their lives?"

Invictus cocks its' head. "I did what they did."

"By that logic that means you should also die," Maggie snorts with a shake of her head. "Come on, Invictus."

"You are not incorrect," it says coolly. "I am deserving of death. And it will come. Eventually."
Maggie's mouth shuts as Invictus steps forward, its' head slightly bowed.

"And when I die, it will not be without suffering."

"Is that supposed to absolve you somehow?" Maggie asks, ignoring the pit in her gut. "People are dead because of you."

"Yes," Invictus says as it looks back up. "And more will continue to die because of me."

"Why?" Maggie chokes out, tears welling in her eyes. "Why can't you just stop? Why can't you just let it go?"

"I can't," Invictus whispers, its' armoured hand reaching out and gently hovering in front of Maggie's face. Thunder rolls overhead as rain starts to patter against them. Maggie leans forward and Invictus takes the last step as its' hand gently cups her cheek. The armour is cool and hard, black steel against soft, fragile skin. Maggie swallows as Invictus sighs.

"I can't stop it," Invictus whispers as it looks down to the pulsing orb in its' chest. "It won't let me, Maggie."

At that, Maggie blinks in confusion. "How do you know my name?"

Invictus shakes its' head, its' hand reeling back as it stands back at its' full height. Maggie looks up to its' visor, losing herself in the cosmic swirls of black and blue. She reaches up, her hand touching the edges of what feels like glass. Invictus doesn't pull away as Maggie explores the expanse of its' helmet, her body leaning closer to the vigilante almost impulsively.

"I know you," Maggie whispers softly, "don't I?"

"You don't," Invictus replies, its' voice low as its' hand clasps over her own. "But I know of you, Maggie Sawyer."

"Alex," Maggie breathes out, "you know her, don't you?"

Invictus sighs and nods, squeezing her hand. "She's a friend."

"Friend," Maggie echoes in shock. "Is this why she has been all distant and different? She's hiding you?"

"Something like that," Invictus replies before it releases her hand and steps back. "I have to go."

"Wait," Maggie says as she reaches back out. "I have questions!"

"In due time they will be answered," Invictus replies cryptically, hovering into the air. "Rest tonight, Detective."

"But—"

Invictus holds up its' hand, hovering further in the air. "Goodnight, Maggie. May your sleep be restful tonight."

Before Maggie can get in another word, Invictus shoots into the air and disappears without a trace.

* * *

November 10th, 2018
Lena is running the final calculations for the synthesis process when J’onn and Maggie come into her lab. Lena sets down her glasses and looks at them curiously, watching as J’onn shuts the door to the lab before joining Maggie in front of Lena.

“Is something wrong?” Lena asks. “Are you reconsidering the plan?”

“No,” J’onn says calmly, “I came here because of the plan.”

Lena looks between Maggie and J’onn in confusion. “What’s wrong? Kara’s super-suit is almost ready to be synthesized. I just have a few minor tweaks to make. Once it is ready, we can move forward and figure out a way to get at Invictus.”

“It’s not that,” J’onn says blankly. “I have no doubt in your calculations, Lena.” Lena pauses, but then it clicks suddenly.

“You’re doubting Kara,” Lena murmurs as she pieces together. “You don’t think she will be able to take Invictus down, even with the modifications?” She sees Maggie flinch out of the corner of her eye, but she keeps her gaze focused on J’onn.

“It’s not exactly that,” J’onn replies, looking to Maggie this time, though his facial expression hardly changes from neutral. “Kara’s morals will likely interfere with the plan. It is for this reason that I have come to you in need of a back-up plan.”

Lena eyes him carefully. “What kind of back-up plan?”

J’onn then turns to Maggie. “I believe that Invictus’ suit is made of lead and pure silver. Due to the nature of its’ armour, I highly believe that any damage it takes from regular weapons would do little to no harm upon its’ external frame. But if we could penetrate it with something powerful enough…” He trails off, waiting for Lena to catch on to his intentions.

When she does, Lena reels backwards. “Like what… a bullet?”

J’onn looks at Maggie, and then back at Lena.

And then he nods. “Yes. I believe platinum would work.”

“You’re kidding,” Lena guffaws, shaking her head. “Kara wouldn’t ever go for this. She doesn’t kill people, J’onn. She would never do it. Kara can subdue Invictus. She doesn’t need the help of a bullet. Besides, if even I create one, who’d shoot it? Kara doesn’t know how to use guns, and Alex is reluctant at even engaging with Invictus.” J’onn glances over at Maggie.

“I would,” Maggie says quietly. “I’d shoot it. After Alex, I’m the DEO’s best shot.” Lena crosses her arms, feeling unsure.

“I don’t know,” Lena murmurs, “I still don’t like it. I don’t think Invictus deserves to die.”

“But you’ll do it?” J’onn asks, brow arched. Lena looks at him, then to Maggie—who refuses to reciprocate. “Lena?”

“Yeah,” she whispers dejectedly, still not fond of the look J’onn is giving her. “I’ll do it.”

“Good,” J’onn sighs in relief. “And Lena? Keep this between us.”

Before Lena can protest, the Martian turns around and exits the lab. Lena watches from the glass windows as he says something to Vasquez, who had been waiting outside the room. The two then
walk off in the direction of the armoury. Lena bites her lip, trying to figure out whether to believe J'onn. His reactions and opinions of Invictus worries her greatly.

"You don't think Invictus is evil."

Lena is brought out of her thoughts by Maggie's calm voice. She looks to the detective and shakes her head.

"Invictus helped Kara," she says softly, "more importantly, I feel like I know why J'onn won't go to Alex."

"Because Alex knows Invictus," Maggie says, rubbing her brow. "They're… friends, from what it said to me."

Lena's eyes widen. "You spoke to it, too?"

"Too?" Maggie asks, confused. "You also spoke to it?"

"It was there when you found me a few nights ago," Lena says as she takes a seat next to the nearly-finished suit. "It told me that it knew Kara, that it loves her and its' job has always been to protect her. It… it reminded me of…"

"Alex," Maggie sighs as she also takes a seat. "I know."

"You don't think…?" Lena trails off, looking up to her friend. "Could Invictus… could it…?"

"The fusion wouldn't work," Maggie says, ignoring the elephant in the room. "Even if the DNA found in your lab was a strange hybrid version of human and Kryptonian DNA, there was nothing genetically similar to Alex's DNA—which would be necessary to prove they're both the same person. Alex and Invictus are close, but I can't believe they're the same thing."

Lena gulps, looking back at the suit with worry. "What if they are?"

Maggie rubs her brow and hangs her head.

"They can't be," Maggie whispers lowly, "because if they are, then we're all screwed."

* * *

November 13th, 2018

“You’re sure this will work?”

Kara looks at Lena, who is finishing the last, minor details of her new suit with a laser-focused attention. Lena doesn't answer her question, only continues fiddling with the small plate on the chest of her suit. Kara watches her hands move in slow, precise movements. She waits behind her girlfriend, the guilt and feelings of worthlessness growing in her chest.

When Lena doesn't answer, she just gazes at the suit carefully.

This super-suit is far more different from her old one. First, upon Kara's request, the skirt had been replaced with pants. The red, blue, and golden embroidery is replaced with a pure white chest, torso, and pants. The shoulder pads are a deep red, matching her cape. The S on the chest is made of a bright blue and silver outline. The belt around the waist is the same blue, but there are hints of red and gold in the stitching. There is a faint layer of steel armour covering it all.
“This looks intense,” Kara observes as she swallows down her fear, “it’s more… sturdy, I guess?”

“The frame is made out of a high-density alloy,” Lena says as she leans back from where she’d been tinkering. “You won’t feel anything because of your super-strength, and it will serve to provide you with additional protection against any of Invictus’ attacks. Right now, without the White Kryptonite, it is stronger than you. This will help put you on even ground.”

Kara digests the information with a sigh. “But will it work, Lena?”

“I re-ran the calculations,” Lena replies, but Kara detects a sudden rise in her pulse. “It will work, and it won’t hurt you.”

“You’re lying.”

Lena stops using the small tool. “Kara…”

“What aren’t you telling me?” Kara asks as she walks over to Lena, placing her hand on her girlfriend’s back. “You’ve been skittish ever since you left in the middle of the night a few days ago. Even more since I thought I heard you talking to someone in our kitchen. I understand if it’s something you don’t want to tell me, but I don’t appreciate the secrecy, Lena.”

Lena flinches. “You remember all of that?”

“I might have solar-flared but it didn’t make me any less observant,” Kara grumbles as she gently guides Lena to face her. “Now, will you please tell me what’s going on? I would never force you to give up information, but Lena, all of this hiding in the shadows is worrying me. Please?” Kara hates the conflict written all over Lena’s face, but she is desperate now.

Eventually, her girlfriend caves and bites her lip nervously. “I, um, saw it.”

“It?” Kara asks, brow arched. “What, Lena?”

Lena gulps, looking down. “Invictus.”

Kara’s eyes flash with worry instantly. She gathers Lena in her arms and frantically searches for injuries or signs of hurt. Now she really hates the loss of her super-vision. “Did it harm you? I swear to Rao; I will end that thing’s life if it hurt—”

But then she stops mid-sentence.

_Wouldn’t you want to kill them, too?_

“Kara?” Lena asks, wincing as she wriggles in her hold. “You’re squeezing too tightly. Ease up?” Kara blinks away from the memory as she sets Lena down, glancing at her apologetically as she wrings her hands together. Lena sighs, patting down the rumpled fabric of her pantsuit before she looks up again, concerned. “Now, will you tell me what’s going on, Kara?”

“When I fought Invictus at the bank, it asked me if I would do it,” Kara says, her voice soft as she remembers her interaction with the vigilante. “If I would kill someone if they hurt my family, or my friends, or my love. And I said no, but…”

“But?” Lena asks, reaching up to cup Kara’s jaw. “But what, Kara?”

“But I think I was wrong,” Kara murmurs. “If it had hurt you, or Alex, or Maggie… I don’t actually know what I’d do.”
“Hey,” Lena assures her calmly, “you don’t have to think like that because none of us are going anywhere. Invictus doesn’t hold power over you like that, and neither does it over us. We are stronger together, Kara. That’s what you told me, remember? We’re here. Besides, even if something happened to us, you are better than that, Kara. You are strong.”

“What if Invictus is right?” Kara asks. “What if in order to be the superhero this world needs, I have to take a life? Its’ life?”

Lena purses her lips and gives her a gentle nod. “Then we cross that bridge when we get there, together. But Kara, you don’t have to be some ideal superhero. You aren’t Clark or Bruce or Diana—you’re Kara. You are special. You are more than just a hero, Kara. You, everything you are, makes you the person we all love and need. Nothing could ever change that.”

Lena then leans up and kisses her soft and slow.

“You,” Lena murmurs lovingly, “are hope, Kara Zor-El.”

* * *

“So, that’s the plan?”

“Yes,” J’onn says as he looks up at the schematics, his arms crossed behind his back. “I will draw it out, pretending to be a criminal. When it arrives to apprehend me, Kara will take it down and we’ll send a team to extract the body and the Black Kryptonite. We’ll figure the rest out after. The importance is on retrieving the Kryptonite, with or without Invictus alive.”

Lena looks over each and every part of the plan, but something still feels off about all of it. She looks to J’onn worriedly. For as long as he’d known the Director, he’d never been one to hurt someone unless absolutely necessary—forget about killing that person. She looks over to her girlfriend, who looks equally conflicted. J’onn stares up at the screens blankly.

“I still don’t like this,” Maggie says, crossing her arms from where she sits, perched on one of the empty desks. “We don’t know what Invictus is, but it hasn’t done anything bad to innocents. When Supergirl left, the city collapsed into chaos—”

“Hey,” Alex says warningly, and Maggie flinches at Kara’s guilty expression. “Watch it, Sawyer.” Maggie gulps sheepishly, wincing at the sharpness of Alex’s tone. Even Kara winces, but Alex’s gaze softens when she looks to her sister softly.

“Sorry,” Maggie says quietly, “but Alex, you know it’s true.”

Alex tears her eyes away from Kara and glares at Maggie. “Doesn’t mean you have to say it.”

“Alex,” Kara sighs, placing a hand on her elder sister’s tense shoulder. “I love you, but you don’t have to step in and say something anytime anyone says something bad about me. I’m not that timid little girl anymore. I can handle it. Besides, Maggie was right. I read up on what happened when I’d been gone. I know about the Donovan Sanders case.” Alex growls.

“That bastard is the reason we need Invictus alive,” Alex says, and Lena’s brow raises at the conviction in her voice. “Killing it would mean that we lose a potential ally in whatever the future brings.” J’onn turns his attention off the screen to Alex.

“Agent Danvers,” J’onn says, stepping over to her warily. “You seem awfully close to Invictus. Almost… intimately close.”
“Gross,” Alex mutters, shaking her head. “I don’t know it or what it is, but I know it did something when you and the rest of this Goddamn government decided not to, so forgive me if I feel a bit of loyalty to a citizen who stepped up.”

“Enough!” J’onn roars, flying across the room and reaching out to grab at Alex’s collar before shoving her into the wall. “I’ve tolerated your insubordination long enough, Agent Danvers. Shut your mouth, Alex, or turn in your badge and gun.”

“Hey!” Kara snarls, flying forward to rip J’onn away, tossing him into a filing cabinet with a loud crash. She hovers above the Martian, glaring him down as she clenches her fists. “Don’t you dare touch her!” J’onn glares at Kara, eyes narrowed angrily.

“Stop,” Lena steps in, still suspiciously staring in J’onn’s direction. “Fighting will only make things worse. We need a plan.”

“I say we put it to a vote,” Maggie says, but J’onn shakes his head as he looks to them. He stares at Kara especially long, his gaze imploring as he points to the picture of Invictus on the screen. Lena watches as his lip curls into a threatening snarl.

“Its’ deeds do not matter,” J’onn spits, “the power of Black Kryptonite has a way of turning even the purest of souls into monsters. Look at what it has done to those criminals. Right now, it could be them, but in a few months, when it isn’t, then what? Then, when the city is over-run and thousands of people’s lives are in your hands, what will you do, Supergirl?”

“Stop it,” Alex growls from over Kara's shoulder. “That’s enough, J’onn.”

But J’onn doesn’t even acknowledge her as he continues his rant. He looks to Maggie next. “You,” he growls, “you watched it decapitate and mutilate a defenceless man. You saw its’ power. You have seen the trail of destruction it leaves.”

Maggie sighs and looks away at the accusation. J’onn then looks to Alex, “and you, Agent Danvers, I have no idea where the Hell you’ve been. For all I know, you could be fraternizing with this Invictus. And so help me God, if I find out that is the case, losing your job will be the least of your concern.” Kara looks ready to fight when Lena notices how Alex deflates.

But then, J’onn turns to Kara again.

“Supergirl,” J’onn growls, “you couldn’t defeat it. You, the strongest being on this planet, crushed by its’ might. So, you tell me, Kara, when the world is at war and if Invictus is standing on the other side, who will protect the people, then?”

A hush falls over the group as J’onn finally relaxes slightly.

“If you wish to put it to a vote,” he says calmly, though his eyes are still lit with fire. “So be it.”

“Fine,” Lena mutters, looking to everyone, “all in favour?”

J’onn has his hand raised, but then—to everyone’s surprise—Maggie’s hand is the next to tentatively raise. Lena looks over to Alex, who looks simultaneously defeated and saddened. She remembers their earlier conversation and she worries.

But that expression is nothing compared to when Kara’s hand raises.

Even Lena is surprised when Kara tentatively raises her hand. Lena can’t stop thinking about her own encounter with Invictus, at the pain and longing and love in its’ voice as it had talked about
its’ relationship to the Kryptonian. Lena knows that if Invictus had truly wanted to kill Kara at the bank, it could have. There were so many opportunities to kill them all.

But it didn’t.

So then, all who remain are herself and Alex.

“Well?” J’onn asks her, brow raised. “What will it be, Ms. Luthor?”

* * *

“Can I ask you something?”

Alex turns around from where she’s standing on the DEO’s rooftop to watch as Kara comes walking over to her, sweater tightly bundled against her chest. There’s something in her eyes, something akin to curiosity and confusion, but a pang of hurt and loss, too. Alex doesn't have telepathy, but she doesn't need the power to know what Kara is about to ask her.

“Yeah?” Alex replies, ignoring the pain festering in her chest. “What’s wrong, Kara?”

“Was what J’onn said true?” Kara asks, standing beside Alex. “About Invictus. Do you know of it or have met it before?”

Alex sighs, feeling her heart sink at the question. She looks into her sister’s imploring gaze, grateful that Kara doesn’t appear to be suspicious, but rather inquisitive about the nature of her relationship with Invictus. When she looks at Kara, she almost wants to tell her the truth, wants to rip open her shirt and show her the truth. Instead, Alex just sighs tiredly.

Maybe she can’t give her sister the truth, but she can give her something.

“Do you remember when you told me you thought you’d heard my heart stop?” Alex asks, deflecting Kara’s question with one of her own. Kara frowns as she ponders the question thoroughly. Alex reaches down and clasps their hands together.

“Yeah…,” she says, brow furrowing in confusion, "you told me that it must’ve been a problem with how my powers were re-manifesting. You said it wasn’t real.” Alex looks out to the horizon, watching the sunset disappear into the sky full of stars.

“Well,” Alex says quietly, “I lied.”

She doesn’t look at Kara. She can’t.

Because she knows exactly what Kara looks like right now.

Scared.

Angry.

Betrayed.

_You did this_, she thinks to herself sadly, _remember that._

“Alex,” Kara almost growls her name ferally as she lets go of her hand, “what are you saying?”

Alex takes a deep breath, before she finally looks to Kara with a helpless shrug. “I died that day. Those two Kryptonians killed me—made my heart stop beating for a few minutes. It was Invictus
who brought me back. It saved me, Kara. And it saved so many others. It may have lost its' way, may have done things unorthodoxly, but it saved so many lives.”

But it didn’t save the most important thing, did it?

“Alex,” Kara repeats her name in a mixture of disbelief and anger. “How could you just hide this from us? From me? J’onn—"

“J’onn can’t know,” Alex interrupts firmly, placing her hand on Kara’s shoulder. “I don’t know what it is, but he’s not the same J’onn we know. Right now, I don’t think the DEO can be trusted. I think there’s a leak in the organization.”

“Alex,” Kara guffaws incredulously, ‘you’re not serious, are you?”

“Kara,” Alex urges. “Something isn’t right here. I know you feel it, too. J’onn would never end anyone without an interrogation first. Our J’onn would bring Invictus to the DEO and question it before making a decision as big as killing it.”

“I think you need sleep,” Kara says worriedly. “You sound like a conspiracist, Alex. If anyone here caught wind of what you’re saying, you’d be fired! Maybe… maybe J’onn was right about you. Maybe you really are losing it. You need a break.”

That sends Alex reeling. “What?”

Kara just gulps nervously. “You’re tired almost all the time. You’ve gotten paler. You’re quick to anger. Not to mention, anytime Invictus is brought up, you get defensive. I… just wonder if it maybe did something to you, maybe it—"

“Brainwashed me?” Alex sneers, causing Kara flinch. “Go on then, Kara, say it. You think that the thing that saved my life is now manipulating me to commit treason against my city and its' people. You can't honestly be thinking that, Kara!”

“That’s not what I’m saying, Alex—”

“Well, it’s what I’m hearing,” Alex snarls, tears brimming in her eyes as she tries to fight against the waves of nausea. "You were gone for so long, Kara. I don't think you have the right to be doubting my decisions right now." She hears Kara’s heart beating louder in her ears, and Alex hates the way the beating has picked up rapidly since their conversation started.

"I was gone because my powers disappeared," Kara fights back, her voice cracking. "I was gone because you didn't want to see me again. You can't honestly think that things would right themselves the minute I got back, did you? Come on, Alex!"

“Kara,” Alex sighs, calmer now as she looks up at her heartbroken and confused sister. “We made a decision tonight. We can't go back and change it, no matter what has been said between us. I just… I think sometimes people get painted in bad lights, for whatever reason. You could be saving the world, and people will still find a fault in what you do—and they have. So many people consider you to be a tyrant even though you're a hero. Invictus killed people, but it also saved many more. It gave life to a defeated city.” Alex looks up at the stars, choking back her tears as she closes her eyes and sighs.

"Tell me, Kara, does it deserve to die for just being alive?” Alex asks, opening her eyes again to look at Kara sadly. “Because I don't know the answer to that and I don't think you do, either. But keep in mind, Kara, when you first showed your powers here, people were very quick to ask the same question about you, too. I kept them from hurting you because I know you and I love you,
and I know that you would never hurt anyone. I never doubted you. So why are we doubting Invictus?"

Alex can see the minute Kara understands the gravity of what she’s just said. Her sister looks down the ground, ashamed and quiet. Alex runs a hand through her choppy hair, sighing as she looks back up at the night sky with longing and hurt.

“Tomorrow,” Alex chokes out, trying to stop the crack in her voice from growing. “Tomorrow, Invictus will be killed. But please, all I ask of you, is to make sure that its’ death is not in vain. You will not kill it, Kara. I won't let it come to that.”

Kara just swallows thickly. “Why did you raise your hand, then?”

Alex’s lips turn up into a quivering, sad smile.

“Because,” she replies as she keeps her gaze locked on her sister, trying to memorize what could be one of the last meetings they may ever have unless she can conjure a plan to save herself. “Because, I know, that this city doesn’t need Invictus as its’ herald. It never did. Invictus isn't a reminder of justice, it's a reminder of what you give them, Kara.”

Because even if she does die tomorrow, Alex wouldn’t be upset.

But she would worry about Kara, about Maggie, about Winn…

“Invictus isn’t this city’s hero.” Alex says the words with a defeated sigh, shrugging tiredly. “Supergirl is.”

“But even Supergirl needs a hero too,” Kara says, stepping up next to her. Alex fights back tears as Kara’s head slides against her shoulder, nuzzling against her neck. “She needs you, Alex. I know that right now things are rough, but that hasn’t changed. I couldn’t do half the things I do without you. I need you, Alex. I will always need you. You're my sister.”

“Kara,” Alex says her name reverently, her eyes misting. “No matter what happens, I will always be with you. I’ll always love you. We don't stop being sisters even if one of us stops breathing, okay? When I go, you need to remember that. Got it?”

Kara just holds her closer, burrowing into her shoulder as she sobs. "But I don't want you to go."

"I know," Alex whispers as Kara's body quakes around her own. She blinks back tears. "I don't either, kiddo."

Alex doesn’t hesitate to wrap her baby sister tighter in her arms, holding her closer as she pecks Kara’s forehead. She breathes in the familiar scent of her sister, trying to memorize the way she feels in her arms, the love between them.

“We’ll be okay,” Kara murmurs sadly, hiccuping between sobs. “We’ll still be together after this, right?”

“Yeah,” Alex says, offering Kara a soft smile. “Always, kid.”

* * *

Maggie is halfway through a bottle of scotch when her door knocks.

“It’s open!” She calls out, still nursing her drink. “Come in.”
“That’s a terrible security system,” she hears a familiar voice reply, before the door shuts and locks again. Maggie doesn’t turn. She keeps her stare locked on her drink, swirling the pale amber liquid in the tumbler. She closes her eyes slowly.

“What do you want, Alex?”

There’s a soft sigh, before the footsteps still.

“To talk.”

Maggie finally turns around, glossy-eyed and sad as she takes in the tired form of her ex-fiancée. There’s this timid, almost sad look in her eyes which stabs Maggie in the gut and bleeds her dry. She looks to the way Alex is slightly curled in on herself, like she’s trying to protect herself from whatever is to come next. She hates that look, especially what it entails.

“Okay,” Maggie says, setting her glass down as she hops off her bar stool and walks over. “What do you want to talk about?”

Alex gulps, her eyes misting. “Us.”

“Alex,” Maggie sniffs, tears burning her gaze. “Please don’t… I can’t. There is no us, remember?”

“I know,” Alex croaks as she runs a hand through her hair. “But I…”

“Alex—”

“I know,” Alex repeats, holding back a croak. “I know that I ended it and that I have no reason to come in here and ask for us to talk, but Maggie, I just… I need to say something… I have to…”

There’s a desperation in Alex’s voice which piques Maggie’s concern. “Alex,” she mumbles her name, “what’s going on? Is it Kara?” Alex shakes her head, chuckling sadly as she looks upwards.

“No,” she rasps, blinking back tears. “No, not Kara.”

“Then what?” Maggie asks. “What has got you this… tense?”

Alex keeps looking up, trying to stop the tears from flowing, but Maggie can see that it’s a losing battle. Eventually, Alex resigns and lets her head bow with a crushing defeat, silently sobbing.

If she wasn’t worried before, she definitely is now.

“Alex—”

“I can’t have kids.”

That takes Maggie by surprise. “You… what?”

Alex just takes a deep breath, one laced with pain and anger. “I can’t have kids,” she bitterly spits out. “A few weeks after we—I broke up with you over it, I checked myself out to see my options. It turns out that constant exposure to Kryptonite can leave you sterile. So, the really fucked up thing is that I broke up with you over nothing. I threw away the best thing to ever happen to me because of some stupid notion that I could be a mother.”

Alex is sobbing now, falling to her knees on Maggie’s carpet as she fists her hands in her hair tightly. “My mom was right, Maggie. I don’t know why I bothered… why I thought I would have a
“chance to do right, to give a child the life I’d never had. To hold them, to love them… I was so fucking stupid. I gave up the one tangible thing in my life for a fantasy.”

Maggie’s eyes glisten with tears as she hears Alex’s voice crack on the word. Alex takes a few more deep breaths before she sighs.

“It doesn’t matter anyways,” Alex says grimly, looking back up at Maggie with a helpless shrug. “If we don’t stop this war, none of it would have ever mattered. I just need you to know that I… that what you and I… we… what we had, Maggie—”

“I still love you.”

Alex stops talking at Maggie’s confession. She blinks. “You do?”

“Yes,” Maggie says airily, dropping to her knees beside Alex now as she reaches out and cups Alex’s cheeks. She dries the older woman’s tears with the pads of her thumbs as she smiles through her own tears. “I love you and all of your insecurities. I love your strength, your passion, your drive, your protectiveness. I love you when you’re happy, when you’re upset, when you’re sad. I know that the past few weeks have been tough, but I can't bear another minute without you.”

Maggie smiles again at the dumbfounded look on Alex’s face.

“I just,” she whispers as she leans forward. “I love you, Alex.”

Alex doesn’t reply with words.

Instead, she surges forward and connects their lips in a fiery kiss. Alex’s hands cup Maggie’s cheeks as she presses them closer together. Maggie gasps when Alex breaks again, hiccupping with each cry that leaves her lips. Maggie reaches out, tangling her hands in Alex’s leather jacket. She slides it from the other woman’s shoulders, letting it crumple on the ground. She reaches down for the hem of Alex’s shirt, but Alex’s hands find hers, gently gripping Maggie’s forearms.

“Alex?” Maggie asks, panting as she pulls away. She looks down to where their hands are clasped in confusion. Alex just shakes her head, squeezing Maggie’s hands before kissing her again. She noses Maggie’s jaw, moving her hands away from her hips, before the other woman’s hands slide up to her the hem of her own top. Alex waits, hands shaking.

“I don’t know what will happen tomorrow,” Alex whispers softly, looking up at Maggie with wide, sad eyes. “But I need you to know that I still love you too, Mags. I don’t think I ever stopped loving you, and I don't think I ever will. You're it for me.”

Maggie’s heart tears apart at Alex’s confession. “Alex, everything will be fine,” she assures her ex-fiancée, “we’ll make it out of this. That’s what we always do, remember? You’re indestructible.”

Alex still doesn’t seem to be uplifted. Maggie sighs, taking another approach. She takes Alex’s hands and slides them under her shirt, goosebumps raising as those cold hands start to warm against her skin. Alex follows the movement with tears in her eyes. For a moment, it feels like it's their first time all over again, shy and timid, soft and sweet. Vulnerable.

“You feel this?” Maggie asks, sliding one of Alex’s hands to rest in the middle of her chest, between her breasts. “That’s how you make me feel, Alex, and the last few months without you have been the worst I’ve ever had. There are about a million miles to go between us, but all I want you to know is that whenever you’re ready, we can start again. Clean slate and everything, Danvers.”
Alex just chuckles sadly, leaning in again to kiss her.

“Only if you’ll wait up for me, Mags.”

Maggie’s heart clenches as she closes her eyes, losing herself in the next sweet kiss Alex gives her. She savours the familiar swipe of Alex’s tongue against her own, the taste of mint on her breath, the way her hands flit back down to her waist and tug her into Alex’s lap. She memorizes the way Alex’s teeth nip at her neck while she fumbles for Maggie’s shirt and bra, the way Alex’s fingers slide down her front until they reach that ready wetness. As soon as she touches her, Alex gasps.

“God,” Alex whispers reverently when Maggie’s lips part open and she cries out at the contact. “I missed you, Maggie. So much.” Maggie clutches onto Alex’s shoulders, clawing into the thin material of her shirt as she holds back from grinding.

“Show me,” Maggie pleads back, “take me to bed, Danvers.”

Alex doesn’t hesitate to draw them up to their feet, refusing to let their bodies not be apart for even more than a moment. Maggie’s hands tangle in Alex’s short hair, pulling and dragging her closer as Alex’s hands slide down to cup Maggie’s bum, squeezing lightly. Maggie gets the hint and leaps up, gasping when Alex’s strong arms hoist her up against her waist.

Maggie locks her ankles around Alex’s firm hips as she reattaches their lips. They continue to kiss as Alex guides them to the bedroom. Maggie’s eyes stay closed tightly as she nuzzles against Alex’s open mouth, gasping for breath as she feels Alex’s hands squeezing at her ass, kneading into the material of pants. A whine tears at her lips, aching for more.

But then she feels the softness of her mattress beneath her back and relief warmly courses through her body. She opens her eyes again to see Alex hovering over her, gazing at her with an infinite amount of love and longing in her expression.

“I love you,” Alex whispers as she leans down again, “my Mags.”

Maggie’s lips turn up in a small smile, her heart aching at the familiar nickname fondly. She leans up and meets Alex halfway, her hips jolting as she feels Alex’s hands on her belt, those dexterous fingers unlatching the buckle languidly.

Maggie breaks the kiss to whisper, “make love to me, Danvers.”

* * *

Alex lays awake, Maggie comfortably resting on her shirt-covered chest. Her head is laying against her collarbone, away from the stone. Her ex-fiancée hadn’t questioned why she kept her shirt on, or why every time Maggie’s hands wandered to her breasts, Alex would redirect them. Instead, Alex would coerce her with kisses to quieten and enjoy the moment, to remind Maggie of her undying love. She would touch Maggie like she's made of glass, like she's a deity to be worshipped.

She thinks about the rings, still in her drawer back at home.

It’s such a mundane question.

It’s such a pointless question.

Alex looks back down to Maggie with a mournful gaze.

Tomorrow, this night will not even matter.
Because tomorrow Invictus dies—and with it, so will Alex.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!
Chapter Summary

The final showdown between Invictus, Supergirl, and Martian Manhunter.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning for Graphic Depictions of Violence.

WOOOOOP the one we all been waiting for!!! Sorry it took so long, but hopefully the length and all the action makes up for it???

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The rain patters against her skin as she stands beneath the cloudy, dark skies. She toes the damp grass, her boots squelching against the soft trail of mud. She looks down to the marble headstone, her body and her mind as empty as the coffin which rests six feet below. Sighing, she sighs her head and looks at the inscription with a mournful gaze.


Loving husband, father, and friend.

May his soul rest in peace forever.

"Maggie said you weren't in bed this morning."

Alex sighs, but doesn't turn around at the familiar soft lilt of the voice behind her.

"We both know that's not the reason you're here, Kara."

"I'm worried about you," Kara whispers, her voice barely audible in the rain. "You've been restless for days, Alex."

Alex doesn't reply as she keeps her gaze on her father's grave. She lets the rain soak her clothes, and she suddenly realizes her Kryptonian cells must mute the coldness which threatens to penetrate her skin. Kara's boots squelch as she takes a few steps closer until she stands at her sister's side. Alex pays her no mind, her eyes glossing as she looks on at the grave.

It takes almost twenty minutes before she finally speaks.

"Do you ever think about Jesus?"

She practically hears Kara splutter. "Jesus? Alex… when did you become religious?"

"I'm not," Alex says as she turns her head to look at her sister's confused expression. "But do you ever think about what he went through? He was a martyr, crucified for protecting his people, and
was betrayed by his closest ally. He suffered."

Kara cocks her head. "What's your point?"

Alex sighs, toeing at the damp grass. "Why didn't his people see what he was doing? Why didn't they attempt to save him? Why just let him take their pain so easily? Didn't Judas feel any sort of guilt as he watched his friend—his brother—die?"

"Alex," Kara murmurs as she reaches out, grazing her elbow. "I think you need some sleep—"

"Invictus did what it could to protect this world," Alex says softly, swallowing down her emotions as she struggles to hide the truth from her sister. "Do you think the world will remember what it did? Or will it be known forever as a monster?"

"It murdered people," Kara says softly, "Alex, I know it saved you, but I think you're experiencing Stockholm Syndrome."

"That's not what this is."

"Yes it is," Kara says, "you're empathizing with it because you feel like you owe it something. By not protecting it, you feel like you're betraying it. But Alex, Invictus is not Jesus. It's not a God or a martyr; it's a danger to you and to the world."

"So it should die?" Alex asks, her voice cracking as she looks up. "Why do we get to decide that, Kara?"

Kara frowns. "Alex, you raised your hand—"

"I know," Alex says as she shakes her head, looking down at her feet. She struggles to hold back a sob as the rain begins to ease up and the stars start to shine. She blinks before taking a deep breath and looking over to Kara with a faint, sad smile.

"When I die," Alex whispers, ignoring Kara's pained face, "bury me next to him?"

"Alex—"

"Please," she says, voice cracking as she reaches out to pull Kara into her arms. "Please, Kara. Promise me."

"I… I promise," Kara stammers, shivering in Alex's firm grip. "But… but you're not dying, Alex. You're okay… right?"

"I'm fine," she lies, but Kara's too distraught to notice it. "I love you, kid. I'm just… sentimental."

Kara doesn't say anything else, just decides to revel in Alex's firm grip. Alex sighs and burrows her head in the soft cotton of Kara's sweater. She clings to her baby sister, willing for the day to give her just a few more hours, just a few more minutes of peace, of living in a world where death isn't waiting around the corner. She kisses Kara's temple soothingly.

"You should go home to Lena," Alex mumbles in her sister's ear. "She'll be wondering where you are."

Kara nods, sniffling. "Let me fly you back to Maggie. She's just as worried as Lena probably is."

Alex smiles, but it barely reaches her eyes. Kara doesn't notice as she quickly shifts into her costume before grabbing at the both of them and vaulting into the air. She closes her eyes as Kara
flies her, remembering all the times Kara used to take her flying when they'd been teenagers. She drinks in the feel of the cool rain and wind against her face, the strength in Kara's arms, and the freedom she feels as she soars above the ground. Though she can do it herself, nothing beats this.

This, Alex realizes poignantly, is home.

Kara drops her off on her balcony and kisses her cheek, tells her to get some rest. Before she leaves, Alex's hand juts out and she grabs at Kara's wrist, pulling her back into another hug. She can't hold back her cry this time as she clings to the last remnants she knows she'll have of her sister. She isn't ready to let go, isn't ready to live without everyone, isn't ready to leave Kara alone to navigate a place she never considered her home. She isn't scared for herself, she's scared for her sister.

Because, without Alex, Kara will be destroyed.

"I love you," Kara mumbles assuringly, "everything will be okay, Alex. I love you."

"I love you," Alex whispers back, her voice cracking. "And don't you ever forget that, okay?"

Kara nods, still confused, but she relaxes at Alex's smile. She gives her one last hug before flying off into the night. It's a majestic image, of Kara in her super-suit, her hair flying behind her, her fists jutted outwards as she cuts through clouds.

It's a fitting last image of her sister, she decides.

Alex waits a few moments at the balcony before she climbs the three steps to her bed, where Maggie is half-awake against her pillow. She stares at her with half-lidded eyes, droopy and barely lucid, but when Alex approaches, she sits upwards.

"Babe," Maggie says, her voice hoarse from sleep. "You okay?"

"Yeah," Alex sighs as she leans over to kiss the love of her life. "Go back to sleep, Mags."

"Mm," Maggie hums as she waits for Alex to nestle in the bed beside her. "Not without you. Love you."

"Love you too," Alex says softly, her fingers combing through Maggie's hair as her lover lays her head on her chest. Alex sighs and kisses her forehead before throwing the blanket over her lap. She stares up at the ceiling, swallowing thickly.

"I won't let Kara kill Invictus."

Alex nearly misses what Maggie says because of the quiet tone of her voice, but her super-hearing picks up on it. She looks down to the snoozing woman, her eyes wide. She stutters on her breath, but Maggie's fingers link together with her own. Eventually, the mop of brown hair shifts and Alex finds herself looking into Maggie's soulful eyes in the dim light.

"I won't let her kill it," she repeats, squeezing their hands. "No matter what happens, Little Danvers will be okay."

Alex isn't sure if Maggie is saying it because she knows who Invictus is, or if she is just trying to protect Kara from taking a life, but her eyes well up with grateful tears for either explanation. She draws Maggie into a powerful, deep kiss. Maggie hums into the kiss as Alex rolls them, pressing Maggie back into the mattress as she kisses her harder, trying to memorize every little detail of the woman who was able to unravel everything about herself. Maggie drew out the darkest parts of her
and wasn't afraid of what she found. She nursed her through an identity crisis, helped her live a true, authentic life.

"I love you," Alex whispers, and she wishes she could say it over and over again, but she's speechless at Maggie's smile.

"I never stopped loving you," Maggie admits as she cups Alex's cheeks before flipping them. "Let me show you, Danvers."

For the first time in her life, Alex lets her guard down.

She doesn't think about what is going to come next.

She doesn't think about what she has become.

She doesn't think at all.

For the first time in her life, Alex only feels.

* * *

November 11th, 2018

Lena startles awake to the rumble of an explosion.

Both her and Kara are jolted awake, looking at each other in concern and confusion before Kara takes off the covers and runs to the windows, her mouth agape at what she sees. Lena follows her, gasping as she takes in the sight outside.

"Is that…?"

“We have to get to the DEO immediately,” Kara says as she looks to where the smoke is trailing from in the distance. Lena's heart sinks as she hears Kara's wariness. “You go and tell J'onn what’s happened. I’ll fly out to see if there are survivors.”

Just as Kara’s about to go, Lena tugs on her arm.

“Take the new suit,” Lena tells her, “I brought it back from the lab. It’s in the workshop downstairs. It's calibrated to my tablet.” Kara nods, but before she can go again, Lena tugs on her arm and swirls the Kryptonian back so she’s in her arms.

“Be careful Kara,” Lena whispers, hastily kissing her lips. “I love you. If there’s something wrong with the suit, you fall back. You have to promise me that, okay? If you feel even the slightest bit strange, please… please don't be a hero, for once.”

Kara's lips quiver as she leans her head down, squeezing their hands. “Lena—”

“Promise me,” Lena growls as she blinks back tears, “if it fails, you fall back.”

Kara’s gaze hardens, but Lena doesn’t relent. “Promise me, Kara.”

Then, Kara leans forward and kisses her hard.

“I promise.”

* * *
When Kara puts on the suit, it’s like a whole new world.

All of her senses are resuscitated. She can hear sirens, the screaming of people, the waves of the ocean crashing against the shores, the sounds of thunder and lightning as the clouds roll in.

Kara feels her arms and chest buzzing with a newfound strength as she hovers above the ground in their workshop. She looks across the room to the mirror, staring at herself in the reflective glass.

“It looks good.”

Kara turns to see Lena staring back at her, glassy-eyed.

“It feels amazing,” Kara whispers as she hovers over to her girlfriend, the motion feeling effortless with the White Kryptonite. “I can feel everything…I can see everything. I… I don’t know how to thank you, baby.” Lena just smiles fondly.

“How about you save the world, and then I’ll tell you how?”

Kara grins. “Sounds perfect.”

Without any further hesitance, Kara looks to the open window of the skylight. She closes her eyes and draws attention to the newfound energy inside of her before she opens them again. It's like the will of Rao himself is flowing through her veins. She looks out into the horizon, her gaze set determinedly. She clenches her fists and hovers upwards in preparation.

And then, with a rattling boom, Kara leaps into the sky and soars towards the destruction.

* * *

“What the Hell just happened?” Maggie asks as she runs through the chaos and commotion of the DEO. as agents struggle to find out information. She sees Alex at balcony in her skin-tight combat greaves, overlooking the growing flames worriedly. Maggie jogs to her, not sure if Alex heard the question. She goes to ask again when she what Alex’s looking at.

“Holy shit… is that the…”

“President’s house?” Alex finishes with a growl. “Yeah, it is.”

Maggie pales in horror. “Holy fuck…”

“Agent Danvers, Detective Sawyer, I’m glad you are here.”

Maggie turns around to see J’onn walking up the steps calmly.

“J’onn,” Alex growls, whirling on him at the sound of his voice. “What is happening? Was this part of your fucking plan?” J’onn doesn’t offer a reaction, other than looking at the smoke. Maggie follows his gaze, furrowing her brow in confusion.

“No,” J’onn says, but it’s unconvincing. “But it works to our advantage. We might be better fit to subdue Invictus this way.” Alex snarls, bounding forward to shove a finger into his chest. Maggie watches the scene unfold with panic in her eyes.

“Advantage?!” Alex practically roars. “Innocent people are dying! This is not a plan, J’onn—”

“Then I suggest you and some agents rally a rescue party,” J’onn says, ignoring the finger in his chest. “Supergirl already told me that she is en-route to the scene. My best guess, so is Invictus.
We need to get to it before it wreaks havoc.”

Alex’s lip curls, and she looks ready to fight back, but Maggie quickly steps in and places her hand on Alex’s shoulders, pulling her back. Her lover's muscles tense and flex under her palm and Maggie has to suppress a shudder at the feeling. She tries to redirect Alex’s angry gaze, but there’s no use. She won’t stop glaring at J’onn, but he’s not reacting to it.

“Fuck you,” Alex growls as she shoves herself from Maggie’s grip with barely any effort. “Their lives are on you, J’onn. All of them.” Before Maggie can stop her from doing something reckless, Alex storms past them and towards the armoury. Maggie goes to follow, but J’onn holds out his arm, preventing her from moving. She looks up at him in confusion.

“J’onn?”

“Lena prepared the bullet,” J’onn tells her. “I have the gun stationed at the tower near the explosion site. Come with me.”

“Wait,” Maggie gasps in disbelief as she looks back at the smoke, “did you…?”

“I didn’t do this,” J’onn tells her in a calm, cool tone. He looks at her blankly. “I wouldn’t ever endanger civilian lives just for the sake of capturing the Black Kryptonite. Unfortunately, this attack is our only shot at getting Invictus. Coincidence.”

“Alex was right,” Maggie says, shaking her head in awe. “You really are different.” J’onn’s eyes flash with an unknown emotion as he leans forward, his hands lightly squeezing her shoulder in comfort. Maggie looks to his hand and recoils.

Once it was reassuring, but now it feels sickening.

J'onn's lips purse as he nods. “Grab your gear, Detective. You’re coming with me.”

* * *

Lena looks up from where she’s stationed at the DEO lab, noticing Vasquez posted at the door, her back rigid and her gaze held straight outside the glass, as if preparing for an intruder. In all her time at the DEO, she's never known Susan to be uptight or cold, but right now she feels like she's looking at a stranger in her skin. Lena gulps, looking at her tablet.

“Why are you here?” Lena asks as she monitors Kara’s vitals on the screen. She’d inputted small sensors into the suit as a pre-caution, and she’s happy she’d made the necessary adjustments. Kara’s vitals look good, but she’s confused at her own security. The threat wasn't in the DEO, so it seemed pointless to have Vasquez guarding her like precious cargo.

“Director Henshaw wants to keep the situation contained and is afraid it might spiral out of control,” Vasquez says coldly, still looking outside. “Please proceed with your work, Ms. Luthor.” Lena arches her brow at the formality of her tone.

“Can I radio Kara?”

Vasquez doesn’t turn. “Supergirl cannot afford to be distracted.”

Lena gulps and looks at the commotion outside. “What’s going on?”

This time, Vasquez does turn. She walks closer to Lena, before reaching on the table for a remote. She powers on the television screen, showing the remains of the President’s house. Lena watches
as the camera zooms in on a figure holding something in its’ arms. Lena follows the agent’s gaze and gasps at the scene as she makes out the figure’s armour.

“Invictus,” Lena breathes out, “it’s there.”

The camera zooms on a speck of white slowly coming down from the sky to hover a few metres away from the other being.

Vasquez smiles, but the sight is unnerving.

“The battle of the titans is about to begin,” she says as she looks to Lena. “Are you ready, Ms. Luthor?”

Lena gulps, shivering under Vasquez’s gaze. “For what?”

Vasquez’s lips pull up into a sneering smirk.

“For the *exaltation.*”

* * *

The world is on fire.

Kara had helped as many as she could to escape the explosion radius, but far too many corpses still littered the scene before her. It was only when J’onn had told her that Invictus was at the scene, holding the deceased body of the president, that Kara flew over instantly.

And that brings her to now, where Kara hovers behind the kneeling body of the mysterious being, the dead president slaughtered and maimed in its’ arms. Kara takes a deep breath, looking at the destruction around them both. She tries to get an x-ray vision of Invictus to figure out what it is, but its’ suit prevented her from looking through to whatever was underneath.

*Lead lining,* Kara muses, *how smart.*

“So,” Invictus’ modulated voice pulls her from her thoughts. “Is this how it is to all end, then?”

Kara watches as Invictus settles the dead woman down on the rubble before standing, its’ back still turned against her. Kara feels a low thrum settle in her stomach. She stands strong, willing herself to be confident as Invictus stays put.

“Did you do this?” Kara asks, anger filling her veins. She hovers closer, looking around at the fire and the rubble with wide, unforgiving eyes. She wants to crush it. “Did you kill her?” Invictus chuckles lowly, sadly almost, as it turns its’ head slightly to the side, enough for Kara to catch a glance of that familiar cosmic visor. Kara grits her teeth, standing strong.

“You are quick to trust those close to you,” Invictus says, ignoring her question. Eventually, its’ body moves, finally turning to face her as it, too, hovers above the ground. “You are blinded by those you love, Supergirl. Your insolence will cost you. Look at this city. It was not destroyed by me, Supergirl. I did not plant this bomb. I did not slaughter innocent lives.”

“You killed people,” Kara growls as she hovers closer. “People have burned your brand around this city. They *fear* you.”

“Think about it carefully, Supergirl. Who exactly fears me?” Invictus asks as it draws nearer, its’ head cocking as it gestures around to the rubble and the destruction. Kara swallows as it nods in her
direction. “Those with sin, or those without?” Kara swallows thickly as Invictus stands in front of her, the closest she’s ever been to her since their last encounter.

“She’s got the gun cocked and poised on Invictus’ knelt body. She reels back from the scope, tears welling in her eyes as she looks over to an irate J’onn with heartache. Invictus is giving in, waving its’ white flag, and yet here she stands with a gun cocked, with orders to shoot on sight. Maggie shakes her head reeling back from the gun.

“Stop this,” she says, “it’s defenceless, J’onn.”

J’onn glares at her. “It killed the president.”

“You don’t know that!” Maggie guffaws, scoffing as she throws her hands up in the air in frustration. “It could have been trying to help for all we know. Now we’re sitting up here bickering
while the world is burning. We need to help it, J’onn.”

J’onn only dismisses her with a steely glare. “You have one job, Detective. Do not argue with me.”

Maggie’s brows furrow into a line. “You don’t order me around.”

“Is that so?” J’onn asks, reaching into his belt for his badge before eyeing her almost threatenabley. “The last I checked, the DEO supersedes the NCPD. If you disobey your orders, you will be committing treason.” Maggie’s eyes widen in shock.

“Now,” J’onn growls, turning back to the scene in front of him. “Get your gun ready, Detective. If Kara won’t make the move, we will. That is not up for contesting. We voted.” Maggie looks to the gun before she leans back and swallows.

“What do you mean we will?” She asks, thinking back to J’onn's previous response. J’onn just rises to his full height, stripping off his D.E.O. jacket as his eyes start to glow red. Maggie watches in horror as he steps to the edge, growling.

“This has gone on long enough,” J’onn says, his eyes focused on Invictus in the distance. “If she refuses to end this, I will.”

Maggie tries to pull at his sleeve. “J’onn, wait—”

J’onn yanks his arm free, looking down to Maggie menacingly.

“When I tell you to take the shot, you do. That’s an order, Detective.”

Maggie lets go and chokes out a cry as J’onn turns back down to the middle of the rubble, where Kara and Invictus are still staring at each other, neither willing to move. J’onn growls deeply as thunder starts to cackle overhead, the sky darkening as the storm rolls. The scene is ominous, and Maggie can feel her gut sinking with disbelief and uncertainty each second.

But then, J’onn leaps off the edge, leaving Maggie behind.

* * *

Alex looks up at Kara sadly, waiting for her to decide.

In this new suit, Kara looks almost God-like. It’s poetic in some sense, Alex thinks, as she feels tears burn at her eyes, that she is to die at the hands of the one person she spent years protecting. She can tell by Kara’s heartbeat and the look in her eyes that she’s confused, unsure of what to do, but it doesn’t comfort her. Kara’s morality has always been clear-cut.

Don’t kill. Never kill.

But now, she has to make a decision, one that might haunt her forever.

“What do you choose?” Alex asks, her voice quiet. “Life or death?”

“I—”

Before Kara can finish, Alex is suddenly thrown to the side, tumbling through concrete and building until she’s catapulted into a concrete pillar. Dust gathers around her as she collapses to her front with a harsh wheeze. Alex stumbles to her knees and looks up to see J’onn standing in front of her, a look of anger on his face. He’s still dressed as Hank Henshaw, his eyes glowing red. She stands, feeling the Black Kryptonite already pulsing through her readily.
“You may have deceived them,” Alex snarls as she hovers to stand in front of him. “But you do not deceive me. Who are you, really? What have you done to my J'onn?”

J’onn’s lips only split up into a grin.

“I’m your worst nightmare,” he says coldly, “Champion.”

Alex’s back stiffens and J’onn smiles harder at the reaction. Just before either of them can react, Kara flies in, coming to a jarring halt behind J’onn. Alex’s heart shatters as she stumbles in her sister’s direction. Unluckily, J’onn seems to notice her movement and acts.

J’onn hurtles himself forward, grabbing at her shoulders before flinging her into the sky. Alex grunts as she finds her power and settles herself. She manages to recover from the hit in time to stop a speeding J’onn from smashing into her once again.

She grabs at him and throws him down back to the ground, smashing him into the pavement. The ground quakes and cracks beneath them. Thunder roars overhead as the rain starts to pelt down. It slides in rivulets off the steel of her armour, dripping silently into the rubble. The dust clears and Alex rises, standing over J’onn’s prone body.

Just as she’s about to reach for him again, she’s once again knocked aside. Alex gasps as her back smashes into another pillar. She comes to a halt, her lungs aching as the Black Kryptonite works to regenerate the damage to her ribs.

When she looks up, it’s to Kara’s eyes, now turned an unrecognizable, glowing white.

Alex stumbles to her feet, collecting herself as she faces her.

“I told you,” she says, bracing herself. “I won’t fight you, Supergirl.”

She hears coughing and looks over to see J’onn rising to his feet, an arm curled over his waist as he looks at Kara. “It killed the president,” J’onn rasps, an evil grin flitting at his lips as his eyes make contact with Alex’s own. “Supergirl, you must believe me when I say that it cannot be trusted. It will bring chaos to this planet, to these people.”

Kara doesn’t move her stare and Alex shivers under the intensity. She’s reminded of the Red Kryptonite.

Only this is far, far worse.

“It will destroy this world,” J’onn says, more confident and cold this time. “Just like it destroyed yours.”

Alex’s eyes widen as she watches Kara’s eyes blaze at the comment.

Her gaze is almost… feral.

J’onn comes up behind Kara, placing a hand on her shoulder, smirking in Alex’s direction before he speaks.

“Kill it, Kara.”

* * *

Alarms are going off in Lena’s lab as she struggles to figure out why Kara is suddenly showing spikes in her vitals. Her EEG scans are off the charts as Lena panics and types into her computer.
“Vasquez!” Lena calls out as she struggles to figure out how to remotely disarm the Kryptonite in her girlfriend’s suit. She looks to the woman at the door. “Vasquez, Kara needs pull back. Something is wrong. She’s losing control, I think the White Kryptonite is—"

But then Vasquez interrupts, her voice cool and calculating as she says, “all is going to plan, Ms. Luthor. There’s no need to worry.”

“Worry?” Lena blurs out as she watches the screen. “You should be worried, Susan! Kara isn’t in control, the Kryptonite is taking over her mind and if she can’t reel her power in, she’ll kill it!”

“Then so be it,” Vasquez says, turning her head to the side. Lena’s face pales as she watches Vasquez’s lip curl into a pleased smirk.

“Oh my God,” Lena whispers in disbelief as Vasquez clicks on the pad to shade the glass to black, preventing anyone from looking in. “Alex was right… she was right. You aren’t Vasquez, are you?”

“Very observant,” Vasquez purrs, her eyes glowing red as her body starts to shift. Skin and bones start to rearrange as the former agent’s body turns into something grotesque and alien. “You certainly were always the smartest one, weren’t you, Ms. Luthor?”

The shift completes, and Lena gasps. “You’re a White Martian.”

“Hmm,” the Martian purrs salaciously, one of its long fingers reaching out to tenderly caress Lena’s jaw. “Perhaps we should keep you. There might be some use for you, yet. With both the power of White and Black Kryptonite on our hands, we would be unstoppable. Your mind is excellent, sharp. We could conquer this planet together, Ms. Luthor. Join us.”

Lena looks to her side, eying the metal tray beside her. The Martian draws closer, its tongue flitting out from between its teeth as it hisses. Lena swallows thickly, narrowing her gaze as she realizes that she has to make a move immediately.

She grabs at the tray and swings forward, smashing it against the Martian’s head violently.

The Martian screams, calling out in fury. "Petulant human! You will die for your insolence!"

Lena jumps back to where Alex left her gun and grabs it. The Martian rises, but before it can leap at her, Lena fires a shot.

“Not a chance in Hell, bitch.”

* * *

Maggie watches in shock as Kara flies head-first into Invictus, knocking both of their bodies back into the series of sky scrapers. Glass shatters around them as J’onn joins. Soon enough, Maggie watches as the fight becomes ugly and violent.

J’onn grabs at Invictus’ leg and tosses it upwards, before Kara zooms up and plants her feet into Invictus’ chest and pushes down, sending them both slamming to the ground. She can practically hear the bones snapping beneath the thick armour as Kara hovers away for a moment, leaving it in the crater, before she swings back down and punches the being in the face. Maggie shivers when she hears Invictus let out a scream of agony as Kara reaches for its neck, twisting harshly in her grip.

Something isn’t right. Maggie knows something isn’t right.
Kara would never be that aggressive.

Maggie looks to the gun and gulps, starting to second-guess what J’onn had said to her earlier. She’d not known J’onn for half as long as Kara or Alex, but something about him seemed off. She keeps thinking back to what Alex had said about J’onn seeming different. She knows that Alex had been on the fritz, but she's starting to realize maybe she wasn't insane.

Maggie turns back to the fighting to see J’onn and Kara tossing Invictus back and forth between them like a piece of meat. She watches in horror as Kara takes Invictus by the shoulders and tosses it backwards like a ragdoll. Invictus is slow to get up, and Kara capitalizes on that by zooming forward, smashing her shoulder into Invictus’ chest, throwing it downwards.

“Fuck,” Maggie growls, fumbling for her radio. “Alex, you there? I need you to get in touch with Kara and stop her. She’s losing it out there. I think something is wrong with the suit. Alex?”

Static replies on the line, and Maggie’s heart jumps. “Alex? Alex, do you copy?”

Once again, there’s no reply. Maggie curses, shaking her head as she continues to watch the battle unfold worriedly.

"Where the fuck are you, Danvers?"

* * *

Alex feels herself crumble through the Earth at Kara’s next hit.

Alex, Kelex’s voice sounds in her head, your vitals are spiking. You must allow the Black Kryptonite to temporarily take over. Alex growls at the suggestion, remembering the last time she let the Black Kryptonite invade her mind.

Before she can reply, a hand clasps over her chest and digs her out, before throwing her into another building. Alex snarls, reaching around her to find J’onn grinning in her direction. She latches onto his arm and twists her body, turning him so that his head smashes into the glass of the building as she flies forward. She keeps her elbow in his neck firmly, pressing him deeper against the glass. She watches his arms flail, but the motion is useless as Alex grips him even tighter.

J’onn screams as Alex continues to drag his face alongside the panes of glass, before she throws him ahead, causing him to catapult into another building. He pierces a hole in it as he tumbles and jolts around through the metal and concrete. She goes supersonic, colliding with his chest as she sends them both hurdling back into the air and out the other end.

Finally, Alex throws him down, causing him to crash directly into the burning embers of the president’s former house with a quaking rumble. Alex falls to her knees a few feet from him, pain lancing through her body as she stumbles in his direction, infuriated at the sight before her. She seethes as she feels the tempting lull of the Black Kryptonite intensify.

“What have you done?!” Alex snarls, picking up an overturned car and vaulting it in J’onn’s direction. It collides against his shoulder, sending him hurtling backwards. She launches another overturned car. “What have you done to her, imposter?!”

J’onn is sent crashing backwards a few more feet as Alex grabs yet another car and throws it at him. But, before this one can make contact, it’s kicked aside. In its’ place hovers a white-eyed Kara. Alex looks to her sister in disbelief as Kara's fists clench. They practically glow with the aura of her power. Alex swallows thickly as her sister's eyes narrow coldly.
“Do not touch him,” Kara growls as her eyes start to burn brighter. “I will not warn you again, world-killer.”

Alex shakes her head. “He’s manipulating you!”

"Don't listen to her," J’onn wheezes as he looks to Kara. "It's trying to coerce you into taking its' side. Resist, Supergirl!"

Alex snarls, glaring at J’onn’s smirking face from where he’s laying behind Kara. “This isn’t you, Kara—”

“No!” Kara roars, her eyes flashing. “Do not say my name!”

In a flash of white, searing heat comes careening in her direction. Alex gasps as she digs her left foot backwards to stabilize her before she meets Kara’s blazing white heat vision with her own. She’s barely able to temper the searing heat.

Alex, Kelex’s voice sounds, you cannot withstand this power without the full use of the Black Kryptonite. Fusion is advised.

Alex grits her teeth and holds her ground as best she can, but the force of Kara’s augmented heat vision is enough to send her sliding backwards in the rubble. Her boots dig deeper and deeper. She clenches her muscles and fights to keep control. When Kara responds with a low growl of her own, Alex feels the heat start to singe at her eyelids.

She’s losing this battle, and fast.

So, she makes the executive decision.

Alex takes a breath and snarls, “do it.”

* * *

Lena fires another shot at the charging alien, ducking out of the way when the Martian lunges in her direction. Deep down, Lena regrets suggesting to sound-proof the lab walls. By now, someone should have been able to hear the gunshots and the conflict. She ducks beneath desks and vaults over the chair as the Martian charges once again. Lena fires another shot.

“Your efforts are futile!” The Martian snarls at her, ducking the bullet. “No one is coming for you, Luthor! The exaltation will happen, and we will conquer this planet and all else for Lord Darkseid. You are just a pawn in this plan. Do not think of yourself as anything more. You would be stupid not to engage with us. We could prove you with everything, Lena.”

“Fuck you,” Lena spits, firing off another shot. "Don't you ever fucking say my name, you bitch!" The Martian snarls when she fires another one into her chest. Looking to the side, Lena spots one of the shock-sticks and quickly grabs at it.

Vaulting over another table, Lena juts the stick into the back of the Martian’s neck. She holds it there, listening to sizzle of burning flesh as the electricity cuts through the thick skin until it touches the bone of the Martian’s neck. Lena holds it down until the Martian convulses, tenses, and then falls completely limp.

Lena holds it an extra few seconds before she tosses the stick away, breathing hard. She then runs over to the screen where Kara’s vitals are going insane. She types in the kill code of the White Kryptonite, watching as the stabilization processes takes place.
Once Lena is sure that Kara will return back to her normal self in a few moments, she quickly grabs both the gun and the stick, before downloading the information on the computer to her tablet. Lena steps over the dead Martian and bolts for the door, unlocking it.

When she steps outside, the commotion of the DEO is no more.

In fact, there isn’t anyone left.

Lena shivers when she realizes that all along, Alex had been right.

Quickly, Lena makes her way to the armoury before grabbing a radio. She tunes into the secure communications channel she’d set up with Alex and Maggie and presses on the microphone button.

“Hello, is anyone there? It’s Lena,” she gasps into the microphone as she rushes through the DEO, “Alex, you were right, it’s a trap. Vasquez was a White Martian working for Darkseid. I don’t know where her body is. But… but I think J’onn is one, too. You were right, something is wrong. You need to stop J’onn. Oh God, please… please somebody get this message.”

There are a few seconds before a reply sounds back.

“Oh, thank God. Lena, are you okay?”

“Maggie,” Lena breathes out in relief as she heads up to Alex’s main office, locking the doors behind her. “I’m a bit banged up but I’m fine. Listen, Kara’s suit will stabilize any minute now. When it does, she needs to retreat. J’onn is using her to kill Invictus. All they want is to harvest the power of both Kryptonites. This wasn’t an accident. It was planned all along.”

“Fuck,” Maggie curses, and Lena can hear something jostling on the other end. “And Invictus? Is that thing in on it, too?”

“I don’t think so,” Lena says, her voice wavering with the fading adrenalin. “But I’m not sure. We can’t trust anyone but ourselves, Maggie.” She pulls up her computer, realizing that Kara had tried to scan Invictus’ suit prior to their battle.

“Wait,” Lena says quickly as she furiously types some codes and programs. “I think I can figure out what Invictus is. Kara scanned its’ suit, but I think I can pull it apart with the simulator. Some of its’ blood landed on Kara’s suit. I can use the sensors I implanted to trace its’ genetic origin. I can figure out what this thing is.” Maggie sighs on the other end.

“Thank fuck for some good news,” Maggie says, her voice disdainful as Lena continues typing away into the computer. “Because right now, this fight is getting ridiculous. Half of National City has been blown to bits and it doesn’t look to be easing up anytime soon. Hopefully your shut-down works quickly, Luthor. J’onn and Kara are close to putting it down.”

Lena looks to the reset time on her tablet and grits her teeth, knowing there is still time before Kara’s suit shuts down.

“Okay, just watch them for now. I’ll try to find out more.”

***

Kara comes back to herself in the middle of an intense heat vision battle with Invictus. She has to cut off the contact and duck to the side. Gasping, Kara shakes her head, trying to figure out how she’d gone from watching J’onn flinging Invictus aside to engaging with the being herself. Kara
looks down to her suit and winces. Her powers feel muted somehow?

The glow of the White Kryptonite is dulled now, and Kara can sense that her powers are weakened again. She's back to where she was before Lena gave her the suit: half-baked. Worriedly, Kara looks up, seeing Invictus on its’ knees, its’ visor steaming after the heat vision it’d just dealt. Kara stumbles to her feet, ready to attack it again. *How did I get here?*

She’s about to fly forward when something hurdles past her. Kara looks to the side to see J’onn going at Invictus, his fist drawn back as he lands a devastating punch to Invictus’ visor. She hears the sickening crack of the glass, and she knows J’onn has managed to crack the armoured casing. Kara watches as Invictus goes flying backwards, smashing into the rubble of the president’s house and tumbling a few times before stopping. It remains motionless for a few moments, barely breathing. Kara hovers closer, conflicted as she watches J’onn grin from afar, his fists flexing as Invictus starts to move.

J’onn flies over, chuckling madly as Invictus struggles to stand. "Had enough, Invictus?"

Invictus' head cocks up from where it's still on its' hands and knees. "Fuck you."

"Your time is over," J’onn snarls down at it, “you die today—”

Before J’onn can finish what he’s saying to Invictus, black streams of heat vision extend outwards, slamming into J’onn’s chest and sending him flying backwards. Kara gasps as she watches J’onn smash through rock and glass until he collapses on the rubble. Invictus flies over, covered by an aura of black fog as it fires another stream of black in the Martian’s direction. Kara gasps in horror, her body moving on its' own accord as she looks the sight of her injured mentor.

“No!” She screams as she flies forward, shoving her hands out and knocking Invictus over. “Don’t you dare touch him! How could you hurt him like that?” Invictus grunts as Kara reaches for its’ chest, pulling it up before smashing it down again. Invictus claws at her arm, trying to pull itself free. Kara feels herself entering a blind rage as she lands punch after punch.

“You… you d-don’t…,” Invictus chokes out as Kara’s hand reaches up to its’ neck, wringing her fingers around it tightly before twisting her arm and drawing it upwards. She hovers in the air, Invictus in her grasp. “It’s… n-not… J-J’onn.”

“Liar!” Kara seethes as she throws Invictus in the opposite direction with a rough twist of her arm. She follows after it, grabbing at it before tossing it again. “You were in this all along, just trying to get me to turn on them. I won’t do it.”

Kara then reaches up to her ear piece, panting. “Maggie, you there?”

She watches Invictus stumble again, its’ movements slow. "Supergirl… don't… do… this…"

There’s some jostling before Maggie pants, “*oh thank God, Kara, you're okay. Listen, there’s something I need to tell you—*”

“I want you to do it,” Kara interrupts coldly, watching as Invictus hangs its' head, panting heavily. Kara almost feels guilty, but she then looks to J'onn's prone form. Maggie’s breath hitches on the other end as Kara hovers closer to Invictus.

“D-Do what, Kara?”

“You know what,” Kara says, glaring at Invictus, now standing—albeit a bit hunched over. Its’ visor is cracked, and the cosmic glow which had once adorned it is now gone. It looks defeated,
but Kara can't focus on that for right now.

There's only one thing left to do in order for all of this to finally be over.

She takes a deep breath and steadily says, “I want you to take the shot.”

* * *

Lena keeps analyzing the sample and the existing database on Invictus. She rapidly types in different codes and formulas until she’s finally able to pull apart the data enough to find a match. Only, the picture on the screen makes her heart drop.

“Wait,” Lena says, frowning nervously. “No… no please… this can’t be right.”

She re-enters the codes, but the same results pop back up. She'd always had her suspicions, but she never wanted them to be real. Not like this; never like this. Lena drops her radio, her mouth agape as she looks on in shock at just who’s scans stare back at her. Tears well in her eyes as Lena falls backwards, slumping into Alex’s office chair with a started gasp.

At first, Lena wants to deny it, but then it hits her like a bullet train.

Everything makes sense now.

The disappearance.

The reluctance.

The protectiveness.

The break-in.

It all makes sense.

Lena looks back up in defeat, tears welling in her eyes as she breathes out the one name she'd dreaded it to be:

“Alex.”

* * *

Alex, Kelex says softly as Alex stumbles to her hands and knees, winded after another debilitating throw by her sister. *Please, you are losing strength. You need to fall back. Without the stable connection to the stone, you will die.*

“I won’t fall back,” Alex mutters, watching as Kara flies over slowly, a glare settled on her face. “If this is how it ends…”

*Alex, this is suicidal.*

Alex draws a sharp, deep breath, before whispering, “I know. So be it.”

“It’s over,” Kara’s voice calls out to her. “Stand down, Invictus.”

Alex raises her head. Rain continues to pour down from the sky, tempering the flames burning around them. She sighs sadly. If she is going to go out, she will go out doing the only thing she knows how to do; she’ll always protect Kara.
“You’re making a mistake,” Alex tells her, “but if I must die for you to realize that, then kill me. J’onn is not who you think he is. The DEO are not who they think they are. You have to believe me, Kara. You have to trust me.” Kara growls fiercely.

“And why should I trust you?” Kara asks, brow arched. Alex just smiles underneath her cracked visor, watching as Kara draws closer. She looks to her baby sister, replaying the moments of late last night in her mind, of Kara's smile, her hugs…

“But because,” Alex replies, “I’m not who you think I am, either.”

There’s a brief pause, and Alex almost thinks Kara is about to reconsider. Tears well in her sister's eyes, and Alex shakily reaches out, her hand hovering a few paces in front of Kara's chest. She looks up at Kara, her breaths wheezing harder. Kara looks over at her, but then her gaze shifts to the destruction around them, and then finally to a motionless J'onn.

And then, Kara reaches up to her ear and shakily whispers, “take the shot, Maggie.”

Just like that, Alex’s eyes close in defeat.

Who is she to change her fate?

Is this what must be done to save the world, to save Kara?

If so, she’ll take a million shots, over and over again.

So, she closes her eyes and thinks of everyone she’s ever loved.

Alex prays death is not as unforgiving as life.

* * *

Maggie gets the order, but she doesn’t know what to do.

“Kara,” she says into her radio. “You’re absolutely sure?”

She can see from where Kara is standing that Invictus is not looking like it will be fighting back anytime soon. J’onn is still down on the other end, and he doesn’t seem to be moving. Maggie knows what Lena said, but J’onn hasn’t shifted yet. Vasquez might have been a White Martian, but without J’onn shifting, she won't be able to tell if he’s real. She doesn’t know if she takes the shot on him, she’ll end up killing a brainwashed director or a White Martian in disguise. It’s far too risky.

But then Kara gives her the order again, clear and firm.

“I’m sure,” she says, “take the shot.”

Maggie closes her eyes and prays that she’s doing the right thing as she loads the single platinum slug into the gun, before angling it in the direction of the hunched-over Invictus. It feels wrong, so incredibly wrong. Tears are sliding down her cheeks as she slides closer to the gun. Maggie gets into position, taking a breath as she aligns her scope over its’ head.

But she made Alex a promise.

If she doesn't pull the trigger, she knows Kara will find a way to kill Invictus.

And she will not let the woman she's become to see as her little sister take a life like that.
Maggie’s finger slides over the trigger, ready to pull it as she sniffs. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry…"

"Maggie, don’t shoot it’s—"

The cackle of Lena's voice over the radio startles Maggie, and her finger slips.

The shot rings out, and Maggie doesn’t hear the rest of whatever Lena’s said, because she watches Invictus crumple against a slab of concrete like a sack of potatoes, a blooming stain of dark crimson around its’ side growing almost exponentially.

She barely registers Lena's frantic voice, or the words she says, or the name she speaks, because her mind is numb.

The gun slides from her grip and Maggie collapses against the wall, sobbing uncontrollably.

It's over.

It's over, and she was the one to end it.

* * *

"It’s down. Good work, Kara."

Kara looks at Invictus’ crumpled, quivering frame as it gasps and splutters for air. The blood is pooling around its waist, flowing in rivulets. It stains the dust with the pouring rain. The colour of its’ blood is red, like human blood, only darker. Kara feels a shiver run through her spine when she hears J’onn’s voice again, stronger and nearer than before. She turns to see the Martian hovering over in her direction, looking suspiciously less injured than he had moments ago. Kara frowns.

“Look at that,” J’onn muses with a grin and she shivers at the coolness of his voice. “Even Gods bleed, too.”

Kara looks over to him, feeling uneasy about the way J’onn looks at Invictus, like it's the prey and he's the predator going in for the kill. Unable to take it any longer, Kara walks over to where Invictus is propped up against the slab, its’ shoulders shaking. Its' hands are loosely clasped over the gaping hole in its' side, barely holding together whatever is left of its' life.

Kara pauses a moment, before she kneels beside it.

Invictus’ head turns just the slightest bit and Kara feels her stomach flip.

Underneath the crack in the visor, Kara can see a hint of pale… *skin*? Human skin? A newfound sense of dread courses through her. Kara reaches out, her hand hovering over the mask. She expects Invictus to turn away, but it stays still.

“Tell me,” J’onn says from behind her, chuckling. “Do you hear it?”

Kara pauses, her hand still extended over Invictus’ mask. J’onn only snickers again. "Do you hear it, Kara?"

“Hear what?” Kara asks, her voice trembling as she turns her gaze to the Martian. “J’onn?”

J’onn just keeps smirking past her in Invictus’ direction. The unsteadiness is growing and Kara feels her mind grow dizzy under the look J’onn has plastered on his face. She wants to run away, but her body is frozen as J’onn practically purrs.
“Her heartbeat, Kara. Do you hear it?”

Kara’s heart clenches as she whips her head back around to Invictus, who is looking up at her blankly. More blood pools between its’ gloves, trying to hold in its’ life source. Its’ letting out soft, pitiful little gasps that are painful and harrowing.

“Where is she?” Kara asks, her voice broken as she interrogates the hybrid. “Where’s Alex?”

When Invictus doesn’t answer, J’onn laughs again from behind her.

“Take the mask off, Kara. Find out the truth, once and for all.”

Kara reaches out, staring at that crack in the visor. The familiarity is sickening now. Her radio cackles and she can hear Maggie trying to speak, but she tunes out the shouting and chaos to focus on the lack of a heartbeat in her ear. She hadn’t heard it during the fight, even with her powers in full. Kara’s hand grips the helmet, and with a deep breath, she tugs.

When the clasp comes close, and the helmet falls away to reveal the face underneath, Kara’s world comes crumbling apart.

“Alex?”

* * *

“Alex?”

Alex is barely able to keep her eyes open as she looks up to those devastated blue eyes, brimming with disbelieving tears. Kara throws the helmet away and cries out in agony and bone-chilling guilt, shaking her head as she stumbles backwards with shock in every trembling collapse of her knees into the cracked, bloodied pavement. Alex watches it all unfold slowly.

Alex. Kelex's voice cuts through the haze of her unfocused mind. The odds of survival at this rate are—

“I know,” Alex whispers, iron tinting her lips as she lifts one of her bloodied hands out to Kara shakily. “I know.”

It's not said with defeat.

It's said with acceptance.

“You!” Kara screams, voice cracking and wrenching Alex's heart. Kara shakes her head, tears streaming down her face as she rocks herself in a way that makes the pain of the bullet wound feel more like a paper cut. Alex's heart strains in remorse at the look of sheer terror on Kara's face. “How could you? How… How… Alex… oh Rao, Alex… no… no… no…”

“She lied to you,” J’onn tells her, placing his hand on Kara’s shoulder. He grins down at Alex with a sadistic expression. Alex blinks up at him, blood running down the side of her cheek as she feels her body start to grow cold. “And now the Champion belongs to us, Supergirl.” Alex shakes her head and focuses her attention on Kara, trying to ground her sister.

If she only has moments left, dammit, she will use every single one to help Kara.

Kelex, can you give me a secure telepathic link?

I can, Kelex says, but it would require more power from the—
I don’t care, just do it.

Alright, Alex. The link has been established.

Kara, she whispers in her mind as confidently as she can, but she knows that even she is unable to hide her fear. You have to listen to me. J’onn isn’t J’onn. He’s just using you to get at the stone. You can’t let that happen, Kara, or else we all die.

She sees Kara’s eyes widen in horror, and she knows that Kara’s in shock right now, knowing that not only Alex lied about almost everything, but that Alex is dying right now and there’s nothing she can do to stop it. And Alex knows that Kara’s only thoughts are about how she ordered the shot, about how she is blaming herself, but she can't let that happen.

She shakes her head at her sister’s distraught expression. "N-Not your fault…"

"Alex," Kara croaks as she is unable to breathe through her hiccuped cries. "Alex…"

“Y-You…,” Alex stutters the words as she holds out her hand shakily, “Y-You’re b-brave, K-Kara…”

Alex sucks in a deep breath, feeling her lungs burn as the Kryptonite tries and fails to repair the wound. She’s a doctor, for fuck’s sake. She knows that she’s bleeding out and that the bullet, whatever it’s made out of, is still wedged inside of her. No amount of Kryptonite or regeneration will save her unless she has a Hail Mary—but at this point, Alex doesn't want one.

Alex is tired. And she has been tired for a long, long time.

“B-Be strong,” Alex coughs out, “s-stand s-strong…”

Alex, Kelex says, your power…

“Stop your blabbering,” J’onn spits, “I’ve had enough of you—”

Before he can finish his statement, two searing holes appear in his eyes. Alex feels all the rest of her energy go into her heat vision as she sears him down until his limp body collapses in the dirt. Alex gasps as she feels her powers start to recede again. She knows she only has a bit of juice left before she's back to being human. Gasping, Alex steadies her gaze.

When her vision returns to only barely spotting black around the edges, she takes in the sight of the mangled White Martian body in front of her. Alex almost wants to laugh at how all of this could have been avoided if she’d just killed him before this all started. If she had just been smarter, been one more step ahead, been able to do without thinking too hard.

But she didn't, because deep down, she knew she would never forgive herself if it was J’onn after all.

No matter what the Martian would have become, he was always the father Alex needed after Jeremiah’s death.

When she looks up to Kara, she sees the pure shock in her eyes and she hates herself. She knows Kara needs her more now than she’s ever needed her before. Alex wants to fight, to deny her own death, but she knows that even she has her limits.

God, Alex thinks miserably as she looks to her sister, this wasn't how it was all supposed to go down.
Alex, Kelex’s nervous voice returns, *the blood loss is significant. You may still retreat.*

Well, Alex considers as she looks to Kara's shivering body, she never did things the easy way. Alex can feel her legs tingling as the blood loss continues. If she doesn't make a decision now, the circulation will cut off and there will be no second chances. She gazes over to Kara, who is just staring at Alex in shock. Alex knows that Kara’s unsure of what to do or say now. But Alex knows she can't leave Kara like this, no matter how tired she is, no matter how much pain she feels.

*Protect Kara,* she thinks to herself firmly, *protect your family.*

Alex, Kelex says in alarm, *I'm getting scans of incoming DEO agents in the area. They are coming for the Black Kryptonite. Some are friendlies, but others are not. We do not have sufficient power to distinguish them. You must retreat, Alex.*

“Fuck,” Alex hisses as she looks over Kara’s shoulder to the soldiers storming in on foot. “Kara… K-Kara listen to m-me…”

Kara only blinks at her, the tears still helplessly streaming down her face as Alex chokes on a wad of blood. Kara shuffles closer, pressing herself to her sister's side. Kara's hands clasp over the one pressed down on her abdomen.

"Alex," Kara chokes out, "Alex, tell me what to do… tell me… how to save you?"

Alex wheezes as a wave of pain washes over her. She grits her teeth. “K-Kara, p-please…”

"No," Kara replies, her hands shaking as she looks all over her body. "No, no you're not leaving me, Alex. You can't!"

**Alex, you do not have time, you must escape.**

“Kara,” Alex whispers in a raspy voice, “you can’t… can’t let them… find me.”

Kara looks down to her abdomen, to the blood covering both their hands, and for a moment, Alex doesn’t think she’s going to speak. She recognizes the tell-tale signs of shock, and she knows that despite being Kryptonian, even Kara isn't able to hide away from human problems. Her sister is frozen, staring at the blood covering her pale palms, barely able to see anything else. Alex hangs her head, channeling all of her energy into redirecting her powers. She has to protect Kara.

“I’m sorry,” Alex whispers sadly, “I love you, Kara.”

Before Kara can respond, Alex channels the remainder of her energy from the stone into flight, and she shoots up into the air. Mid-leap, she turns on the auxiliary mask she’d installed into the suit, protecting her against wind resistance. She continues to rise higher and higher, her suit barely able to maintain her altitude at a stable rate. She can feel herself weakening. She blinks back the darkness spotting her gaze as she cuts through rain and clouds, flying on autopilot.

**Alex, Kelex says, still worried. Where do you want to go?**

Alex closes her eyes and lets the power carry her as she continues to fly.

There's only one place she needs to be right now.

**Home.**
CONGRATS TO ALL OF YOU WHO FIGURED OUT J'ONN ISN'T J'ONN! Nice jobs.

Thanks for all the feedback!! You guys are the best!!!
"Kara, answer me Goddamnit!"

Kara looks up to where Alex had shot up into the air, her breath still caught in her lungs. The shock still hasn't worn off, and all she can see is Alex's pale, devastated face staring back at her from the mask. She finally tears her eyes away from the darkening skies and looks back down to the pavement, her heart twisting as she sees the blood and water mixing between cracks. Rain continues to pour down upon her shoulders, soaking her hair, but Kara only has eyes on the crimson pool.

Alex’s blood.

"Kara, for fuck’s sake, are you there?"

Finally, Kara tunes into the blaring shouting on her radio. Kara gasps, holding her fingers up to her ear as she looks to the rooftop where Maggie had been stationed. She can't see that far ahead because she’s unfocused and rattled by the recent events. She tries to tune into the detective's worried voice, but her hearing is muddled and cloudy, and she feels unsteady.

She called the shot.

She called the shot to kill her sister.

Kara opens to mouth to reply, but instead she retches violently. Hot vomit gushes up her throat as she empties her stomach between heaving sobs. She collapses to her knees and shakes her head as she can't stop the tears from streaking down her cheeks. The rain soaks up most of the moisture, but Kara can only feel Alex's flesh beneath her palms, warm but fading.

Her sister is dying.

And she was the one who put her there.

"Kara, please, please just respond—"
“Maggie?” Kara sobs as she chokes on the words, "Maggie, I—"

“I know, kid, I know… Christ…”

“Maggie,” Kara croaks out, her voice breaking, “it was…”

“I know,” Maggie growls, “Lena told me too late… I slipped and fired… God, I’m so sorry, Kara, I didn’t mean to—”

“No,” Kara whispers, choking back tears as she wipes at her cheeks fruitlessly. She straightens and stands, looking up to the sky to try and find Alex in the clouds. “I… I have to go after her. I have to make sure she’s okay. She… she didn’t look good.”

“Kara, wait—”

Only Kara doesn’t wait.

She needs answers, yes.

But first and foremost, she will always need Alex.

* * *

Maybe Kelex doesn't know the difference between a house and a home, but Alex is too tired to fight him.

Midvale is a quiet town, on the outskirts of National City. It's suburban and gentle, where everything is a tad slower and a tad softer. She understands that Kelex associates her childhood house as her home purely by semantic logic, but she knows that the emotional ties to the house don't matter to her. They didn't matter to her as soon as her father never came back home.

She isn't sure what her mother will think of her coming back. Alex isn't so sure she cares.

She's dying, after all.

Alex soars over the city, feeling the life-blood dripping out of her at a faster rate as she soars through the rain clouds. The storm is hardly easing up, but she can hardly feel it. Water spatters against her armour, but Alex doesn't pay it much attention. She focuses on just holding on until she sees the trees. The roads are getting smaller and Alex smiles softly.

She’s almost there.

It’s about four miles out before her powers finally wane.

_Alex, Kelex says frantically as Alex feels her body start to fall limp in the thundering sky, the Black Kryptonite is no longer able to keep your flight. Re-routing all remaining power to your armour and life-support systems. Brace for impact._

Alex grunts her acknowledgement as she starts to plummet from the sky, watching as she passes over that familiar worn-rooftop. She doesn't have the strength to throw up her hands before she crashes down. She tumbles into part of the intricate tiles before face-planting into the grass, body skidding and tumbling until it finally comes to a halt in the long, tall blades. She lays on her back, her mask still covering her face as she stares up at the clouding sky and the drizzling rain in silence.

She can hear a boom cackle through the air, but Alex smiles, because she knows that sound well by
now. Her eyes stay glassy as her mask recedes back into the armour, and she stares up at the clouds without a visor to cover her vision. She's taken back to when she'd been younger, when she and her father would lay out in the grass after a soccer scrimmage and look at the patterns of the clouds. If she thinks hard enough, she can remember his cologne, the strength of his arms wrapped around him. She can remember his laughter, the nimble fingers tousling her hair after she threw blades of grass at him.

She can see something coming in the distance, but she’s tired and lost in this dream-like world she’s revisiting. All she wants to do is close her eyes and to finally rest for a moment, to tune out the world, the people and all its’ responsibilities.

Alex just wants a second—one measly second—to breathe.

So, she closes her eyes, and does exactly that.

* * *

Eliza Danvers is sitting in her kitchen, sipping from her tea when a loud crashing sound startles her from where she sits. She feels her house vibrate as the something rattles and breaks. She stands up in alarm before rushing over to the window. She gasps, looking outside the glass to see something fall from the sky and land in her field, rolling and tumbling until it stills.

The dirt is torn up and sizzling with the force of the projectile’s impact. Only two things could leave such a damage on her grass, and Eliza knows that a damned meteor didn’t just land on her front lawn. Fear immediately claps her heart as she pictures her blonde-haired daughter, destroyed from a fight with that nasty brute Invictus. Eliza waits for the figure to move, but nothing happens. Tears film in her eyes as she hurriedly throws on her shoes and a rain jacket, willing it to not be true.

“Kara,” Eliza breathes out as she runs to her door. "Oh God, Kara!"

Eliza has to fight the tears as she sprints down the steps. She heads towards the marks when she hears something else soaring overhead. Eliza feels her heart stutter in her chest as she looks up to a familiar blonde in an unfamiliar suit.

“Kara?”

Eliza stops in her step as Kara comes flying down, an anguishing cry tearing from her lips as she kneels in the field. Eliza knows Kara’s pain. Even when Jeremiah had passed away, Eliza hadn’t heard that bloodcurdling of a scream before. The only time Kara would get that upset over someone or something, it was to do with…

“Alex!”

Eliza runs like she’s never run before at Kara’s scream.

* * *

Kara falls to her knees next to Alex’s prone body. She looks down to see Alex’s face paling, her veins nearly black as her chest rises and falls in ragged breaths. Kara’s eyes water, as she reaches for Alex’s face, hating how cold it is in her palms.

“No,” Kara whispers as she slides down, resting her head on Alex’s armoured chest, trying to find a beat underneath the lead and steel, but it’s no use. She leans back and gently shakes her sister’s shoulders. “No, Alex, you… you can’t leave me…”
Kara sobs as Alex’s breathing gets more laboured, the uneven pants turning into startling wheezes. Kara leans back up and fumbles with Alex’s armour, trying to get it undone, but she doesn’t know how it works. She looks at Alex’s face desperately, the tears coming faster and harder now as she pleads for Alex to just wake up, to tell her what to do, to fix this…

“Please,” Kara sobs as she cups Alex’s cheeks and rests her forehead against her sister's cold one. “Please… Alex…”

“Kara?”

Kara turns at the pitiful whimper which sounds from behind her. She looks to see Eliza standing there, looking shocked and unsure as she stares at Alex’s armoured body covered in blood. Eliza stands there with her hands clasped over her mouth in shock, and for a moment, Kara thinks she’s about to pass out. Kara sobs again, looking back down at her fallen sister.

“Alex…,” Kara breathes out, “I need you to wake up… please. Please… I'm so sorry. I should have trusted you and I'm sorry. This is all my fault, oh Rao. I never meant to hurt you… I never… Alex, please, I don't know how to fix this. You have to wake up and fix this, please!” She can hear Eliza sobbing behind her, but she can't pay attention to her foster mother right now.

"Please," Kara begs again, collapsing over Alex's eerily-still chest. "Please don't leave me, Alex. I love you."

Kara continues to sob when there's barely-there movements of Alex's chest against her ear. She clutches onto her sister's shoulders, trying to press her body as close as she can to the older woman. She's shaking from the force of her cries, and she can't accept that this could be the last few breaths Alex ever draws—and it will all be because she ordered the final shot.

"Please…," Kara whispers into the thunder clapping overhead, her eyes sliding shut. "Please…"

There are a few moments of silence before there’s a sharp gasp.

Kara immediately jerks back at the wounded noise and looks down to see the glowing centrepiece in Alex’s chest start to pulsate rapidly, the darkening the veins creeping up on her sister’s neck. It causes Alex’s body to convulse slightly.

And then, with another rattling gasp, Alex’s eyes open halfway.

“Alex!” Kara chokes out, reaching down to gently grasp at Alex’s twitching gauntlet. “Oh Rao, what do I do? What do I do? Please…” Alex’s blackened eyes look over at her, pain-infested and tired beyond means, but she summons strength to speak.

“B-Bullet…,” Alex chokes, her head thrown back as she releases a bloodcurdling growl of pain. Kara flinches as Alex's hand clamps down on her's tight enough to make even her own bones creak with pressure. Sweat pools in the crook of Alex's neck as blood spills from her lips. “B-Bullet,” Alex chokes as she cranes her neck back down to look at Kara feverishly. “I-Inside.”

“I can help,” Eliza finally cuts in, moving from her spot a few feet away to tumble down to Alex’s other side. Her hands are shaking and she still looks to be in a state of shock, but Kara knows that her mother-instincts, honed in on protecting her child, have kicked in. Kara watches her take Alex’s free hand, holding it, hardly flinching at the grip. “I’m here, sweetheart.”

Alex squints, her eyes welling with tears as she gasps, “Mom…”

“Oh Alex,” Eliza cries out, unable to hold back her sob as she leans over, pecking Alex’s forehead
twice. She uses her free hand to smooth down Alex’s unruly, sweat-matted hair as soothingly as she can. “I… I don’t know what this is all about, but we’ll worry about that later, okay? Right now, I’m going to make sure you’re okay. Me and your sister, both, okay?”

“I… I…,” Alex chokes out, shaking her head in defeat. “I’m sorry, M-Mom, I-I… I tried…”

“No,” Eliza rasps and Kara winces at the croak in her voice. “You’re going to be okay. Right, Kara?”

Kara nods in rapid succession, even if she feels anything but confident in her ability to save her sister. She gives Alex a hesitant smile, her stomach still flipping at the sight of the life dimming in Alex’s dark eyes. Alex’s head then slowly turns to her and she tries to smile back, but it falters on those split, bloodied lips. Alex only sighs in exhaustion at her failure to reassure her, eyelids sliding shut again as she shivers violently. Kara grips onto her hand tighter, croaking in sorrow.

“Ssh,” Alex mumbles tiredly, her grip easing on both of their hands. “I want sleep now.”

“No,” Kara says, tears sliding down her cheeks as she leans into Alex, pressing kiss after kiss to her sweaty forehead. “No, Al, you’re not sleeping yet. C’mon. Get up, we gotta talk about this, remember? Can’t talk if you’re not with me, so get up, Alex.”

But Alex shakes her head faintly, more blood sliding down her cheek and into her ears. She gurgles on it and Kara reaches over to tilt her head to the side to help her weakly spit it out so she doesn’t aspirate. Eliza looks over and Kara gets the message. She goes to hook her arms under Alex’s waist, but Alex’s hand grips onto her forearm, a cry tearing from her lips.

“Stop,” Eliza yelps as she notices the pain twisted on Alex’s face. Kara looks to her foster mother’s distraught face. “Go to the shed and get a plank. We can’t carry her in this state with the bullet lodged inside of her, Kara. Get me some towels, too.”

Kara doesn’t even hesitate as she zooms into the house and comes back out with the necessary materials. Alex gasps, choking on her breath as she starts to quiver and shake harder than before. She may not be a doctor, but she’s watched enough Grey’s Anatomy to know that the adrenalin is wearing off and Alex’s system is shutting down from the lack of epinephrine in her system. Kara is about to tell her to stay still when a slight hissing sound interrupts them both.

Kara watches as the latches on Alex’s armour come undone and slide off to the side, revealing a skin-tight, nearly-shredded bodysuit underneath. Kara’s eyes immediately are drawn to the protruding oval of swirling black between Alex’s breasts, before her gaze flits down to where there is a gaping, messy hole of torn flesh and bone in her left side. She almost gags.

“Kara,” Eliza’s voice snaps her from her staring. She can see the fear blatantly flaring up in Eliza’s blue eyes, but she hides it in her steady voice. “Get that plank over here and to slide it under her.”

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It's all her fault.

“Kara,” Eliza says, her voice desperate now as she rips Kara from her guilty thoughts. “The board!”

Kara nods, forcing herself out of the dazed state as she grabs at the plank and gently places it beside Alex. She clears away the armour and kneels behind Alex’s head, placing her forearms against her chest and her elbows at the base of Alex’s neck, supporting it. She weaves Alex’s hands with hers, whispering words of encouragement and comfort as she tells Alex to hold her breath.

“I have to move you,” Kara says, trying to ignore the pitiful whimper which leaves her sister’s lips. “Alex, it’s going to hurt…”

“It’s okay,” Alex gurgles weakly, coughing up a thicker wad of blood before spitting it out. She cackles out another cough before she turns her head up to face Kara, trying to muster up an encouraging smile, but she’s not strong enough and her lips falter miserably. Kara nearly sobs again as Alex sucks in a deep breath and nods faintly, giving her hands a faint squeeze.

“It’s okay,” Alex repeats softly, “I love you, Kara.”

She’s as gentle as she can be, but Alex’s screams as she’s moved from the suit to the board will haunt Kara until she dies.

As soon as she’s on the board, Kara is grateful Alex’s eyelids slide shut.

* * *

“Get her on the table,” Eliza frantically orders after she’s sanitized the wooden surface with alcohol and wipes. Kara gently places the board containing her injured, barely-alive sister on the table before going back to gently support Alex’s neck as she slides it out from under her. Eliza sets the kettle on before rummaging around her kitchen for the necessary supplies.

She’s a doctor.

This is a precision she’s trained for her entire life.

But suddenly it’s different when it’s your own child fighting to survive. Eliza forces herself to pause, to gather herself, before she looks up to a still-panicking Kara fretting near Alex’s head. She doesn’t understand how both of her daughters ended up in this mess, or how Alex had managed to become Invictus, but none of that matters right now. She saw the wound on Alex’s abdomen. She knows that the wound is fatal unless she manages to at least triage it for now. It’s only going to buy them time.

When Alex’s feverish eyes meet hers from over Kara’s shoulders, she knows her daughter knows, too.

There’s a strong chance she’s losing her only biological child today.

“Kara,” she says gently, trying to mask her fear as she watches Alex’s slip back into unconsciousness and slump on the table. She clears her throat and chases away the niggling thoughts and regrets she carries and focuses Kara. “Get Alex’s blankets, pillows, and some fresh clothes from upstairs. And some more towels. Please hurry. She needs you.” Kara looks torn between leaving Alex’s side and following her demand, but eventually she relents and nods, zooming up the stars and returning within a blink of an eye with the requested materials. She hands them to her without breaking her gaze with Alex’s prone body.
“Okay,” Eliza says with a deep breath as she retreats to the kitchen to wash her hands vigorously, “where’s the bullet?”

When Kara doesn’t reply, Eliza turns her head and tries again gently. “Kara?”

“I…,” Kara trails off quietly, her eyes flickering over Alex’s waist frantically. “I can’t see it.”

“But your super-vision—”

“The Black Kryptonite prevents me from seeing anything,” Kara bitterly snaps back, her eyes red-rimmed from crying. Eliza can feel the already slim chance wheedling away at the look of devastation on her youngest daughter’s face. She’s angry for a split second at their only chance to help Alex survive, before the feeling crumbles at the sound of Kara sobbing sadly.

“I can’t help her, Eliza.”

Eliza’s back stiffens as she looks up to Kara. She dries her hands before tying her hair and slipping on a mask.

Her voice is muffled as she approaches her youngest. “What do you mean you can’t help her, Kara?”

“I… I can’t…,” Kara sobs out, falling to her knees at Alex’s side. “I can barely touch her. The Kryptonite is draining me, Eliza.”

Before Eliza can respond, Alex gasps beneath her, body shuddering in agony as she lets out a scream.

“Alex,” Eliza breathes out as she clutches onto Alex’s face, reaching for a towel to wipe away the sweat from her brow. “Focus honey, please… I know you’re in pain, I know you are hurting, but we need to know where the bullet is. I’m here, baby. Just breathe… I know it hurts.” Alex shakes her head, gritting her teeth as her chest jumps up and she lets out another scream.

Eliza can see Kara’s heart breaking out of the corner of her eye. Her own is shattering slowly in her chest.

“Mom…,” Alex croaks as she looks up with tear-filled eyes. "I… I don't wanna die…"

Kara sobs again and this time, even Eliza can't hold back her tears. They drip down her cheeks as she keeps stroking Alex's hair, trying to give her daughter as much comfort as she can. She knows there are rivers and bridges between them, burned and torn down after years of misplaced blame and unrealistic expectations, and Eliza regrets ever making her only biological child feel like she isn't worth anything. She can see the fear in Alex's eyes, but it's not the fear of death for herself.

Because Alex looks at Kara, and Eliza feels her heart break at the next whispered words from Alex's lips.

"I… I tried to p-protect her, Mom. I'm sorry… I'm… sorry… I wasn't good enough… I'm never—"
"No," Eliza says firmly as she cups her daughter's pale cheeks. "You are always good enough."

Alex's eyes tiredly flit over to her as she shudders a breath. "I'm sorry, Mom…"

"I love you," Eliza whispers as she leans down to press their foreheads together. For a moment, all she can think of is that rainy day in the fall, when she held that bundle of pudge and hair in her arms, close to her chest. She can feel those soft, round cheeks resting against the nape of her neck, the tiny hand wrapped tightly around her index finger as she slept…

"I… I just…," Alex chokes, tears running down into her hair. "I just wanted to make you proud, Mom."

"Oh honey," Eliza says as she kisses her daughter's forehead. "I am so incredibly proud of you, Alex."

"Mm," Alex mumbles as her eyes start to loll in the back of her head, "Mm, 'm tired…"

"I know, honey, but I just need you to hold on," Eliza pleads, her voice cracking as she hears Kara's sobbing intensify from behind her. "Just for a few moments longer, just got to hold on, okay? You're doing so well, sweetheart. So just hold on."

"Hold on," Alex whispers, her voice barely audible as she faintly nods. "Okay…"

Eliza gives her daughter another weak, reassuring smile before she immediately moves to Alex’s waist. She takes a deep breath and assess the damage, looking to where blood is still slowly gushing out from under the wad of towels.

“Okay,” she breathes out, gathering her thoughts as she gently places her fingers on Alex’s abdomen, ignoring the agonizing grunt it pulls. "Ssh, honey, I know. I just have to get a feel for it. Hang in there, sweetheart." Alex hisses, but obeys quietly.

“Y-You need to get the b-bullet out,” Alex gasps when her fingers probe closer to the wound, her head bobbing up as more black pumps up through her veins and into her neck. Eliza looks over, and when she sees Alex’s expression, they both know what needs to be done. Eliza pulls her hand back, trying to set aside the fact that the blood on her hands is her daughter's.

But before she can act, there’s a rough pounding on the door.

Eliza's head jerks up at the sound, her face paling as she looks at Kara. Her foster daughter’s eyes darken with an overwhelming amount of protection as she rushes to the door, no doubt poised and ready to take on whoever dares intrude.

But when Kara swings open the door, it’s to the dishevelled and out of breath Lena Luthor and Maggie Sawyer. Alex groans under her again, drawing back her attention as the blood still flits at her lips and paints them a darker shade of crimson.

“Lena,” Kara breathes out in the distance, “How did you—”

“We can talk later,” Lena says as she shoulders her way past Kara to where Eliza is standing, replacing the bloodied towels with clean ones as she tries to calm the steady flow of blood leaving Alex’s body. Eliza looks over to see Lena set down a hefty-looking briefcase before whipping out her portable tablet. “I’ve got her scans set-up on my device, I can help heal her.”

“Good,” Eliza says as Alex starts to tremble underneath her firm grip. Her daughter's skin is getting cooler to the touch, no doubt in due to the blood loss. Lena takes her place beside her,
typing away on her computer before pulling up scans.

Eliza’s grip falters when she sees what’s projected in front of her.

* * *

“Listen, I know this is a lot to take in right now, but we need you to focus on getting this bullet out,” Lena says as calmly and carefully as she can, knowing that she herself was just as awe-dropped as Eliza and Kara currently are as they stare up at the projection. She can tell that Eliza’s dazed and in shock at the sheer devastation on the screen, but they need to act fast.

“M-Mom,” Alex chokes, drawing Eliza’s attention. "F-Focus…"

Lena follows Eliza’s frantic gaze to see Alex’s eyes now blackening as the Black Kryptonite is struggling to take over her frame and preserve her functioning. Eliza reaches down, clasping at Alex’s shaking hands as a shudder quakes through her body.

“Ssh, baby, we’re gonna fix you up, okay?” Eliza whispers to her, kneeling so they’re eye-level. There’s a shakiness in her voice that Lena barely detects as nervousness, but she is mesmerized by the eldest Danvers’ strength. Alex’s eyes are tired as they flit over to her mother’s while Eliza nods and speaks, her voice steadier as she says, “I just need you to hang on, okay?”

Alex gurgles, spitting up more blood as she convulses. Her skin grows a shade paler after she finally stills on the table.

“Dr. Danvers,” Lena says urgently. "Eliza. We need to work. Now."

The insistence in her voice is enough to draw Eliza away from her dying daughter. She nods seriously, wiping at her tears with the back of her wrist as she looks up to her other daughter, who is standing still and in shock with Maggie. Her eyes then flit back down to Alex’s, and they share an almost knowing gaze. Lena’s heart breaks as she sees the acceptance in Alex’s gaze when their eyes meet for a few moments before Alex squeezes them shut tightly and groans again. Eliza looks at Kara.

“Kara,” Eliza says as calmly as she can. “I need you to get my medical kit from the garage… and the power drill with the long bit.” She hates how Kara does a double take at the proposition of leaving her sister and retrieving such a primitive tool.

“The what?” Kara asks in shock. “Eliza—”

“K-Kara,” Alex stutters from the table, “l-listen… t-to her.”

“I have to get the bullet out,” Eliza says, but Lena can hear the pain in her voice. She looks away, unable to fathom what they’re about to do. “It’s still lodged inside, and we can’t dig around to fish it out. This is the only way we can get it out, Kar.”

“I…,” Kara chokes out, her eyes watering as she looks to Alex’s paling body. “There has to be another way!”

"There isn't," Lena says as she looks to her girlfriend desperately. "If we don't do this, Alex will die."

Kara's body stiffens and Lena can see that she’s slipping into shock again. She bounds from Eliza’s side and gathers Kara in her arms. Kara's eyes are glued on Alex's prone form, and it takes a lot of maneuvering on Lena's behalf to refocus her.
“Baby,” she whispers into Kara’s ear, gripping her tightly in an embrace as Kara shakes her head and starts to cry harder. “I know you’re scared, but Alex needs you right now. You have to listen to us, okay? I swear, I won’t let her go, Kara. I won’t.”

“Promise me,” Kara growls, pulling back. “Promise me you’ll save her, Lena.”

Just as Lena goes to reply, Eliza cries out in pain.

She turns to see Alex’s chest quaking as she convulses harder on the table. She darts back to the agent’s side, holding her down at the shoulders as Alex flits. Her hand is gripping Eliza’s tightly, no doubt cracking the bones underneath and leading to Eliza’s cry of agony. She looks up and pleadingly gazes at Kara, willing for her girlfriend to be brave and to take the step.

“Please,” she gasps as Alex continues to fit violently, “Kara. For Alex.”

It’s like she’s said the magic words.

Because the next thing Lena sees is Kara’s face set determinedly before there’s a flash and she returns with the necessary equipment. She reluctantly hands over the power drill, her eyes watering as Lena watches her look over to where Alex is sobbing. She exchanges a knowing look with the pain-addled agent, and she knows what Alex is trying to communicate.

Lena hangs her head and says the words she knows Kara doesn’t want to hear.

“You need to go, Kara.”

Kara’s eyes blaze a deep crimson at the statement. “How dare you?! I’m not leaving her—”

“Kara,” Lena urges her as she hears Eliza pattering around the kitchen, sanitizing the equipment. “Please, baby. It won’t be good when we take the bullet out, and I know you will try to do anything to get to her, but we can’t have that. We need complete focus if we have any shot of saving your sister, okay? Right now, you need to step aside. I'm sorry, Kara. Please.”

“I’ll stay with her,” Maggie says, stumbling up from where she’d been shell-shocked and silent only moments earlier. She numbly tugs on Kara's sleeve. “C’mom, Little Danvers. Let’s go outside.” Kara doesn’t budge, her eyes getting redder.

“Jesus,” Lena hisses as she hears the computer beeping in the distance, alerting them of Alex's alarmingly dipping vitals. “Kara, we don’t have time for this. If you’re going to stay, you can’t move from this spot, you understand?” Kara just keeps glaring at her, but to her credit, doesn’t move when Lena bounds back to where Alex’s chest is nearly jumping off the table.

She throws open the briefcase she'd brought and pulls out an IV-bag. Since the fusion had changed the composition of Alex's DNA, her blood type was also affected. A half-Kryptonian, half-human mix meant no possible donors. After setting Alex up with the liquid nutrients, Lena quickly washes up and throws on a mask and some gloves. She watches as Eliza returns with the sanitized tool, looking more unsure than she’d previously been. Lena sighs and adjusts the mask around her ears before stepping in beside Eliza, who is now cutting away at the lycra under-suit with a laser-focus attention until it is torn apart.

Lena gasps when the Black Kryptonite orb is revealed, pulsating and glowing as it pumps energy into Alex’s veins.

“Oh my God,” Eliza chokes, dropping the scissors she’d been using onto the blood-soaked table with shock. She looks to her daughter, fresh tears welling in her eyes as she hovers her gloved hand
over the stone. “What… how… oh my baby…”

“M-Mom,” Alex growls, shivering harder than before as her teeth start to chatter. Lena quickly grabs at the heating pads she'd packed and snaps them before placing them against Alex's extremities. “N-Need y-you… t-to… f-focus. The b-bullet…”

Before she can finish, another painstaking snarl leaves her lips, and the swirling black of the stone whirls and pulses again. Lena types something into her computer as she watches the scans zoom in on the bullet, piecing apart its exact location. Lena gulps nervously as she looks to Alex, who’s still shuddering violently. Her eyes are reddening and bloodshot, but her stare is clear despite the fever and pain running through her system. She sees the understanding in the elder Danvers’ eyes and sighs.

“Alex,” Lena says as she draws the older woman’s attention, “I don’t have a sedative for this… it’s… it’s going to hurt… a lot.”

"I know…," Alex whispers as she tilts her head back and lets a few more tears drip down. "Just get it over with, Lena.” Lena just nods, watching Alex's teeth chatter as she braces herself. Breathing deeply, Lena reaches for the power drill. She sanitizes the long, thin drill-bit before adding to the drill. She sets the drill down before reaching for the suction machine in Eliza’s kit.

“Okay,” Lena says gently, eyeing Alex with a sympathetic expression. "You ready, Agent Danvers?"

"Ha," Alex croaks out weakly. "Born ready."

Eliza reaches down and places a small rubber bit in Alex’s mouth. The agent clamps down on it before closing her eyes. She hears Kara whimper in the background, followed by Maggie's own distressed noise. She can't focus on them, however, as she clears away the remaining fabric from the edges of the messy gunshot wound. She almost gags at the torn muscle and bone.

After steadying her shaking hands, Lena wipes the area around the wound with disinfectant wipes before placing the mouth of the suction cup over the gaping bullet wound. She swallows thickly before triggering the switch, causing excess blood and tissue to rush upwards. Alex snarls against the bit, her hands breaking the wood beneath her, struggling against moving.

“Almost done,” Lena whispers, tears welling in her eyes as she sets the tool aside before reaching for the drill. "Now, for the hard part. Hang on, Alex. This is the last bit." She takes another glance at Maggie and Kara, who are looking on in horror.

“I know I told you to stay away, but I need your help,” Lena says as she fixes them both with a pleading look. “Hold her down.”

Kara splutters, eyes wide. “Lena—”

“If she moves, I could kill her,” Lena says sternly, trying to convey the desperation in her voice. “She needs you, Kara.”

Kara still looks hesitant, but Lena watches her take one look at Alex before she nods resolutely. She and Maggie both bound forward to help out. Kara takes both of Alex’s shoulders and holds them down, while Maggie’s hands firmly place themselves on Alex’s legs. Lena watches as Alex's eyes meet Kara's glossy ones, the elder Danvers sister nodding slowly, faintly smiling.

"I love you," Alex whispers as she chokes the words out through the rubber bit. "You can do this, Kar."
Kara can't find the words to respond, so she nods uselessly instead, tears still streaming down her cheeks.

"Hold her tightly," Lena instructs as she passes a sympathetic glance off to Eliza and Maggie before steadying herself. Kara looks up to her and she nods encouragingly at her girlfriend, trying to convey all the strength and reassurance she can.

“Okay,” Lena says as she holds up the drill. “Ready?”

"Wait!" Kara blurts out quickly, looking back down at Alex's slanted eyes. "Alex, I… I love you… I'm so sorry for everything, and I swear, I swear I'll make it up to you. I… I'm not going anywhere, okay? Just hold onto me, sis. I won't let you go, okay?"

Alex's eyes fill with tears before she nods weakly. Maggie sniffles, leaning over to squeeze Alex's hand below Kara's own.

"We're gonna fix this," Maggie tells her, voice cracking as she cries. "But first we're gonna fix you, Danvers."

Alex nods, chest stuttering as she breathes out, "love you… both…"

"I love you," Maggie says as she squeezes their hands again. "Just hold on, Danvers. We're almost done, baby."

After giving her hand another squeeze, both Maggie and Kara look up and nod in Lena's direction.

"Okay," Eliza says as she cradles Alex's head carefully, "go ahead, Lena."

Both Kara and Maggie look physically sick, and Eliza fares no better, but when Lena looks to Alex, she only sees strength in her blackened eyes. She knows there’s fear and exhaustion, too—but it’s masked behind the pain and concern for her family. Even in her most vulnerable of moments, Lena never ceases to be impressed with Alex’s relentless devotion to her family.

"Alright," Lena says softly, "here we go."

Without further hesitation, Lena slides her glasses on her face, connecting them with the screen so she can mirror the x-ray images onto her own lenses. She looks down at the puncture and takes a deep breath as she isolates the crumpled bullet. Lena waits until her hand has stopped shaking before she hovers the drill over the hole. She hears everyone draw a breath.

There's a moment of silence, of anticipation, before Lena makes her move.

With one last steadying breath, she lowers the drill.

* * *

Kara isn’t prepared for Alex to thrust upwards when the drill slides inside of her. With the Black Kryptonite pulsing in front of her, Kara’s strength is reduced to that of a regular human, but she still uses every ounce of it she has to hold Alex down. Lena whimpers from where she’s working, looking over to her with fear and worry in her gaze. Kara's stomach flips in anxiety.

"Lena?" She asks, her voice stumbling over her girlfriend's name. "What's wrong? Did you get it?"

“I’ve got the bullet,” Lena says, “I just have to get it out.”

“So?” Maggie grunts from where she’s struggling at holding down Alex’s legs. “Get it out, Luthor.
We can’t hold her down forever, she’s too strong. We don’t have much time left before she wins.” Kara watches as Lena gulps and looks up to Alex.

Kara glances at her sister, hating the pain on her sweaty face. "Alex?"

Alex’s eyes glance back up at hers, full of defeat and acceptance. She shakes her head and Kara’s heart twists agonizingly. Kara bites her lip and shakes her own head, refusing to bend. She will not let Alex die. Not when she still has so much to fix.

“Hold on,” Kara tells her, voice quivering as she squeezes Alex’s shin tightly. “Hold on, Alex.”

Alex blinks sluggishly before she weakly nods. "Okay… hold on…"

Lena gives them all one last look to make sure they are ready before she nods. She primes her finger over the drill’s trigger.

And then, she tenses her shoulders, and depresses the button.

The scream that leaves Alex’s lips is enough to haunt Kara for the rest of her life. Her eyes turn completely black, and Kara only has a second to shove Eliza out of the way before two streams of heat vision sear holes into the ceiling. The stream continues for a decent minute, burning a hole straight into the thundering sky. Kara watches in horror as blood pools out of Alex’s body at an alarming rate. She looks to Lena, who is struggling at keeping the drill straight as Alex screams and tries to twist her body. Alex’s mouth suddenly opens and a beam of black shoots out, joining the holes in the ceiling.

“Just… a… few… more… seconds…,” Lena pants over the shattering noise of the house crumbling and Alex’s near-demonic screaming. "Hold her steady, Goddammit! Kara, get her legs before I nick an artery and she bleeds out on the damned table!"

Kara doesn’t hesitate to obey, nearly throwing her entire upper half over one of Alex’s legs, pinning her to the table. She can feel the searing heat from the force being expelled from her sister, but she bears through the sweltering burn and focuses on keeping her writhing sister as steady as she can while Lena extracts the bullet. It feels like hours, but it’s only seconds.

Finally, Lena pulls the drill free with gasp, bullet stuck to the other end, before she collapses against the wall of the kitchen. The black leaves Alex’s eyes and mouth as she sobs, wailing in agony as her body goes limp beneath Kara’s clammy grip.

“Ssh,” Kara whispers, as she collapses on Alex’s chest, pressing her face into her feverish, sweaty neck. She strokes Alex’s hair and murmurs into her skin, “you’re okay, it’s okay, it’s over, Alex. You’re okay. Ssh, just breathe. You’re okay… it’s okay…”

She isn’t sure if she’s convincing herself or her sister.

Kara thanks Rao when Alex finally, finally passes out from the pain.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will involve a lot of talking/reflecting on what happened to Alex and everyone’s part in her near-death/murder. This chapter was on fixing immediate problems (i.e., the bullet wound so she doesn’t die LMAO). I promise things aren't
suddenly okay with Eliza, Kara, Lena, or Maggie and their relationship to Alex.

Until then, thanks for the comments and the feedback!! I really appreciate them and they really motivate me to update and stick to a regular(ish) schedule of uploading! :D
"I did this."

Eliza looks up at Lena from where she's taping down the gauze and wad of bandages to Alex's midsection. Maggie had taken a near-catatonic Kara away, and while Eliza wants nothing more than to escape from this nightmare, she has to stay. She looks down to Alex's pale face, her features contorted in pain even while she sleeps, and she finds herself struck with overwhelming sadness.

"Lena," she says, voice hoarse. "No one could have predicted this."

"Ha," Lena chuckles airily, shaking her head as she reaches for the crumpled bullet, now cased in a small container. She swishes it around, her eyes glaring at it so hard Eliza is almost certain heat will stream out of those dark green eyes. Lena doesn't speak for a few more moments, but Eliza remains patient. It takes a shaky gulp of air before Lena's eyes guiltily flit back upwards to face her.

"I made the bullet."

Of all the things for the Luthor to say, Eliza doesn't expect that.

Lena flinches in preparation for a berating from the older Danvers, but Eliza hardly moves as she finally replies,

"It wasn't your fault."

Lena's eyes bug out in surprise. "Dr. Danvers, did you not hear what I just said? I made the bullet!"

"But I made Alex," Eliza says as she looks down to her daughter mournfully. "All of this, it was all just the fallout of what I did."

Lena sets the bullet down and cocks her head in confusion. "I'm not sure I follow…"

Eliza reaches down and adjusts the oxygen mask Lena had brought around her daughter's mouth.
She hesitates a few seconds before reaching out and brushing back some of the greasy, blood-crusted strands of hair from Alex's clammy forehead. The fever started only moments after the bullet was removed, but she knows that while they managed to triage the immediate problem, the road to recovery is still going to be an uphill battle. She looks at Alex, remembering her fearful cries of not wanting to die.

"Alex was a quiet child," Eliza murmurs as she takes a seat by the table. "Never really interacted with other children. She was latched to Jeremiah's side like they were conjoined at the hip. We never... with my job... I just never had the time for her. I loved my work, I loved my research. I always wanted a family, yes, but the things I was doing in the lab, the innovations... I loved that, too."

Lena grabs a chair and drags it to where Alex's hand is loosely draped over the table. Lena adjusts it over her waist as Eliza smiles, tears filming in her eyes. "Alex always was her father's daughter. Natural inquisition and intelligence she got from me, but her impulsivity and fierce protectiveness, that was all her father. Sometimes, when I'm alone, I'll watch those home videos, where Alex toddles after him, mimics his stature, his voice, his expressions. I will watch and see that daughter I unintentionally neglected."

Eliza wipes at a stray tear before clearing her throat and continuing, "I wish I could say that I wasn't ignorant of her before Kara came to live with us, but I can't. I know what I did to my daughter, and I only made it worse when Kara came. All Alex has ever wanted was to make me proud. When Kara came into the picture, I casted her aside. And Alex, my sweet, misunderstood baby girl, she let herself be thrown into Kara's shadow. I made her believe that her entire worth was dependent on protecting Kara."

She's sobbing now, the words coming out stuttered and disjointed. "Alex gave up her entire world for Kara. Friends were lost, her identity. She thinks I have no idea the turmoil she went through during graduate school, but I did. I know she used alcohol as a coping mechanism, that she partied and spent the most of her days either high or drunk, or a combination of both. I know she nearly flunked out if it hadn't been for J'onn swooping in and saving her, but even he knows that he used her to protect Kara."

"Alex said she joined the DEO readily," Lena replies back, frowning. Eliza sighs, shaking her head.

"Alex would say she did anything readily if it meant protecting Kara," Eliza murmurs, looking back to her resting daughter's face. "My girl took care of both of us when her father died. She studied, she worked, she protected Kara, and she took care of me. What kind of mother was I, to let a fifteen-year-old take care of a family and not even allow her the proper chance to grieve her father?"

Eliza's shoulders slump defeatedly. "I can't even say that I thought I was doing the right thing, because I know I wasn't. I made my entire life about Kara, about my research, never anything about Alex. After looking at her body today, at those faded scars, I know that my baby suffered in silence for so long. I hate saying it, but I'm honestly glad Kara came out as Supergirl. She gave Alex someone to talk about, someone to understand her pain, even if the DEO made Supergirl a priority. Kara was there when I wasn't."

Lena swallows thickly, and Eliza can see the younger woman is stumped on how to respond. Shrugging sadly, Eliza just sighs.

"I can't change the past, no matter how much I would like to, but I can change now," Eliza says as she reaches out and smoothes over the crinkle in Alex's brow. "I love my daughter, and I've done a
poor job of showing it. I won't do that anymore. Alex has sacrificed herself for too long." She
gently leans down and pecks Alex's skin softly, her tears dripping down her cheeks.

"I love you," Eliza murmurs, "I love you so much, Alex."

Just then, there's a creak of a door being opened. Lena and Eliza look up to see Maggie and Kara
trudging into the house, downtrodden and guilty. Eliza offers up the best forced smile she can as
she leans back from Alex's side and gestures to Kara.

"Sweetheart," she says calmly, drawing up those wide, watery blue eyes. "C'mere."

"Alex?" Kara asks, her voice clogged as she hesitantly pads over to her fallen sister. "Is she…?"

Eliza hums, rubbing Kara's arm. "Stable, honey. But I was thinking we should move her upstairs,
make her more comfortable."

Kara's jaw sets determinedly as she nods, her gaze never leaving her sister's unconscious form.
Maggie nudges past the Kryptonian and gives Alex's hand a gentle squeeze before she starts
gathering the supplies needed and taking them upstairs. Lena and Eliza both stand and give Kara
some space as she carefully scoops her motionless sister into her arms, making sure Alex's head is
resting on her shoulder. Eliza leans over and adjust the oxygen mask before pulling away, allowing
Kara to peck Alex's forehead.

"C'mon," Kara mumbles softly, "let's get you to bed, sis."

* * *

The room is dark and bleak, and something smells… off.

Extremities first. Toes are fine. Fingers work the way they're supposed to. Everything is fine,
physically.

"Good to see you're finally awake."

The voice is familiar, drawing the attention from the bleak duskiness of the room to the owner of
the raspy lilt. Blinking to clear the muddiness, a woman stalks into view, a sword strapped against
her shoulder as she kneels, her hands reaching out gently.

"J'onn," she says softly. "How are you feeling, Martian?"

J'onn swallows down the nausea brewing in his mind as he clears away the memories that he
knows are not his. He flexes his fingers and sits up with the assistance of the familiar woman. He
feels his gut wrenching, knowing the actions he'd committed when the White Martian had
possessed his mind and body. He looks around the crusty prison cell, realizing it's all unfamiliar.

"You're not on Earth."

At last, J'onn makes the connection to the familiar woman in front of him.

"Barda," he hisses as he struggles to his feet. "What did you do to me?"

Barda only snorts and shakes her head, barely affected by his glaring eyes. Before she can reply,
the sound of a heavy metal door swinging open interrupts them both. Barda startles and stiffens, a
coldness taking over her eyes as thundering footsteps fill the blank space of the dusky cell. J'onn
peers through the dust and the darkness to watch as a lumbering figure approaches him.
"The last Green Martian," a low, rumbling voice drawls with a chuckle. "What a treat."

Glowing red eyes light up the room and J'onn shivers as looks to Barda, who's now avoiding his glance.

"You're him," J'onn says as he looks up to see the darkness clearing to reveal a towering man. "You're Darkseid."

"Astute," Darkseid sighs with a smirk, "you truly are the smarter half of the Justice League, Martian."

J'onn's gut twists at the mention of the other heroes. "Where are they?"

"Rounded up and neutralized," Darkseid snarls, his hand jutting out to wrap around his throat. J'onn chokes as he's lifted to the air, his feet dangling beneath him as Darkseid's eyes finally meet his. He claws at the rock-clad hand twisting his throat uselessly.

"You think you can stop the process?" Darkseid asks, his voice low. "You are nothing, Martian."

"Let me go," J'onn growls, "I will end you, Darkseid."

"Will you, now?" Darkseid chuckles, his shoulders shaking. "With what army, Martian?"

With that, Darkseid releases his grip and J'onn clatters to the floor with a thump. He hisses in pain as Darkseid rams his boot into his side before spitting down at his side. "You are an embarrassment to Green Martians. What would your daughters think?"

J'onn's head snaps up in fury. "How dare you—"

"You never thought about it, did you?" Darkseid interrupts coolly, turning his back on him as he calmly walks to the door. "Mars was destroyed eons ago, but you never thought about how, did you? The forces of the universe, Martian, they are bigger than you."

J'onn blinks and he sees his daughters, ripped to shreds before his eyes, his wife torn limb-from-limb and he nearly retches.

And then, the realization.

"You were there," J'onn whispers in a broken voice as his eyes blur with tears, "it was you."

"I took everything you loved," Darkseid says as he hovers the door before turning his head and smirking. "And I'll do it again soon."

"Why?" J'onn croaks as he shakes his head up at him. "Why the destruction? Why the death?"

"Because," Darkseid says as he turns back around, "the universe must be cleansed in order for life to go on."

"That's genocide!"

"It's exaltation," Darkseid hisses as he turns his head, "it is truth. I am the saviour of the universe. I bear the burden of their deaths, I bear their losses, but I also give them life. It is not only Earth, Martian. It is every planet in our system. It is the natural process."

"You're insane," J'onn says, shaking his head. Darkseid only sighs.
"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and expecting a different result," Darkseid says cryptically as his gaze flits from J'onn to Barda, curiosity and suspicion shifting in his eyes before he looks back to the Martian. "This isn't insanity, J'onn."

J'onn spits, growling. "Then what is it?"

Darkseid looks at him blankly.

"The Rapture."

* * *

November 12th, 2018

“I thought I’d find you out here.”

Kara startles from where she’s got a warm cup of tea in her hands as she looks up at the stars and the pale blue skies. Dawn is still hours away, but Kara always liked seeing the shift from the night to the day early in the morning. She turns around at Eliza’s voice.

“Hi,” Kara says, her voice still scratchy and raw from crying. “Is Alex…?” Eliza’s face softens as she takes a seat next to Kara. Her hands curl around her thick sweater, and Kara hates that she can still see some of her sister’s blood crusted between her fingers.

“She’s recovering,” Eliza says, reaching out to firmly place her hand at Kara’s back, rubbing soothing circles into her shirt. “Lena and I just finished up checking the rest of the wounds. The bullet wound is healing well, but she's still not out of the woods. It was lucky that Lena came bringing supplies. The IV fluids have helped a lot. She’s… she’s a fighter, your sister. Always has been.”

“She shouldn’t have had to,” Kara mutters bitterly, fingering the rim of her still steaming mug. Her heart twists as she remembers their childhood and she sighs. “Fight, I mean. It shouldn’t have been her responsibility. I mean… she was just a child, Eliza. She was a child who was already lost in her own world, trying to find out where she belonged, and I squandered that. I mean, she only just now got to realize her sexuality, her identity. I kept that from her. I prevented her from being happy, from living an authentic life.”

Eliza only nods, her eyes misty as she removes her hand from Kara’s back to fiddle with the other one. “You’re right,” she murmurs sadly, shaking her head. Kara flinches, half-expecting Eliza to have countered her point. “It was my fault… I shouldn’t have thrust that burden on her, but… but I just thought… if anyone could do it, that person would be my Alex. She’s a natural-born leader. I mean, look at me, Kara. I was never a mother to either of you. Jeremiah was the natural parent. I was just there for the ride.”

Kara sniffles as Eliza looks up, heartbroken. “Alex was your real mother. She raised you, made you the woman you are today. She protected you even though it meant casting herself aside, and she would still do that if it was necessary. She’s a lot like her father in that way. Selfless. God, she was right… I was too tough on her. I made her feel like she wasn’t worth the scum on my shoe.”

Kara gulps as tears slide down her own cheeks as Eliza chokes out, “I made my only daughter, my baby, feel like she was worthless. I made her fear me, resent me, crave my attention despite the neglect. What kind of mother does that to their child? I held her in my arms the day she was born, and I looked into that beautiful little face, to the tiny hand clenching my finger, and I vowed to make sure she lived the best life she could ever live. Instead, I ruined the best part of my life. How
could I do that, Kara? How could I?"

“Ssh,” Kara whispers as Eliza breaks down into a powerful sob, mumbling self-deprecating thoughts. Kara holds her through the waves, grounding her with a shaky kiss to her mussed hair. She burrows herself in Eliza’s hair, struggling to keep herself together.

“I’m a failure,” Eliza mutters, shaking her head. “I made my baby live with this pain for more than half of her life. I… I abandoned her, pushed her away. And each time, she kept coming back, kept pleading for my attention, for my approval, and I never… I…”

Eliza cuts her off before removing herself from Kara’s arms to look at the stars bleakly. She scoffs in anger, crying silently.

“I love her so much,” Eliza hisses, “and I failed her.”

“No,” Kara says, “you didn’t fail her. She needed you today, and you saved her life.” Eliza chuckles sadly, shaking her head.

“That was Lena.”

“No,” Kara tells her sternly. “Without you there, Alex wouldn’t have made it. Your strength, your love for her, that’s what saved her. She held on, Eliza, for you and for me. She forgives you for everything that happened in the past. She always will. I swear, Eliza.”

When Eliza doesn’t reply, Kara just rubs her arm and sighs. “You know,” she says quietly, avoiding her foster mother’s gaze as she speaks. “Alex and I fought, before I left. I told her that she was too protective of me, that she needed to stop pushing me away. She… she was angry and hurt and lost, and I escaped to Ireland for almost five months before I came back and saw her again.”

Kara takes a deep breath and looks to Eliza, smiling sadly. “Do you know what she did when she first saw me?” Eliza sniffles, wiping at her tears and snot as Kara smiles again bittersweetly. She remembers the moment she touched down on the DEO balcony.

“She hugged me,” Kara says, her voice cracking as she loses herself in the memory of her sister's arms. “And she told me that she missed me and that she loves me. She just… forgave me. She didn’t think that it was worth fighting over again. And that’s who Alex always taught me to be. As cold and stoic as she can be sometimes, Alex was never like that with me. She was everything… she is everything to me. Krypton is my birthplace, and Earth is where I live, but my home?” Kara muses on the question, smiling as she pictures Alex’s beautiful smile and feels her strong arms wrapping around her. She hears that comforting rhythm of her heart.

“My home…,” she starts again confidently. “Alex is my home.”

Eliza smiles bittersweetly, wiping away her tears. "If I could be grateful for anything, Kara, it would be you."

Kara looks over at her in confusion, but Eliza just nods and reaches out to wipe Kara's tears.

"You saved her," Eliza says softly, her voice cracking. "You gave my baby girl a reason to live, Kara."

Like a punch to the gut, Kara feels herself crumple in on herself guiltily. "That's not true."

Eliza reaches out and tries to comfort Kara, but she pulls away sharply. "Kara, dear, what's wrong?"
"I didn't save her," Kara growls as tears blur her vision. "Alex almost died because of me—"

"You didn't know that she could have been Invictus—"

"I ordered the shot," Kara says as she stands abruptly, winding her arms around her chest defensively. "I made the call, Eliza."

Like that, silence suddenly fills the tense space between them. All that can be heard are the crickets chirping and the babbling water of the ocean in the distance. Eliza splutters lightly as she stands, shaking her head in disbelief and confusion at Kara.

"You... you what?" Eliza asks in a hoarse voice. "Kara, you don't kill people."

"No," Kara spits bitterly, "apparently I just order other people to do it."

Eliza falls quiet again, her head turned down as she takes in the new information. Kara stares up at the sky, feeling her life unravel again. This time, there isn't Alex there to gently wrap her in her arms and whisper words of comfort. She's alone and she's hurting.

Earth has over seven billion people and yet Kara has never felt so alone.

She expects Eliza to berate her, to make her leave, to never show her face in this family again.

But what she doesn't expect is her foster mother's arms winding around her shoulders and pulling her close.

"Oh honey," Eliza whispers softly, "we'll get through this. We have to."

Kara just swallows, closing her eyes as she pictures Alex's lifeless body against the grass.

"I don't know if we can, Eliza. Not after what I did—what we all did."

"Sweetheart," Eliza says as she pecks Kara's cheek. "You're the Danvers Sisters. What's your motto again?"

Kara chuckles sadly, shaking her head as she sniffs. "I don't think it applies anymore, Eliza."

"Tell me again," Eliza says as she hugs Kara close. "Give my old mind a refresher."

Sighing, Kara sniffs again and looks over her shoulder to her teary-eyed foster mother with a poignant smile.

"Danvers Sisters, yes we can," she says with a small smile, "if you can't do it, Danvers can."

"Danvers can," Eliza echoes as she reaches up to pull Kara's head to her shoulders. "That's always been the truth, Kara."

Kara sighs as she finally reaches up and wraps her arms around her foster mother's shoulders, closing her eyes.

"We'll get through this," Kara murmurs as Eliza rubs her back. "We're Danvers, after all."

* * *

J'onn sits in his cell, staring at the scratches he'd made in the wall blankly.
He tries not to dwell on his memories—the fake memories—of his actions under the influence of the White Martian. He tries to ignore how his hands had clutched at Alex's throat, had pinned her to the wall, had convinced everyone to turn against Invictus. He had known, before he'd been trapped, that Alex was most likely the true identity behind the hybrid vigilante. It was for that reason he wanted to get a physical from Dr. Hamilton. Despite Invictus' actions, J'onn knew Alex would never murder intentionally.

But he knew the twisted powers of Black Kryptonite.

Most would have fallen prey to its' luring appeal, to the darkness and the vindictiveness which fuelled its' power. But Alex was—is, he corrects himself resolutely—Alex is the strongest of them all. He thinks for a moment that maybe the real reason Alex never developed powers before the incident is because her selflessness is her greatest superpower. Her willingness to sacrifice, her strength and her confidence, it outweighed super-strength, heat-vision, and even flight itself. Alex is and always will be a hero.

Alex made mistakes, true. Her morality has never been dichotomous, black-or-white, yes-or-no. Invictus played the same rules. There were no laws, no rules that it followed. Instead, Invictus made its' judgements based on a cost-benefit analysis. Donovan Sanders' death might have started the revolution, but Alex's morality and judgement predated the events of that afternoon.

For any other person, the Black Kryptonite would have turned them into a vicious, moral-less fighting monster. There would be no consideration of the value of a life. And that willingness to take a life, that wasn't something Alex learned herself. No, that was him.

J'onn wonders about an alternate realm, one in which Alex never developed an alcohol and substance problem. One in which Jeremiah Danvers did not die and Kara was just a human girl. He pictures a life where Alex never had to live under the shadow of a God amongst men, where her life didn't rely on her job as a human shield. He thinks of a time when Alex Danvers got to be Alex Danvers, an awe-inspiring and intelligent doctor at Seattle Memorial—or Alex Danvers, a bioengineering mastermind at Stanford.

"Moping will do you no good."

J'onn turns his head to see Barda standing in the door, sporting a few fresh bruises as she smirks at him.

"What do you want?" J'onn asks, barely looking away from his scratches. "You betrayed us."

"Have some faith, Martian. Do you think it was all going to be easy?"

J'onn frowns and turns to see Barda standing in front of him, extending her hand.

"Come with me," she says as she flexes her fingers. "We have to gather the others."

J'onn eyes the hand warily. "Darkseid?"

"Subdued," Barda says, her voice slightly impatient. "For now. He's impenetrable, but we've temporarily got him beat."

The explanation doesn't do much to assuage J'onn's suspicions. "How do I know I'm not being played again?"

"Because," Barda says as she nods towards the door. "If you were, do you think I would have brought him?"
J'onn follows the woman's gaze to where a familiar figure stands in the doorway, a torn red cape fluttering behind him.

"Clark," J'onn breathes out as he gets to his feet. "You're alive."

Clark offers a small, meek smile. "It's good to see you, J'onn. Come, we have to get to the others."

J'onn looks back to Barda, who gives him a firm nod. He follows after them both as they lead him through the labyrinth of the holding cells. He passes cells with old skeletons, some with barely-alive prisoners, and others with near-feral para-demons.

"What are we doing?" J'onn asks Clark as they round another corner. "Darkseid will find us."

Clark's jaw sets determinedly as he turns his head over his shoulder and looks at the Martian with a grim expression.

"Not if we find him first."

* * *

Maggie sits at Alex’s bedside, her hand gently clasping Alex’s non-IV connected one. She glances up to see Lena nervously fretting over the tablet before she gingerly checks Alex’s vitals and bandages again. Alex doesn’t stir, only stays still and quiet—almost peaceful—in her childhood bed, clothed in warm pajamas. Maggie looks back down to her lover, swallowing the pit in her throat.

Her fingers still twitch like they'd twitched around that trigger.

Her hands still feel the weight of the gun, the weight of a life, the weight of Alex's life, in their palms.

Every time she blinks, she sees Invictus—Alex—stumbling backwards and collapsing against the pillar, blood spreading around her waist and her chest. She sees Alex's blank, defeated gaze as they sit in the DEO and take a vote to put an end to the vigilante's life.

Alex sat there and she watched as every single person she's ever loved, ever trusted, turned against her.

Maggie clenches her teeth, tears silently sliding down her cheeks as she remembers that night Alex came to her, before the showdown between the fake-J'onn and White Kryptonite Kara. She remembers the desperation in Alex's touches, the raw need for touch and for love. She remembers Alex holding her close, almost terrified of letting go because she feared Maggie leaving forever. She remembers Alex whispering in her ear, words of love, promises she wished she'd never broken, words that felt like weights…

And Maggie shot her.

Despite everything. Despite her undying love for this heroic woman, she shot her.

But she can't dwell on that now. It's not the time for her to be guilty. Right now, all that matters is Alex.

Alex, the woman she loves.

Alex, the woman she almost killed.
Maggie shakes her head and draws herself out of her thoughts and away from the self-deprecation. She turns her gaze from her sleeping lover to where the youngest Luthor is typing away on her tablet. The pale light of the morning spills through the slit in the blinds, making Lena’s already viridescent gaze look almost translucent. It’s a bittersweet contrast of beauty and guilt and sorrow.

“You should rest,” Maggie suggests as she notes the bags under Lena’s eyes. There are still faint traces of blood on her clothing from earlier, and the scientist looks haggard and weary. She’s sure that between the fight last night and patching Alex up, the younger woman hadn't slept a wink. Lena only smiles at her half-heartedly before looking to her screen with rapt interest.

“I just want to make sure she’s out of the woods,” Lena replies, running through the scans with quick and precise swipes of the interactive screen. “The Black Kryptonite… it’s remarkable. Though she doesn’t have Kara’s cellular regeneration ability, her body still heals at a faster rate than humans. This injury would have killed a human in a blink of an eye. It’s… it’s incredible, Maggie.”

“She’s not a science experiment,” Maggie growls, gripping Alex’s hand protectively. She knows she has no right to touch Alex like this, especially after what she's done, but she can't help but still feel naturally protective over the older woman. The slight squeeze causes a small gasp to leave her ex-fiancée’s lips, and both Maggie and Lena look down to see Alex’s eyelids flickering. Panicking slightly, Maggie squeezes their hands again and tries to draw her attention. Alex moans lowly, her body stirring as she fights sleep.

“Baby?” Maggie asks, her voice barely audible as she leans forward, “Alex, can you hear me, sweetie?” Alex’s eyelids open halfway, and Maggie has to hold back the hurt in her heart at the pain there. A pain that is there because of me, she remind's herself sadly.

“M-Mags…,” Alex chokes out, her voice raw as she struggles to find words. “A-Are y-you…?”

“Don’t,” Maggie interjects, a mixture of a laugh and a sob playing at her lips as she raises Alex’s hand to her mouth and kisses the rough skin there. She clasps both of her hands around that hand as she says, “don’t you dare ask me if I’m okay, Danvers.”

Alex just gasps, her eyelids closing again as she struggles to breathe. Maggie bites at her lip, squeezing Alex’s hand tighter. “What do you need, Al? Lena’s got an assortment of pain-killers… she even got the good stuff that makes you all spacey and soft.”

“Mm,” Alex grunts as she opens one eye weakly. “N-Not soft.”

“No,” Maggie chuckles through a sob, “no, you’re not soft, baby. You’re the toughest woman alive.” Alex just follows Maggie’s movement her grip loosens. Maggie squeezes harder, shaking her head as Alex starts to slowly slip back into unconsciousness.

“No,” Maggie gasps as she moves closer to kneel beside Alex’s side, closer to her head. “No, baby. Don’t let go of me, okay? Hold onto me. I know you’re not feeling good right now, but you’re not alone. I… I love you, Al. You can’t leave me. I have to fix this, Alex. I can't let you go, not after what happened. So you have to hold on, okay? Hold on.” Alex forces her eye open again, but it’s a massive effort. Maggie can see that she’s struggling to just breathe. Alex tries to squeeze her hand, but her fingers twitch.

“Baby?” Maggie asks, gasping as Alex struggles to stay awake.

“T-Tired,” Alex mumbles, her words slurring. “P-Please, Maggie…”
“Ssh,” Maggie whispers, pressing another kiss to the back of her hand. Alex keeps her eye open as long as she can, but each second is like a stab to the gut for Maggie. Finally, she gives in and she nods, sniffling as she struggles to hold back her tears.

“It’s okay,” she whispers, trying to smile encouragingly, but it falls flat. She nods, swallowing her cries as she leans forward to press gentle kisses to Alex’s clammy forehead. “Rest, baby. It’s okay.” Alex tries again to stay awake, but Maggie shakes her head.

“Sleep,” Maggie whispers, removing one of her hands from Alex’s own to gently stroke her fiancée’s hair. “I’ll be here when you wake up, okay? Just rest, Alex. Everything’s gonna be okay. I’ll be here. I’m not leaving you ever again.” Alex looks at her sadly.

“P-Promise…?” Alex mumbles, her voice even quieter than before. Maggie nods rapidly, tears leaking down her cheeks at the force.

“Pinky promise, Al. Now get some rest, sweetheart.”

* * *

"You realize this plan is stupid, right?"

J'onn looks up from where he'd been handed the schematics of Darkseid's fortress to the sound of Barry's squeaking voice.

"Do you have another option, Speedster?" Arthur gruffly replies, sharpening his pitchfork as he glares at the smaller man. Barry gulps and shrugs. Huffing, Arthur casts his weapon aside before peering outside of the refuge of their cage at the distant building.

"We storm it and we take him down. He's one guy and we're the Justice League."

"He is more powerful than all of us combined," Barry argues back, waving his hands dramatically. "I mean, hello, he has literally everybody's powers. Plus his lasers are like heat-seeking or something. We're nothing compared to him. We can't defeat him."

"We will not concede this battle," Diana chimes in with a determined glare. "Darkseid will fall before we return to Earth."

"Great," Barry says, rolling his eyes. "And storming the castle is your great plan, Princess?"

Diana's brow arches and she growls. "Would you like a demonstration of my prowess?"

"Enough."

J'onn looks over to see Bruce step out from the shadows with Clark and Barda at his side. Diana and Arthur snicker something beneath their breath while Barry straightens immediately. J'onn stands and walks over to his confidants with a grim expression.

"Barry is right," Bruce says as he nods to the speedster. "We can't storm the gates. We need a distraction."

"Distraction?" Dinah pipes up from where she'd been sitting with Oliver. "Like what?"

"That's where I come in," Barda says, smiling at them. "I'll sabotage them from the inside out. Get you inside."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, sword-lady, but at the last meeting, didn't you tell us that you were being
hunted by Darkseid?" Oliver asks, twirling an arrow between his fingers. "Because if I recall correctly, you're just as fucked as the rest of us, Barda."

"Which is why he'll be expecting me," Barda says, jutting her chin up. "He'll be focused on me."

J'onn's brows furrow as he realizes the depth of her plan. "You're... sacrificing yourself, for us?"

Barda's confidence slips for a moment, and J'onn can sense the fear and the sadness in her mind. She looks at him knowingly, a small, hesitant smile playing at her lips as she turns her gaze to the rest of the perplexed-looking Justice League. She nods.

"I've spent years under Darkseid's rule, taking planet after planet, life after life. My hands are and will forever be stained with the blood of innocents," Barda says as she looks to her palms. She swallows thickly before looking back up, the confidence returned.

"Darkseid must be stopped," she says as her eyes fall back to J'onn's gaze. "No matter the cost."

* * *

Lena watches as Alex’s eyelids slide shut and she falls back into sleep shortly after blearily mumbling more sleepy words to her lover. Maggie’s head slumps to her shoulder, silent sobs wracking her body as she murmurs unintelligible things into Alex’s skin.

“She’ll be okay,” Lena says, placing her hand on Maggie’s shoulder as she looks over to a resting Alex. “We’ve got her through the worst of it. She just has to take the time to recover now, Maggie. Judging by the power of the stone, she will make a full recovery.”

At first, Lena doesn’t think that she’s been heard, but she sees Maggie’s head nod slowly. Lena sighs, setting her tablet aside as she reaches for Maggie’s shoulders, squeezing gently. “Come on,” she murmurs lovingly, “you need some fresh air and some rest.”

“No,” Maggie stubbornly refuses, “I told her I won’t leave her.”

“You’ll be here when she wakes up,” Lena says, “technically, that’s what you promised her. Now, get some air. You need it, Maggie.”

Maggie still looks reluctance, but at the sound of familiar heavy footsteps ascending the steps, she sighs. “Fine,” the detective mutters as she wearily rises to her feet. Her knees shake and tremble, but Lena's hands steady her arm until she is able to stand on her feet steadily. Lena watches as they both turn to face a nervous-looking Kara standing in the doorway, watching Alex sleep.

“Alright Little Danvers,” Maggie mumbles tiredly as she walks over to Kara, dragging her feet behind her. “Your turn, kid. Give her the best Danvers Sisters’ cuddles you can, okay?” Lena watches as Maggie looks up at Kara before winding her arms around Kara’s neck and pulling her close. Kara nods determinedly, rubbing Maggie's back as she burrows her head into the smaller woman's shoulder, seeking that familiar comfort. Maggie softly kisses her cheek before walking past her and down the steps to the kitchen.

Kara, however, stays rooted in her spot, staring at Alex's motionless body with tears in her eyes.

“Hey babe,” Lena sighs gently, approaching the Kryptonian like one would a startled animal. “It’s okay, she’s fine. She’s sleeping.”

Kara hangs her head when Lena finally gets close enough.
“This is all my fault.”

“Kara,” Lena hums, reaching out to gently tuck a loose strand of hair from her girlfriend’s face. “No one knew Alex was… *is* Invictus. You couldn’t have known when you asked Maggie to shoot. All of us made a mistake, love. We all are at fault here, not just you.”

“I’m her sister,” Kara growls, glancing back up as her eyes darken with frustration. “I’m supposed to know everything about her, Lena. And instead of supporting her, instead of protecting her, I almost killed her. I almost killed my own sister, Lena. My family. *Me.*” Lena throws her arms around Kara’s trembling shoulders as she starts to sob, bringing Kara’s head into her neck gently.

“Ssh,” Lena soothes her as she presses kiss after kiss into the side of her head, “I love you, baby. You didn’t mean to hurt her.”

Kara just sobs harder. “I… I’m a m-monster—”

“No.”

Lena and Kara startle at the croak which echoes from the bed. Before Lena can even move, Kara is bolting from her spot to Alex’s side. Lena watches as Kara hesitates a moment, not sure of what to do at the sight of Alex looking up at her in a mixture of fatigue and pain. Alex’s hand trembles as it angles upwards, her lips quivering as she tries to mouth out something, but she can’t speak.

“Alex, I’m so sorry,” Kara sobs as she falls to her knees at Alex’s side, her hands clutching at her sheets desperately. “I didn’t know, I swear I didn’t know it was you… I never wanted to hurt you. I love you, Alex, and I’m sorry that I screwed it all up again—”

“Ssh,” Alex rasps, lightly patting the bed. “C’mere.”

Kara hesitates as she hiccups, looking up to Alex with a worried gaze. When Alex just nods and pats the sheets again lightly, Kara rises from her feet. Like a small child, Kara gingerly pulls back the covers and slides under them, tucking herself into Alex’s side.

Lena feels her heart burst at the sight of Alex using the remainder of her strength to tuck an arm under Kara’s shoulders and lightly nudge her to come closer. Kara obliges without hesitating as she presses herself as close as she can to her older sister. Alex mumbles something under her breath, and Lena can just barely parse out the familiar Kryptonese lullaby Kara would often hum before bed. Kara’s body eventually stops shaking before she passes out, drawn into the safe blanket of her sister's strong arms.

“You should sleep,” Lena says as she returns to the other side of Alex, picking up her tablet again. Alex only grunts.

“Look who’s talking,” Alex mutters softly, her voice laced with fatigue as she struggles to stay awake. “Need to make sure… she’s…”

“She’ll be fine,” Lena tells her, taking a seat by Alex’s side as she runs through the scans. “You two need to talk, but only once you’re better. You almost died today, Alex. What we did… it wouldn’t have worked on you if you didn’t have the Kryptonite.”

“I know,” Alex mumbles as she holds Kara closer to her chest. ”I'm sorry, for hiding it from all of you, but you understand why.” Lena sighs, leaning back in the seat as she looks to the faint shadow of the black stone beneath Alex’s nightshirt warily.

"Alex," Lena says softly as she stares at the glowing stone, "you voted with us, you voted to kill
Invictus. Why?"

Alex follows her gaze. “It’s stuck with me.”

Lena swallows thickly when Alex looks back up with a mournful expression, before she nods over at the tablet. “But I’m guessing you already know about that, don’t you? Amongst… other things. You’re the smartest person I know. You’ve figured it out, right?”

Lena winces when she passes a knowing glance with the older woman. She had glanced at the reports in the scans while they’d helicoptered their way to Midvale, but she never wanted to bring it up, especially not now. But by the way Alex is looking at her, Lena knows that she can’t ignore the fact she knows Alex’s secret. It kills her on the inside, more so when she looks at Kara.

“Yeah,” Lena replies instead, ignoring all of the information she’d gathered about the effect of the Black Kryptonite on Alex’s body. As she looks to the older woman, she feels her heart breaking in her chest. While initially, she and Alex hadn’t gotten along well due to their differences, she’d come to admire Alex’s strength and bravery, but most importantly, her undying need to protect Kara.

“I can figure something out. My mother synthesized Kryptonite for God’s sake,” Lena chokes out, watching as Alex’s eyes soften when she looks down at a fully knocked-out Kara atop her chest. “Alex, there might be a way for me to take it out and then—”

“If you take it out it’ll kill me,” Alex murmurs, not taking her eyes off her sister. “And if you leave it in, it also kills me.”

“No,” Lena interjects, swallowing thickly. “I can find a way to replace the Black Kryptonite with an alternative power source, something that doesn’t degrade your internal systems over time. I can create something that would keep you alive for longer—”

“Lena,” Alex sighs her name in exhaustion. “You know me well enough… and you’d know that I’ve already looked into trying that.”

Lena shakes her head, gulping. “Maybe you haven’t tried enough.”

Alex just exhales softly, turning her attention back to her sister. She reaches up with her IV-injected hand and strokes Kara’s head, causing her sister to snuggle deeper into her embrace unconsciously. She cords her fingers through Kara’s hair and Lena feels her heart twist when Kara’s nose presses against Alex’s neck, right under her pulse point. Alex smiles, and Lena can see she’s crying.

“I love her,” Alex murmurs as she pecks Kara’s forehead. “The thought of losing her makes me want to die… so… so maybe…”

“No,” Lena growls, “don’t you dare finish that statement.”

“I have two years,” Alex states plainly, glancing back up as a stray tear slides down her cheek. “Nothing changes that, Lena.”

“Just let me work on it—”

“It doesn’t work—”

“Alex—”

“Lena,” Alex interrupts, her voice cracking. “I can’t… I can’t believe in a false hope. I can’t give
her false hope.”

The words jar Lena, but it makes sense.

All her life, Alex has been faced with disappointments.

And Kara?

Kara has lost her entire world, her family, has been thrown into a planet that was never her own.

Losing Alex would be like losing Krypton all over again.

If Lena were to promise a cure or a fix, and then it didn’t go through? If she had to watch Kara say a permanent goodbye to her sister after months of work proving she could change it? And God forbid, the cure she creates causes any sort of harm to Alex. If she, if Kara, had to watch Alex suffer after everything they tried, she knows the younger Danvers—and the older, too—would hurt.

* * * 

J’onn has lived for approximately four-hundred years.

He has seen all of Earth, has loved and lost two families, and now he is about to lose his hope.

The plan had been curated perfectly. Barda would go in, lure out Darkseid, and they would launch a full-out attack.

Except, like most plans, everything fell apart.

Darkseid expected their distraction and sent out the Furies, the elite, lethal women Barda herself had trained. Diana and Barda had done their best to take them down, but the Furies were relentless,
carving lines into flesh and ripping them apart. Even the impenetrable Demigod herself was vulnerable to their attacks. Bruce and Clark had tried to help, but Darkseid cornered them.

The fight was vicious and bloody. The screams still ring in his ears and the blood still hasn't dried on his uniform. The dusty, barren land before him is littered with flesh and bone of both the Justice League and Darkseid's elite. J'onn stands alone, his cape fluttering in the wind as the stickiness of the blood hardens to his green skin. He looks to his palms and he closes his eyes as he remembers.

Barry, screaming as one of the Furies snapped his leg, causing bone to break the skin.

Clark saving Bruce from Darkseid's fatal, swinging fist before getting tossed aside by para-demons.

Diana, a sword cleaved through her abdomen from a Fury, blood running down her jaw as she rips the blade free.

Hal, obliterated into a bloodied mist by Darkseid's omega beams, not a single hair left to be returned to Earth.

Dinah, screaming a final canary cry as Oliver shoots his last arrow at a horde of para-demons before they're both torn apart.

Barda, brandishing her sword and standing between a wounded and battered Justice League and Darkseid, urging them to retreat.

Arthur, calling upon the power of the water on Apokolips to carry them away while Barda screamed in the distance.

"We did all we could."

"We will honour their lives and their sacrifices by ending this war," J'onn replies, hanging his head. "We must, Clark."

Clark sniffles, his eyes red-rimmed and worried as he croaks, "how, J'onn?"

"With this."

Clark and J'onn turn at the sound of Bruce's hoarse voice. J'onn watches as the man limps, holding out a small device while his other arm reminds wound around his side tightly. J'onn frowns but takes the small box into his hands. He fingers over the intricate lines and wires, before the realization dawns on him. He looks up to Bruce, who nods at both him and Clark with a deep resolution.

"We'll do what we can from here," Bruce says as he gestures to the box. "We might be a lost cause now, but they can't be."

"Bruce," Clark says, his voice choked as he reaches out to gather his injured friend in his arms. "We're not abandoning you."
"He will come for Earth," Bruce hisses as he leans into Clark's touch. The Kryptonian eases his friend to the ground, cradling him in his arms and stroking his back while Bruce fights to breathe through the pain. "Clark," Bruce mumbles tiredly, "you have to go."

"No," Clark says bitterly, "I'm not leaving you, Bruce."

Bruce swallows thickly, shaking his head. "Kara needs you. They need you to protect them. You have a family."

"And you don't?" Clark asks incredulously. "What about Selina? Dick? Jason? They need you, Bruce."

"They have each other," Bruce says as he reaches up to clasp Clark's shoulders. "They're strong. I trust them."

"We will go to Earth," J'onn says, ignoring Clark's furious gaze as he looks to Bruce. "But then we come back to end this."

Bruce opens his mouth to protest, but J'onn shakes his head as he looks down to the box.

"Perhaps Darkseid is inevitable," he says as he fingers over the wires. "We can't stop him, but…"

"But?" Clark echoes, standing as he looks at J'onn curiously. "But what, J'onn?"

J'onn sighs and glances back up, smiling grimly.

"But maybe we can slow him down."

* * *

Kara walks through the halls of the Fortress of Solitude, her heart and soul at peace as she lets her fingers gently trail over the walls, feeling Krypton in every small touch she gets. She hears giggling ahead, and Kara breathes in the scent of the green and the life, the happiness and the peace, as she walks towards the sound. Sun spills from the ceiling cracks, bathing her in warmth.

“No, Mommy! That tickles!”

“Come here, munchkin! I’m gonna get ’cha!”

Another fit of giggles sounds after, tugging a smile to Kara’s lips as she walks forward to see a little girl chasing a familiar woman around the halls of the fortress. She watches as the girl giggles when the woman scoops her up and blows raspberries on the little one’s belly, eliciting more high-pitched laughter and joy.

“I got you,” the woman breathes out, nuzzling her cheek. The girl hums happily as she turns in her arms and presses herself closer.

“Yeah, Mommy, you did.” The girl is happy, smiling from ear-to-ear as Kara walks into the room. At the sounds of her footsteps, both heads turn, lighting up in happiness at the sight of her.

“Aunty Kara!” The girl exclaims as she scrambles down from her mother’s embrace before running at full force in Kara’s direction. Kara kneels, laughing as the girl barrels into her legs. She swings the little girl around before nuzzling her, earning more giggles.

“I missed you,” the girl murmurs, squeezing her neck in a hug. Kara wraps her own arms around the little one, holding her close.
Kara breathes in the soft scent of linen and lavender. “I missed you, too.”

“Allie,” the woman mumbles softly, “let Aunty Kara stand, will you?” Allie giggles and moves away for half a second before she bounds forward again. Kara booms with laughter, hoisting her up into her arms as she nuzzles the little one’s soft cheeks lovingly.

The woman walks over, placing a hand atop the girl’s back. Kara looks to her with an unbridled amount of love and happiness. “Kara,” the woman says, before leaning forward to peck her cheek. Kara sighs with warmth as she continues to rub Allie’s back.

“Hey Maggie,” Kara murmurs as she blushes. “Where’s Alex?”

Maggie’s gaze falters for a moment, and her smile cracks. “Oh, Kara. Alex hasn’t been here for a long time, don’t you remember?”

“Mama?” Allie asks, perking up. “Where’s Mama?”

Maggie turns to Allie then, stroking her long brown hair with a sad smile. “Mama isn’t here, baby girl, because your Aunty took her away, remember? We said goodbye to her, Allie. You were there.”

“W-What?” Kara asks, her heart dropping to her stomach. “I didn’t take Alex anywhere, Maggie, she was here just a few days ago.”

“No,” Maggie says, her voice growing hard as she pries Allie from her arms. “You took her away from us, remember? You promised you would keep her safe, but instead, you lied. You killed her, Kara. You couldn’t stand the thought of her being better than you.”

“No,” Kara whimpers as Allie glares at her. “No, I would never—”

“You hated her,” Maggie continues to spit, “you wanted her gone.”

“No,” Kara cries out as Maggie advances on her, “no, I swear…”

The sun starts to fade away, replaced by darkness and swirling storms as the ground begins to quake. Kara shouts as she watches the walls crumble down, revealing a swirling grey sky and pelting rain. Thunderclaps roar overhead, and lightning flashes, blinding her momentarily. Dizziness overwhelms her as her senses start to go into overdrive. She feels herself falling before she collapses.

When she looks up, she stares at the empty gaze of her sister staring back at her, blood slowly dripping from her mouth. She’s leaned up against that slab, the bullet still lodged within her. J’onn is laughing behind her, but none of that matters to Kara.

Because she’s looking at Alex but Alex’s not looking at her.

Because she’s alive and Alex is not.

“You took her away from me,” she hears Maggie’s voice sneer in her head, and she turns to see Maggie approaching with Allie in hand as they walk over to where Alex’s lifeless body is laying, slumped. Her brown eyes are glassy and blown, lifeless and cold.

“Allie?” Allie gasps as she collapses at Alex’s motionless side. She reaches up with her tiny, pudgy hands and presses them into Alex’s cold cheeks, trying to get her to move to no avail. Kara watches in agony as Allie’s lips start to quiver and she cries.
“Mama,” she sobs, clambering over Alex to rest atop her chest, trying to feel her mother’s heartbeat. “Mama please… wake up!”

“You did this,” Maggie says as she comes to Alex’s other side, kneeling beside the dead woman. Kara’s heart climbs up into her throat as she watches Maggie look into Alex’s faded eyes. “You killed her, Kara. You made me kill her. She’s gone because of you.”

“Mama!” Allie wails, her tiny fists pounding on Alex's still chest. “Mama please…”

Maggie looks back up at her, a growl on her lips.

“Why did you do it, Kara?” Maggie asks. “Why did you make me kill her?”

“I…,” Kara stumbles, choking. “I didn’t, I didn’t mean to—”

“You’re selfish,” Maggie snarls, “you’re selfish and she’s dead.”

“You killed her,” Allie sobs, hiccupping as she turns around to glare at Kara with ire in her eyes. “You took my Mama from me!”

Maggie hisses, her gaze darkening. “This is your fault, Kara.”

“Kara!”

“Kara!”

Kara jolts awake, breathing heavily as she scrambles for air. She feels herself tumble to the floor as she sobs. Air gets stuck in her lungs and she can't breathe. She can’t wrack the feeling of loss and guilt from her bones as she heaves. She can hear someone calling out to her, but the sounds are muddled over the roar of her blood in her ears. She crawls against the floor, covering her head as she closes her eyes tightly, trying to push away the dead gaze of her older sister from her mind, but it doesn’t have a use.

“Kara!”

“No!” Kara screams as she covers her ears. “No, no, no—”

She feels a thump beside her, before two strong arms wrap around her middle and turn her around forcefully. Before she can push the contact away, her head collides with a familiar collarbone and the scent of lavender and spice. Those arms grip her tighter, and she can faintly hear something being whispered into her ear as she trembles and quakes in the embrace, sobbing uncontrollably.

“Breathe,” she hears, “breathe, little one, it’s okay, you’re okay. You're safe, Kar, just breathe, honey…”

“Alex,” Kara sobs out, still seeing her dead sister. “Alex, I'm so sorry… I… I didn't mean to…”

“I’m here,” the voice whispers, “feel me, Kara. I’m right here.”

She feels a soft hand drag one of her own up to the flat of the person’s chest. Kara sobs harder as she feels lips pecking her hair. She hears that voice whispering the same things over and over again. She grounds herself to that voice, and then to the familiar beating of that heartbeat—the only heartbeat she would be able to distinctly pick out of the entirety of the human race.

“Alex,” Kara whispers again as she turns her head into that familiar collarbone, “Alex…”
“Ssh,” Alex’s voice hums gently, “I’m right here, sweetheart.”

Kara digs her face in deeper, trying to let Alex consume her whole. She wraps her arms around Alex’s back, her legs curling into her older sister’s chest as she allows herself to be held again. Alex sways them gently, still kissing her forehead to comfort her.

_Selfish_, she hears Maggie’s voice from her nightmare in her head, _Alex is hurt and you’re seeking her comfort? You’ll kill her, Kara._

“No,” Kara whimpers as she hiccups against Alex’s neck. She claws softly at the soft material of her sister’s cotton shirt. “No, Alex, please don’t leave me, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hurt you, I’m sorry, please… please… I don’t want to hurt you, I’m so sorry…”

“Ssh,” Alex hushes lovingly, “you didn’t hurt me, Kara.”

“But I did!” Kara snarls as she removes herself from Alex’s embrace. She looks to her sister, noticing she’s paler than usual.

But Kara is still lost in the throes of her nightmare, and all she can see is Alex’s dead body and that lifeless gaze staring back at her. She crawls backwards, landing on her ass as she feels a self-deprecating rage wash over her body. She shakes her head at Alex.

“I killed you,” Kara snarls, “Maggie said it. So did Allie.”

Alex, breathing hard, only cocks her head in confusion. “Allie?”

Kara snarls again, tears dripping off her chin to the floor. She hears the thundering of footsteps outside the door, but she doesn’t react to the surprised gasps of Lena, Maggie, or her mother at the sight before them. Kara just puts her hand out in front of Alex, trying to shield her older sister from the monster she’s become.

“Who else?” Kara says, voice cracking. “Your daughter, Alex.”

At that, Alex’s face crumbles.

Suddenly, Kara’s visions ebb because all she sees is Alex falling apart right in front of her eyes. Her sister reeks backwards, her jaw opening and closing like a dead fish as she looks back up to Kara with tears in her eyes. Kara’s heart settles and the fear and anger diminishes, replaced by guilt and sorrow at Alex’s broken expression. Her sister stumbles backwards, her breathing slowing.

“My…,” Alex chokes out, looking back up to Kara with a glazed expression. “My daughter?”

Kara hears the sheer agony in her words, and Kara swears she would take an entire galaxy full of Kryptonite to the chest before letting that sound leave Alex’s lips again. Now, her concern is shifting from herself to her sister as she looks at Alex.

“It was a nightmare,” Kara hears Eliza say as her foster mother stumbles into the room, maneuvering around Kara’s body to get to her daughter’s own. Kara’s not sure when Eliza came in, but she goes to wrap her arms around Alex, but her sister just shoves her away. Kara holds a hand over her mouth as she watches Alex’s hands slowly clasp around her wounded stomach.

“My daughter,” Alex breathes out, “my daughter…”

“Alex,” Maggie says shakily, concerned. “Let’s get you back into bed.”
Eliza doesn’t wait for Alex’s response this time as she reaches down and wraps her arms around her daughter’s waist. Maggie steps past Kara to help move a near-catatonic Alex back into the bed. Kara watches from afar, her body frozen at the terrifying sight.

“Maggie, dear, grab my kit. Alex tore her stitches again,” Eliza murmurs in a hushed tone as her hands smooth over the damp spot on Alex's abdomen. Maggie nods, going into the en-suite for Eliza’s medical kit. Alex just keeps repeating the same words under her breath, the words growing louder and more painful as she goes. Eliza tries hushing her, but Alex just keeps on repeating them.

“She’s burning up,” Eliza comments as Maggie returns with the kit. She takes the kit and pulls out the necessary materials. “I think her wound might be infected. I need some cool water for her fever and the antibiotics from Lena's briefcase. Hurry, sweetheart.”

"I don't want to leave her," Maggie protests as she looks to Alex's feverish eyes, "Alex…"

"Allie…," Alex sobs again, wailing against Eliza's desperate hold, "Allie, no…"

"Maggie," Eliza snaps at the detective with wild, wet eyes. "Please!"

Maggie takes one more look at Alex before she darts out of the room and down the stairs. Kara tunes out the sound of Maggie's heavy steps as she runs to the kitchen to fetch the briefcase. It only takes a few seconds before she's back and almost throwing the items into Eliza's hands. She and Lena help settle Alex on the bed while Eliza grabs at the IV and starts to administer the antibiotics.

“My daughter,” Alex mumbles, teary-eyed as she writhes under their grip. “My daughter…"

Kara can’t stop herself as she stumbles from her place on the ground. She hears Lena calling her back, but Kara ignores her as she stumbles in the direction of her sister. She collapses at Alex’s other side, reaching for her hand and squeezing it tightly.

“Alex,” Kara says hoarsely, “please…”

“My daughter…,” Alex whispers once again, before she turns and looks at Kara desperately. “My daughter… what was her name?”

Kara chokes on a cry at the roughness in Alex’s voice. She squeezes Alex’s hand again as she says, “it was just a dream, Alex—"

“What was her name?” Alex interrupts, her voice going shrill as she gasps. Kara can feel her fever increasing, and she sees from the glazed look in Alex’s gaze that she’s delirious with pain.

“Alex,” Kara sighs again, but Alex shakes her head, crying harder as tears and snot slide down her cheeks. Kara’s heart breaks at the desolate sight. “Alex, please, it was just a nightmare…”

But Alex just swallows thickly. “What was her name?”

It’s a bare whisper, something so aching and longing.

Kara knows she shouldn’t do it, shouldn’t give in, but Alex is in so much pain, and if this saves her from it temporarily… so be it.

“Allie.”

Alex heaves as she cries harder, the sobs making the bed practically shake. Kara can’t hold on when Alex hiccups, barely able to get a breath in, writhing on the bed in agony as the pain and
fever threaten to overwhelm her. Eliza tries to calm her down, and so does Maggie, but it’s no use. Alex just keeps crying, unable to stop. Kara stays frozen and mute by the sight.

“Alex,” Eliza says, cupping Alex’s cheeks. “It was a nightmare, it wasn’t real, Alex. You don’t have a daughter. Please, Alex…”

But Alex isn’t listening as she continues to sob. Even Maggie is crying now as she tries to comfort her girlfriend, but Kara can tell that Alex isn’t with them right now. Maggie is pleading for Alex to snap out of it, but Kara can see Maggie realizes the futility of the action. Maggie slumps down, her back against the bed, holding her head in her hands as she starts to cry silently.

“My daughter,” Alex mumbles one last time, “my Little Bean.”

Kara turns to look at Lena, but then the pain is even worse.

Because Lena’s expression isn’t one of sympathy.

It’s one of knowing.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for all the wonderful comments!
Youth

Chapter Summary

The Danvers Sisters, through the years…

Chapter Notes

No major trigger warnings apply.

So sorry this took so long to get out -- I was really struggling this week with a lot of different things, but hopefully we'll just get back to the usual schedule now.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

October 13th, 2003

Kara always hated thunderstorms.

It was loud enough when she first moved into the Danvers’ house, overstimulated by every single noise around the planet. She was terrified and even though Kal—Clark, she reminds herself—had told her that she would get used to the noises eventually, it’s been almost three years and she’s still struggling with dulling the noises. Living out in the woods, away from the big city really helped.

But thunder?

Thunder is the worst.

Another clap startles her from where she’s curled up under her blankets. She doesn’t close her eyes, because every time she closes her eyes and the thunder roars outside, she doesn’t see the muted tones of her bedroom. She doesn’t feel linen in her palms or cotton stuffing of the pillow beneath her head.

She sees fire.

She hears screaming.

She tastes death.

When the thunder booms and her eyes close, she’s not on Earth.

Kara is on Krypton, watching her mother cry as her pod is shot from the docking point. She’s screaming as the sedating gas fills the chamber, but not quick enough for her to miss the thundering cackle of the planets’ core imploding, to watch the destruction. She sees her mother's dark eyes staring at her sadly.

“Mom…,” Kara whimpers, hugging her knees tighter to her chest. When she was younger, she used to curl up at her mother’s side, listen to the strong beating of her heart, but her mother is gone now.
Her mother is *dead*.

Kara tries to stifle her sobs, because she knows Alex is sleeping only a few feet from her—and Alex had told her last night that she had a big biology test the next morning and couldn’t afford to be disturbed. Kara never wants to disturb Alex, but she’s so scared that she feels like her whole world is crumbling.

“Mm,” she hears her foster sister mumble, “Kara?”

Kara just hiccups, choking back a sob. “I’m s-sorry…”

But despite what she’d thought earlier of Alex getting mad, the next thing that happens doesn’t all that surprise Kara, either.

Kara’s body shivers violently when she feels the sheets getting pulled back and a warm, tall body situating itself behind her. She turns and burrows into Alex’s chest, sobbing louder as her sister’s strong arms wrap around her shoulders and hold her as tightly as she can. She nuzzles into her, seeking comfort.

“Alex…,” Kara sobs out, clenching at Alex’s shirt tighter, “I want Mom.”

Alex stiffens, her throat bobbing as she swallows, confused. “Mom’s asleep, but I can wake her—”

“No,” Kara gasps, crying harder. “I want… I want my Mom.”

Kara feels Alex deflate against her. “Oh Kara, I’m so sorry.”

The words just make her fall apart even more. It's Alex's sympathy, the sadness in her voice, the softness of her fingers on her back. She despises Kal in these moments, because Kal never knew the destruction of their planet. Kal never knew how his world burned. He never saw the bodies of his people, the anguish on his mother or father's face when they perished. He was just a baby when he was sent to Earth.

Kal never felt the pain she feels.

And he never will.

Kal is more human than Kryptonian, and no matter their blood relation, Kara knows that he would never be a real Kryptonian.

Because of that, Kara is utterly, completely *alone*.

“You’re not.”

Kara looks up to see the fierce protection in Alex’s dark eyes. Even in the blackness of night, she can see Alex’s glare, questioning her to disagree. Stubborn as usual, Alex keeps her grip strong around Kara’s quivering frame. Kara swallows thickly, looking up to her older sister in confusion.

“You’re not alone,” Alex tells her, and while they hadn’t gotten off to the best foot, Kara knew that Alex is a lot like Jeremiah.

She has the heart three times the size of Krypton.

“You have me,” Alex tells her again, her hand cupping the back of her neck to draw Kara’s head deeper into her chest. Her ear slides up against Alex’s heart, and she seeks that familiar beat.
“That’s it,” Alex coos encouragingly, “come back to me, sweetheart.” Kara nuzzles closer, listening to the way Alex mumbles into her ear soothingly. She starts humming a low, familiar tune.

Kara’s body freezes when she recognizes it.

“You know that lullaby?” She asks mid-hiccup. "H-How did you know? You aren't from… I… how did you know?” Alex only smiles at her, nodding. Kara feels Alex’s lips gently peck her forehead.

“Dad taught it to me,” she murmurs against her skin. “He’s been teaching me Kryptonese, too. I’m… I’m not very good, but I’m still learning. I just wanted to have it handy in case you… you know…”

But before Alex can finish whatever she was planning on saying, Kara wraps her arms around Alex’s shoulders and squeezes her harder. Alex yelps under the sudden pressure and Kara reels back.

She’s about to jump out of the bed but Alex pulls her back.

“No,” Alex mumbles as she draws her closer, “I won’t let you go, Kara. You can pull me close as much as you want, but I won’t leave you. I’m here, okay? I love you and I’m here. You’re my family.”

Family.

Kara thinks it’s such a fickle word.

Her real family is dead. Gone.

But Alex?

Alex is real. Eliza is real. Jeremiah is real.

Maybe Alex isn’t her real sister, and Eliza and Jeremiah aren’t her real parents, but Kara is tired of feeling like an outcast in her own skin. She feels like the entire weight of the world—her world is upon her shoulders. She’s the last, true Kryptonian.

But maybe, Kara thinks as she looks up to Alex’s smile, maybe she could have a family still, one bound not by blood, but by love.

* * *

December 12th, 2004

They bury her father on a Monday.

It's snowing, which is rare for West Coast weather. While the rest of the city is celebrating the first-ever snow-fall, Alex Danvers is sitting beside her mother and foster sister on a church pew while a priest talks about her father's life. Her mother and sister are crying beside her, sobbing silently as the hymns are played on the massive organ, but Alex remains stalwart.

Jeremiah Danvers, her father, her hero, the man Alex always found a kinship in, is gone forever.

An hour later, when they watch the empty casket lower into the snowed-on pitch, Alex feels more
numb than she's ever felt. She can feel her mother's angry, grief-riddled gaze on her. Earlier, she remembers the scathing accusation—

"He was your father! How can you just stand there and say nothing?"

"He loved you, Alex, and you can't even shed a tear for him?"

"What's wrong with you?"

Alex looks into those blue eyes, that lost and confused expression and she shivers. It's cold, she thinks, but the frost in her heart isn't from the falling snow, but from the distance which has sheared between her family. She looks between her mother and Kara, and it hits her in that moment that despite Kara's adoption, the two of them look more alike than she and Eliza ever had. Friends and family always joked that Alex would look like the adopted one if they hadn't seen Jeremiah before.

But now, Jeremiah isn't here.

And for the first time since she was born, Alex is alone.

When they return home that night, Eliza hardly says a word to her as she trudges up the steps towards her bedroom. Alex doesn't flinch when the door slams shut and the sound of muffled sobs fill the silence in their too-big house. She hears a sniffle and looks over to where Kara is nervously wringing her sleeves, her eyes welling with tears as she stares up at Alex.

Swallowing, Alex just stares back at her, unsure of what to say.

"I'm sorry," Kara whispers, her voice cracking. "If I hadn't—"

"No," Alex says with a croak, "it's not your fault, Kara."

"But I—"

"Please."

Kara's mouth closes and she nods hastily. "Okay. I... I just... I don't know what to do."

Alex wants to scream at her, to yell and cry about how Eliza always preferred her over her own biological daughter. She wants to berate Kara for taking away the only solid parental figure she'd ever known because of her powers. She wants to blame Kara, wants to get mad at her, wants to make her feel the pain she feels—but she can't. She can't, because when she looks into Kara's broken expression, she knows the pain Kara is inflicting upon herself is far more lethal than anything she could ever do. Kara, her orphaned sister from the stars, a girl who has lost not just one father, but now another—Kara, who hides her suffering so well, behind lofty glances and a smile that doesn't quite reach her eyes—Kara, her sister, is so lost.

When she looks at her, she can only think of her last conversation with her father.

She had been sitting on the roof, staring up at the stars after a blow-out argument with Eliza and Kara. Mostly, it was Eliza tearing into her for not being a good enough sister, for not protecting Kara, for letting her expose herself and her powers. Alex had bolted when Eliza had towered over her, ire in her voice and her gaze. She'd run to her room, clambered through the rickety window, and sprawled herself on her back on the damp roof tiles while her chest heaved with the force of her sobs.

Jeremiah had come up a few minutes later, silent despite his size and weight, and laid down beside
"Why does she hate me?" Alex had whimpered, looking at her father with guilty eyes. "Why am I not enough, Dad?"

"Oh sweetheart," Jeremiah said, wrapping his strong arms around her body and drawing him into her chest. "You are more than enough. Your mother, she just wants to make sure that you and your sister live normal, peaceful lives. This is world is cruel to people like your sister. You know that. Your mother wants to keep her safe. But, she also wants you to be safe."

Alex sniffled then, shaking her head. "She loves Kara more than me."

"Alex," Jeremiah said, cupping her face. "Your mother loves you and your sister equally. She's tougher on you because she knows you can take it. You're our lion-hearted girl, Alex. Do you know what your name means?" Alex shook her head.

"The protector of man," Jeremiah told her with a proud smile. "You are this family's protector, Alex. You always have been."

Alex shook her head, sniffling. "I'm not strong."

"Alexandra Danvers," Jeremiah chuckled warmly, "you, my darling, are the strongest woman alive."

"Alex?"

Alex blinks as she looks up to see Kara still standing, fidgeting with uncertainty which usually accompanies a great loss.

"Kara."

"What's going to happen to us?" Kara asks softly, her lips trembling. "To me?"

Oh.

Alex realizes suddenly that Kara's grief is not only for her father, but for herself. Jeremiah died because Kara took them flying. Naturally, the next person to be targeted would be the girl of steel herself. Kara is shaking in front of her, more terrified than the first time she'd stepped foot in their house. She looks two seconds from being sick in their living room.

"Nothing."

The word leaves her lips before she can even think about it. Kara startles slightly at the grittiness of her voice.

"Alex?"

"Nothing will happen to you," Alex says, stepping forward to tug Kara into her arms. "I won't let anything happen to you."

"Protect them," she hears her father's soft voice in her ear, "just like you've always protected them."

That night, after she tucks Kara into bed and checks on her mother, Alex returns to the roof and looks to the stars.

As she watches the pale dawn emerge over the mountains, Alex finally allows herself to cry.
April 14th, 2005

“She’s a freak.”

“Look at her, she’s such a nerd.”

“I bet she has never had a boyfriend before.”

“Dude, forget about that, who would even want to date her?”

Kara cowers in her desk, fiddling with her pen as she pushes her glasses up her nose. The kids in her class are cruel, but Kara can’t fight back because she still hasn’t figured out how to control her strength, and that’s how it all started really.

It was Billy Wentworth a few months ago. He’d made fun of her friend Winn Schott, so she’d punched him in the face… a bit too hard. Billy had been sent to the hospital and Kara was ushered off to counselling for anger management. Alex had picked her up, looking like a mix of worried and proud—but when she’d gotten home, Eliza had just consoled her and told her to go upstairs and not listen in with her super-hearing, before she’d rounded on Alex.

She tries to ignore Eliza’s cutting words, but she still remembers them. She remembers Eliza blaming Alex, telling her that this whole situation was her fault, that Kara was in trouble because she couldn’t protect her. But Kara was confused at it all as she wept and cowered below the blankets, trying to tune out the sound of thwacks and shoves from downstairs. She was confused because Alex didn’t punch Billy, she did. She was the one who got mad, not Alex.

Technically—no, actually—this was her fault.

“Kara?”

Kara blinks, looking up to see her teacher looking back at her expectantly, his hand hovering over the board mid-scrawl. Kara gulps and shivers, trying to avoid the heated stares from her classmates. “S-Sorry,” she stumbles, earning a few laughs.

“What?”

“Kara,” the teacher—Mr. Wright—just sighs. “Do I need to write you up? Pay attention. Now, tell me, what is the appropriate conjugation for this sentence?” Kara tries to not let the words affect her, but tears still burn at her eyes at the snickers and leering whispers she hears. Kara gulps and looks up to the board.

“Um, the conditional tense.”

Mr. Wright pauses for a moment before sighing, “yes. Good.”

Before he can continue, the bell rings. Kara jumps at the noise. It was her least favourite part of the day. A few more giggles sound as Mr. Wright drones on about the homework. Kara just gathers her things and rushes out of the classroom, feeling panic start to settle as the noises start to overwhelm her. She closes her eyes, trying to focus on the sound of Alex’s heartbeat amongst the crowd.

But because she has her eyes closed, she doesn’t notice as she walks into a hard body. She looks up to see Thomas Mulligan, the six-foot-three monster of a line-backer for the school’s football team—and most notably the school’s most infamous bully—staring back at her with a non-impressed
look. Kara whimpers worriedly.

By now, she’s amassed a crowd.

“Hey freak-show,” Thomas jeers, “are you blind or something?”

When Kara doesn’t reply, Thomas reaches out and snatches her glasses before tossing them aside with a laugh. Kara sucks in a deep breath as her vision blurs. She clutches at her head, dropping her books and papers to the ground as her mind starts to ache.

“Look at her, she can’t even carry her own books.”

“She’s such a waste of space.”

“What a fucking loser.”

Kara eyes well with tears as she crumbles to her knees with the force of the overwhelming pulsing behind her eyes. She hears more laughter, and then someone shoves her hard enough to hit the locker. Another raucous laugh fills the air as Kara whimpers. She can feel all of her senses kicking into overdrive. She can hear the clicking of Thomas’ jaw as he laughs.

“Take it, bitch.”

Kara can hear one of the gym teachers, Mr. Locke roaring into the crowd, tugging Thomas away from Kara’s side. “That’s a straight detention for you, Mulligan. Take another step and it’s a suspension.” She can hear Thomas arguing with him before he eventually shoves the older man off and storms away with a few other boys. Mr. Locke tells everyone to get back to class.

Once they’ve gone, he kneels beside her. “Kara?”

“I’m fine,” Kara mumbles. “I’ll be okay. Just need a minute.”

There’s a sigh, before Mr. Locke says, “alright. If you need anything, I’ll be in my office. I’ll let Principal Underhill know.”

She hears him stepping away, his footsteps receding as he makes his way down the hall and towards the gym presumably. He scolds a few lingering teenagers with threats of being written up, but Kara pays them no mind. She just wraps her sweater around her shoulders tighter, taking deep breaths until she’s finally able to calm down. Still, she waits on the floor.

Eventually, when the halls quieten, she opens her eyes again.

Her vision is still swimming, but when she feels along the floor, she finds her glasses. They’re cracked, but when she slips them on, they manage to help ease the dizziness. Kara takes a deep breath, steadying herself as she rises to feet on shaky knees. She’s stronger than every single human on this planet combined, and yet she feels like she’s made of thin glass.

She keeps her head down in the next class. She pays attention. She speaks when spoken to. She doesn’t look at anyone or do anything to warrant anyone else to look at her. Kara stays silent, praying to Rao the day ends so she can go home and sleep.

Oh, how she hates Earth.

On Krypton, people were never nearly as cruel as humans are.

But she finds out just how cruel humans can be, hours later.
Alex had just finished soccer practice—another sport that confused Kara, because what was so entertaining about just kicking a ball around—and told her to meet her in the parking lot while she showered. Kara had obliged, knowing Alex wouldn’t take long. Despite their early differences, Alex had changed a lot after Jeremiah’s death and they grew closer.

As she’s walking and thinking about her noble sister, she feels a hand grab at her shoulder.

Kara feels herself being yanked backwards and slammed against the wall of the school, shadowed by Thomas’ large frame. She yelps when one of his hands slides up her side and clasps her neck. There is a glaze of anger in his eyes, terrifying her.

“Little bitch,” he snarls as he squeezes slightly. “You think you can get me in trouble? I’ll fucking show you what I can do.”

“Hey, get your fucking hands off of her!”

Before she can even warn Alex to stop, Kara watches in horror as Alex runs across the parking lot, her soccer bag abandoned as she leaps onto the back of Thomas, wringing her elbow around his neck. Her legs lock around his waist, pinning him.

Thomas snarls as he grabs at her from over his shoulder before throwing Alex down with a harsh thud against the pavement. Kara cries out when she sees Alex’s eyes widen as the air is sucked clean from her lungs, clearly dazed by the counterattack. Kara tries to pull on Thomas’ arm, but she freezes when she watches Alex shake her head slightly, her eyes silently letting her know to not get involved and reveal herself. Kara knows what happened last time—*you killed her father, you killed him*.

She wants to intervene. She wants to protect her sister.

But she can’t.

Instead, she painfully watches as Alex clambers to her feet, dusting herself off before she ducks another punch from Thomas. She counters his second hit, deck ing him in the jaw with a well-placed uppercut before she kicks at his chest, sending him sprawling backwards. Thomas’ grunted in pain, before his eyes narrowed angrily and he charged forward.

Using his weight to his advantage, Kara watches in horror as he tackles Alex to the ground before straddling her. Alex is tall, taller than her, for sure, but she doesn’t have the strength to roll out from under his lumbering frame. Thomas lets loose a string of curses and snarls as he cocks his arm back before lashing down without an ounce of hesitation or clarity.

The sound of flesh hitting flesh never erases itself from her memory.

Kara stays frozen in horror as she watches blood spray out from Alex’s nose, her mouth, her eyes, as Thomas hits her over and over again. At first she struggles, trying to kick Thomas away or block his blows. The intense sound is sickening, boiling Kara’s blood as she watches the beatdown helplessly. Alex’s fumbling grows weaker and Kara can hear her heartbeat slowing. Thomas is lost in his rage, his fists hammering down punch after punch upon her prone and vulnerable older sister.

It’s like she’s back on Krypton again, watching her mother helplessly reach for her as her planet explodes. She’s watching her family—her *home* get destroyed, and she’s unable to do anything. She’s watching Jeremiah’s casket be lowered down.

She couldn’t save her family then.
But she can now.

Kara snarls as she latches on to Thomas’ shoulders before she rips him off of Alex, throwing him so hard that he breaks through the concrete wall and crashes into the gymnasium floor inside the school. Kara stalks after him, her eyes glowing red hot with rage. Power courses through her like an addictive fuel, and she wants nothing more than to kill the man who dared to hurt her sister. She steps over a bit of the rubble, her fists clenched and vibrating with pure, raw strength.

Her eyes feel like they're on fire.

Before she can singe him with her heat vision, Kara feels two shaky arms wind around her waist. The fire in her eyes dies as a head slumps against her back.

“No,” she hears Alex’s exhausted voice murmur, “no, Kara, don’t…”

At the sound of the raw pain in Alex’s voice, Kara turns and watches as Alex very nearly crumbles to her knees. Kara kneels, taking Alex into her arms as she starts to cry hysterically at the sight of Alex’s grievous wounds to her face, neck, and chest.

A quick x-ray reveals bruised ribs, a broken nose, a dislocated wrist, a concussion, and a fractured temporomandibular joint. Alex is trying to stay awake, to say something to her, but she keeps choking and gurgling on wads of her own blood and saliva. Kara cries, pulling Alex’s body deeper into her chest, sobbing harder. Alex claws at her shirt weakly, moving closer.

“Ssh,” Alex garbles painfully, “I… s’kay.”

She can’t afford Alex to lose consciousness. Kara hoists her up into her arms and reaches into Alex’s back pocket, thanking whoever was doing a poor job of looking out for them that her phone’s not broken. She flips it open and speed dials Eliza.

Her foster mother picks up after two rings. “Alex, where are—”

“Eliza,” Kara gasps as she looks to Alex’s shuddering chest. “Alex is hurt, we’re still at school, I don’t know what to do.”

“Are you okay?” Eliza asks nervously. “Kara?”

“I’m fine,” Kara snaps, her voice cracking as she cries at the sound of Alex’s heart beat dulling. “Alex… she protected me.”

There’s a small sigh on the other line before Eliza replies, “good. Good. Listen, I’ll be there in just five minutes. Hang tight.”

Kara hates the anger and frustration that builds inside of her at Eliza’s reaction—or lack of reaction, should she say. She pockets the phone and looks over to where Thomas’ body is still laying in the rubble from the concrete. She scans him, relieved only slightly to find out that he has a few broken bones, but that he’ll live. She feels her eyes heat up again as she pictures his fists railing down on her sister, his unrelenting rage driving him to needless and gruesome violence.

“S-Should… s-shouldn’t…,” Alex mumbles again, spitting up blood on Kara’s white shirt by accident. Kara blinks away from Thomas to her sister. Alex groans and Kara focuses on that steady, but slightly slower, heartbeat. “No… no fighting…”

“He hurt you,” Kara whispers, pulling Alex’s body closer to her own protectively. She kisses
Alex’s hair, tasting blood on her lips from the small laceration there. She squeezes her gently, as to not aggravate her sore ribs. “I had to protect you, Alex.”

Alex just chuckles, trying to shake her head but failing epically when she just groans instead. Kara winces when one of Alex’s eyes looks up to her, full of love and pride and relief at Kara’s state. Her heart breaks at the love and protection in her gaze.

“T-That’s…,” Alex chokes out, “that’s m-my job, k-kid.”

Yeah, Kara thinks silently as she sees Eliza’s car pull up. It is.

* * *

April 17th, 2005

When Eliza comes into the hospital room where she had been admitted due to the nature of her injuries, Alex can see she’s visibly upset. The incident between her and Thomas hadn’t gone over very well with the school, and even though Kara tried to advocate that it was, in fact, her that pushed Thomas through the wall, Alex—being typical Alex—took the blame for the entire event. She looks to her mother, trying to calm the swelling wave of nausea pulling at her gut from the drugs.

“What do we do now?” Alex asks in a rough croak, still bleary from the anaesthesia as she watches Eliza strut into the room and take a seat at her bedside. From the corner of her room, Kara flinches at the waves of anger rolling off Eliza. Immediately, Alex sits up slightly, trying draw that familiar strength into her bones to reassure her terrified little sister.

“Well,” Eliza says, clearing her throat as she glares in Alex’s direction. “Due to the nature of the accident,” she emphasizes the word enough to make Alex flinch and slump a little in her bed. “We are going to have to move to avoid facing charges.”

Alex almost jolts up from her seat. “What?! Mom, we can’t—”

“Alexandra.”

Alex winces at the pained look in Kara's face as Eliza cuts her off coldly. Gulping, Alex holds her mother's gaze as Kara moves closer to her sister, her hand reaching for Alex’s to grasp it gently, not willing to let it go as Eliza sighs.

“If people find out about Kara’s abilities, we could be jeopardizing a lot more than just a school and some friends,” Eliza says dismissively, turning her head to face Kara with a less-scathing, sympathetic look. “Besides, they treated Kara horribly here.”

“What about my friends?” Alex asks, whimpering. “Mom, Vickie—”

“You can say goodbye to her this week. I’ve already arranged everything, Alex. There’s no fighting this. You’ll make new friends,” Eliza says, waving her off before smiling at Kara. “Besides, you don’t need friends when you have Kara, Alex.”

Alex looks at her, a mixture of pity and guilt on her face as she nods mutely. She feels her heart crumble inside her chest at the way Kara tears up, wanting more than to take her pain away as Eliza looks up at the monitors and various reports.

“You should be set for release tomorrow night,” Eliza says coolly, looking over at her vitals to reassure her claim before she offers Alex a half-hearted smile. “Alex, get some rest for now. We
can deal with all of this in the morning.”

Alex keeps her stare fixated on her lap as she mumbles, “okay.”

“Good,” Eliza says as she stands, fixing her skirt. “Kara, dear, would you like to come home? You’ve been here for so long.”

“No,” Kara says quickly, squeezing Alex’s hand. “I’m staying with Alex. I… I always sleep better when I’m next to her, anyways.”

Eliza looks between them curiously before she lets it go with a nod. She walks over, presses a kiss to Kara’s forehead, before she reaches over and touches Alex’s shoulder. Alex hates herself when her entire body lights up at the bare touch.

There’s a hope in her eyes, an innocence which haunts her, as she looks up to Eliza in hopes for something more, something warm. No child should ever feel the way she does, and yet she feels so damned excited at the prospect of a loving touch…

But Eliza just shakes her head at her in disdain before walking back out the door with nothing but a few words muttered under her breath. Alex’s entire body shrinks into the mattress once the door slams shut, the fight and the bravery she'd once carried now extinguished. Kara squeezes her hand and Alex tries to pull a smile to her lips, but she's tired. She shrugs.

“It’s okay,” Alex says, holding back tears. “Kara, you don’t have to stay—”

“I’m staying,” Kara says, “I’m staying, Alex.”

Kara isn't just talking about right now.

Alex looks up to see Kara staring down at her with a newfound determination. Her blue eyes are bright and strong, and fora moment, Alex feels like the Kryptonian's invulnerability is washing over her, too. Kara squeezes her good hand lightly.

She doesn't say anything because she doesn't have to, because Kara says everything in her soulful gaze.

Kara is staying, and she’s resolute in this.

* * *

June 1st, 2010

Kara opens the door to her dorm, surprised to see Alex sitting on her twin bed, two unopened tubs of ice creams and two spoons in her hands. Her laptop is propped open and ready with a new episode of The Office. Kara lets her bag slide off her shoulder and sigh in relief at the cheeky grin on Alex’s face, her insides bursting with joy as she practically vibrates on the spot. She walks over and slumps dramatically into the couch, taking a tub of the ice cream before looking at Alex.

“Shouldn’t you be writing midterms, right now?” Kara asks, opening the lid and digging into the ice cream. "Skipping?"

“It was your first day,” Alex says, grinning as she tears into her own ice cream. “I remember my first day of college and I remember wanting to come home almost instantly. Of course I'm going to check on my baby sister to make sure she's okay.”
Kara’s heart warms inside of her chest. Alex always had a way of just being that one rock, that one anchor to tie her to this planet. Alex is funny and kind and caring, and under her stoic expressions and hard voice and intimidating frame, she’s a goof. She’s a loyal friend, and even more devoted sister. Everything about Alex inspires Kara to be better, to strive for more, to be happy. Earth has become her residence, and Alex is now her home. Just the thought of Alex makes Kara feel strong.

“So,” Alex says, licking her spoon. “How was it?”

“Ugh,” Kara mutters, slumping into the couch. “So many people! I didn’t think it would be as overwhelming as it was, but it was. And Alex, some of these people are so smart and write so well. What if I am in here because of a mistake? I’m not…”

“Hey,” Alex says softly, prying the ice cream from her hands before drawing her into her chest with one hand. Kara gives in, snuggling against her chest as Alex uses her free hand to drape something over both of them. Kara frowns, feeling the material before grinning up from where she had her cheeks against Alex’s chest. She looks to her sister's warm gaze.

“Is this the blanket you got for me when I arrived?” Kara asks, and Alex only shrugs, failing to conceal her smirk as she pulls Kara back down. Kara giggles, her heart bursting at the love she has for this person—her person, as Alex once said.

They’re not romantic, but it’s a different relationship. No person in Kara’s life could ever replace Alex’s role. And maybe it’s because she hasn’t met the right person yet, but Kara doubts that.

Alex is, and will always be, different.

“I’m glad you’re here,” Kara whispers, snuggling closer under the covers to let her ear gently rest against that familiar heartbeat. She wrings her hands underneath Alex's body so she can wrap herself fully in her sister's embrace. It’s then that she feels something off. Her hands tap lightly at Alex's ribs, noticing the stark difference from a few months ago.

"You've lost weight," Kara mumbles as she snuggles closer. "Eliza won't be pleased."

Alex scoffs, shaking her head. "When is she ever pleased?"

Kara winces. "Sorry, I didn't mean it like that…"

"It's fine," Alex says, shrugging her off. "It's just exam season. I forget to eat sometimes."

There's something off about the way her sister sounds. As of late, Alex had been sounding tired, but Kara chalked it up to studying late. But if she really hones her senses, she can smell the faint acridness of alcohol and smoke on her clothes. Alex's hands are warm and gentle against her back, running soothing lines up and down the expanse of her taut spine.

"I missed you," Alex murmurs quietly. "I can't believe you're in college already."

Kara chuckles, poking her sister's side. "We're not that far apart in age, Alex."

"Still older than you, though."

"Technically—"

"Don't you even dare try it, Kara. The Phantom Zone doesn't pass time the same way we do."

Kara laughs, as she hears the pout in Alex's voice. “I missed you. I hated being away from you for
so long.”

Alex’s free hand cords through her hair, playing with it soothingly as Kara feels herself growing sleepy. She’s safe and warm and with her favourite person in the entire world, and no bad day could ever take that feeling away. Despite her fears, she focuses on Alex’s ministrations and chooses to block out the world. Alex kisses her forehead lovingly, calming her heart.

“No matter where we both are, I’ll always be there,” Alex says, wrapping both her arms around her back as she curls their bodies closer together. “It’s you and me against the world, kid. Remember?” Kara bobs her head, her eyelids drooping shut.

“Sleep,” Alex mumbles into her hair, “I’m here, Kara.”

The "I'll always be" is unspoken, but Kara hears it loud and clear.

* * *

May 19th, 2012

As the years goes by, Alex feels herself slipping.

She parties more, drinks more, smokes more, to deal with her never-ending pain. Her mother calls endlessly, asking for progress on her academics. Never once to congratulate her on her early acceptance into a PhD/MD joint program. She doesn't care that she's pioneering research that has never been done before, that Stanford is calling her to collaborate. No, Eliza couldn't ever care about specifics. She couldn't care that Alex, by definition, is a genius or a trailblazer in her career. Kara doesn't call as much, either.

She knows it’s difficult that they're miles apart, but the last time Alex went to National City, Kara had built her own set of friends in college. She's sociable, well-liked, easy to get along with, and she doesn't have a reputation of being a total mess. Kara is on-track to be successful, probably far more successful than she'll ever be, but Alex doesn't hold resentment.

Not towards Kara, at least.

Because a lot of what she's feeling has been going on before Kara came into the picture.

Unlike Jeremiah, Eliza was never the ideal parent. She tried, at first, and Alex won't discredit the few early years when Eliza had held her, loved her, made her feel like she could rule the world. But then Eliza got busy with Clark and the Kents, in building a career for herself, in helping raise a child that wasn't even her own. As Alex aged, Eliza grew more distant. At first, Alex was angry, furious that her mother dared to spend time with a child that wasn't her. But then, the anger faded and was replaced with a poignant sadness. Because Alex is human, Alex is not special. She can't see through walls or fly super-sonic.

Alex is just an ordinary girl surrounded by extra-ordinary people.

It drives her to insanity, and she finds most of her time is taken up getting high or drunk or a combination of both. She can't stay sober because being sober means thinking with a clear head—it means thinking, period. Thinking means drowning in self-deprecating thoughts, in fixating on unchangeable parts of her life. It means realizing that Alex is someone broken.

Only this time, she drinks and smokes a little too much.
"Danvers, Alexandra."

Alex's head snaps up, her gaze blurry and her stomach still flipping despite having thrown up four times already. She looks up to see an officer accompanied by an older Black man. She frowns when the officer points to him with a nonchalant shrug.

"This is Mr. Henshaw," the officer says, "he'd like to speak with you."

Alex frowns, because she doesn't know anyone named Henshaw. Standing on wobbly knees, she walks over to the cold rims of the cell, leaning her forehead between the rungs before she looks up at the blurred, swimming vision of Henshaw's face.

"Do I know you?"

"No," Mr. Henshaw says softly, "but I know you, Alex. My name is Hank Henshaw."

Alex frowns, her stomach curdling again. "How?"

Hank sighs before he looks down. "I worked with your father."

Just like that, Alex feels herself sober immediately. She stumbles backwards, slumping into one of the cold benches. She folds her hands in her lap and looks away, trying to hold back tears as she remembers her father on the roof, his arms around her frame, his words in her ear. She remembers the look of anger and devastation on her face, the grief and fear. She remembers Kara clutching to her, afraid of her fate without the Danvers patriarch to guide them. She remembers it all.

Was she trying to forget?

"He talked a lot about you," Hank says as he slides down and sits across from her. "Boasted about his eldest, prodigal daughter. Said that you were the one who would take on the world to save her family." Alex flinches, looking away.

"But," Hank says, swallowing thickly. "He always worried about you."

Alex keeps her head down as Hank peers at her through the bars. "He loved you, Alex. So much."

"Why are you here?"

The sound of her own voice surprises her. She flinches at the accusatory tone in her voice, but she can't help it. Her father and his loss are a sensitive subject, one that she progressively ignored through the years to avoid rehashing old wounds.

"Your father asked something of me, before he died."

Alex looks up at him with empty eyes. "And what's that?"

Hank clears his throat nervously, though his gaze remains open and warm. "To take care of you and your sister."

Alex chuckles, shaking her head. She looks back down to her hands in her lap. "How poetic."

"I've stood on the sidelines for too long," Hank says, his voice more urgent and sad now. "I have watched you suffer in silence, drinking yourself to death. You are intelligent and stubborn, and your strength is relentless. You deserve better than this life, Alex. You deserve better than festering in your own guilt. You have potential to give more to a world that takes."
Alex looks up, confused. "What are you talking about?"

Hank leans forward, his lips curling up in a small smile.

"What do you know about the DEO?"

* * *

August 20th, 2011

Her summer semester ends early, and Kara feels spontaneous.

She books a ticket using a good chunk of the balance in her savings' account to see Alex. Her sister was supposed to visit in July, but Alex had claimed that she was going on a retreat somewhere with her cohort so she would be out of contact for a month. A week ago, she'd received the text letting her know that her sister was not, in fact, mauled by a wild bear.

Normally, Kara hates flying in planes (why waste money when she can get there in twice the speed and half the hassle?), but she doesn't want to risk exposing herself yet again. Once landed, Kara hails a cab and prattles out the address of Alex's apartment. The drive is quick, and Kara takes in the scenery of upper California, not-so distinctively different from Midvale.

She hands the driver a handful of bills before jogging up the steps to the small, two-storey complex that is Alex's temporary home. She hits the buzzer next to her sister's name and waits a few seconds before a cackle comes over the inaudible static.

"Hello?"

"Alex, it's me! Open up."

There's a pause before Alex rasps out, "Kara? What are you doing here?"

At that, Kara frowns. Alex almost seems... unhappy to see her?

But any other thought escapes her mind as she hears the door click and unlock. She shoulders her way through lightly before ascending the small flight of stairs. She walks down the hall before knocking on Apartment 2B, her nerves bouncing harder.

There's the characteristic sound of bolts being undone before the door swings open to reveal a dishevelled Alex. Kara's mouth hangs open in confusion as she looks up to see her sister wearing a hoodie twice her size, the hood pulled over her head and shadowing her face. Her hair is cut far shorter than it has been since high school, and she looks dangerously thin.

"Alex," Kara rasps in shock and worry, "what happened to you?"

Alex moves aside, jerking her head to gesture for her to come in. "You didn't tell me you were coming."

Kara stumbles into the small, dank apartment and swallows nervously. "I wanted to surprise you."

The door shuts behind her, the locks being done up again in haste. Kara frowns at the insistence and quick, nimble fingers as Alex does up the last latch. Kara takes a look at the state of her apartment, realizing it is fairly spartan and dark. She looks back to her sister, who is still standing at the door and is wringing her fingers. Suddenly, Kara feels out of place.

"Are you okay?" She asks, tilting her head. "I know you had an emo phase, but this is something
"Were you followed?" Alex asks, her voice low. "When you came, were you followed?"

Now Kara is really concerned. "Alex, what are you talking about? No, of course I wasn't followed."

"You shouldn't be here," Alex says, tucking her hands under her armpits as she paces in front of the door. "I'm not ready yet, Kara. I can't do it. I need more time. I need more fucking time." She mutters the last phrase under her breath, but Kara doesn't miss it with her super-hearing. Alex looks back up at her, her hood falling back to reveal her face underneath.

Kara gasps at what she sees.

"Who did this to you?"

A fat, nearly-black bruise covers the right side of Alex's face. Her throat is purple and red, and Kara almost gags at the distinct outline of fingers against her skin. She does a scan and is shocked to see two cracked ribs on her scrawny frame. Alex cowers and looks away, curling her arm around her midsection as she shivers under the intensity of Kara's stare.

"Alex," Kara says again, her voice firmer than before. "Who did this to you?"

"I dealt with it," Alex says, glaring back up at her with the one good eye she has. "It's fine, Kara."

"You look beaten to Hell—"

"Please," Alex croaks, tears welling in her eyes. "Please, drop it. It's over, Kara. I can't talk about it."

Kara steps forward, resting her hands upon her sister's trembling shoulders. "Why not? I can protect you."

Alex slaps her hand away, a fearful look taking over her brown eyes. "I don't need your protection!"

It stings, the words that leave her mouth. Kara nearly recoils under the weight of her words, but Alex's eyes immediately dart downwards in shame. It's then, as she watches her sister struggle to barely keep it together, that she knows something is catastrophically wrong. Alex has never broken her composure, even when she was at her worst points. Kara looks behind her, to the kitchen, to the litter of empty alcohol bottles and the musty, over-filling trash can leaking with old take-out.

"I… had a boyfriend," Alex says softly, "it… it didn't end well."

Kara feels anger burble up inside of her at the implications. She turns back to Alex's downcast expression.

"I'll kill him."

Alex's head snaps up. "No."

"I will," Kara growls as she clenches her fists. "Tell me where he lives, Alex. I'll throw him into the sun."

"Kara, stop. It's okay, he's gone. I already pressed charges," Alex quickly assures her, hands reaching out to gently tug her solid frame into her own. Kara's always loved Alex's hugs, but she
hates this one. She hates it because Alex is shaking and she's afraid and from the beat of her heart, Kara can tell something is wrong. It's more than just a boyfriend, she knows it.

But why won't Alex tell her?

"Come on," Alex croaks into her shoulder, "I could use a sister's night right about now."

Kara wants to protest, but when Alex's face pulls back and she looks into those desperate brown eyes, she nods wordlessly. She lets herself be dragged to the couch with staggered steps. Alex slumps next to her, powering on the TV and scrolling through Netflix before throwing on some Parks and Recreation. Kara remains still and shocked, staring at the moving screen with confusion. Alex is curled up beside her, their hands tightly laced together as they avoid the elephant in the room.

A few episodes pass before Alex speaks, her voice tiny and afraid—nothing like Kara's ever heard.

"Please don't tell Mom," she whispers against her sweater. "I just want to move on, Kara."

She knows she should resist, should protest and try to talk some sense into her sister, but Kara can't.

Instead, she nods wordlessly. Alex hasn't lied before, and Kara knows her sister.

Or, at least she thought she did.

* * *

**November 11th, 2012**

Lying to Kara doesn't get any easier.

Alex thought it would pass as the years slipped by, but it turned out that it only kept getting progressively worse. Her injuries from training keep getting harder to hide, and she can't keep using the 'abusive' boyfriend approach. She wants to tell Kara. She wants someone to confide in when her nightmares from the simulations are too much to handle. She wants someone to pry the cold bottle of bourbon from her hands when the roughest nights won't let her breathe without aching.

But Alex, as she's always been, is utterly alone.

Hank checks in here and there, makes sure she's alive, but his teaching style is more tough-love than anything. He pushes her to her limits, isn't afraid to break her down and build her back up. For a moment, Alex thinks of those documentaries of soldiers in foreign countries who undergo brainwashing techniques to build their resilience. While she trusts Hank, she also remembers the DEO is the one responsible for her father's death, and that Hank's stories of Jeremiah may as well be fabricated. All of the training, the simulations, the beatings, it could all just be to indoctrinate her into a xenophobic regime.

If it is, it's a damn good regime.

Good enough that Alex is handed her first mission only a few days after the final day of training. Hank beams at her as he prattles out the details. An alien-trafficking ring in the heart of National City. Alex is tasked with working with Vasquez, a younger recruit who is still in her training days. She'd only been a few days behind Alex when they'd been recruited. She's doe-eyed and bright, but eager. Alex makes it a point not to get attached to anyone, but she finds solace in Vasquez.
Maybe it's because she reminds Alex of a younger, less-damaged version of herself.

Their mission goes off without a hinge. They uncover the ring and flush out the high-ranking mobsters. Their arrests are prompt and swift, and for a moment, Alex almost feels giddy with how simple and routine everything played out.

But good things are never good, and Alex knows she should know better.

One of the criminals breaks loose from his hold and sprints in the direction of her officers. Alex watches him running, and she can see that Vasquez, who is busy cuffing the last criminal, has no idea he's coming for her. She doesn't think in that moment as she reaches for her gun—she lets her brain rest on the months and weeks and hours and minutes of training.

She fires one singular shot.

People don't die like they do in movies.

There's no dramatic fall or slow-motion movement. There's no gasp or shudder for breath. There's just a loud pop and then the crumpling of a body like a bag of potatoes. Alex's hands shake as the shell of the bullet singles her exposed skin. Her eyes stay wide and in disbelief as she looks to where the criminal is laying, face down in a pool of his own growing blood.

She's frozen, the gun in her hand trembling as the realization sets in.

She killed someone.

Four years of being in school practicing to be a doctor—practicing to save lives—and she's taken her first one.

"Alex."

She blinks, her mouth hanging open as she feels a warm hand on the gun. Her vision clears from its' blurry state to reveal a worried-looking Vasquez staring back at her. How the woman had managed to cross the street and get to her without Alex noticing is beyond her comprehension. Alex swallows and lets the other woman take the gun from her shaking hands slowly.

"You're okay," Vasquez says, even though her voice trembles. "You're okay. You saved me."

"I…," Alex trails off, shaking her head as her eyes land on the body. "I killed him."

Vasquez draws a sharp breath, before following her gaze solemnly. "You did what you had to."

"No," Alex says as she croaks the word out, "killing should never be the right answer."

"Sometimes, there is no right answer."

Alex turns her head to see Hank stepping out from the darkness, dressed in his tactical fatigues. He looks tired and sympathetic, and a little sad. Their relationship is still developing, but Hank has become the paternal figure she's missed for a long portion of her life. She looks up to him with watery eyes, expecting him to look at her with disgust or horror.

But he doesn't.

Instead, Hank looks relieved.

"I'm sorry," he says as he reaches out and pulls her into his arms. "I'm sorry, Alex."
She doesn't care that she's in public, or that her team is watching her, or that she can still feel the burn of the recoiled bullet shell on her forearm. She lets herself be wrapped up in Hank's tight embrace. She burrows into him, struggling to breathe.

And then she sobs.

She sobs for the life she had taken.

She sobs for the choice she made.

She sobs for herself, for the final scrap of innocence that she's lost.

She sobs, because there’s nothing else she can do.

But Hank holds on, and for the first time, Alex doesn't feel so alone.

* * *

**February 18th, 2015**

Kara hadn’t gotten a call, but she knows something was wrong.

She knows she’s not supposed to fly or to do anything that would make people suspicious, but she can feel that something is wrong—deadly wrong. It’s only when she turns on the news that she sees the flaming engines of Flight 237 as it flies towards the city. The bar she's in doesn't seem to be talking about it, other than faint murmurings of shock, but Kara stiffens.

*Flight 237.*

That’s Alex’s flight.

And Kara freezes as she stares up at the news report, of people screaming in the background as the plane soars over buildings, heading towards the centre. The bar is quietened now as the helicopter pans over the flaming plane circling National City. Kara’s heart jumps up in her chest as she imagines Alex, how she could be reacting, but she doesn’t need to; she already knows that Alex is trying to save as many as she can, that is her sister: always putting others before herself.

But not today, Kara thinks as she straightens and grabs at her coat. She runs through the crowd of people in the bar down the hall towards the entrance of the back alley. Once outside, she looks up. In the distance, she can see the burning speck of light of the plane, but she pushes her emotions down and focuses. She tears her glasses off and runs down the street.

She builds momentum, jumping up, each step higher than the next, until she’s hurdling into the air with a cackling boom, her unsteady flight taking her soaring towards the burning aircraft. It takes some time to get her bearings straight, but eventually she does. She manages to get a steady rhythm and she pushes harder, jutting her fists out to cut the wind.

As she nears, the roaring of the engines is overwhelming. She falters as she looks at the burning aircraft banking downwards at an alarming rate. But then, Kara closes her eyes as she hovers in the air, blocking out everything but one single sound.

*Ba-dum, Ba-dum, Ba-dum.*

Strong, clear, familiar.
Kara opens her eyes and looks at the plane.

With a determined expression, she sets her jaw and sets off towards the burning metal with a newfound determination. She flies around it before hovering just under the wing. Kara takes a deep breath and reaches up, her hands clasping at the burning metal as she heaves upwards. She’s never truly tested her strength before, but she gets to do so now.

Kara takes a deep breath and heaves, astonished as she watches the plane start to tilt upwards from its’ nose dive. Gaining some more confidence, Kara puts even more force into the shove, angling the plane away from the city and towards the water—safer she thinks, and she can prevent the destruction of the city and its people. The metal screams underneath her, protesting her movements against the air resistance, but Kara doesn't hold back. She pushes harder with a heavy grunt.

And then Kara looks to her side, and she gasps at the sight.

Alex stares back at her, a mixture of shock and awe written on her face from the small space in the window. Kara’s heart almost stops in her chest at the tears in Alex’s eyes, but Kara keeps strong. Her sister places her hand on the window, and Kara looks up to see a defeated acceptance in Alex’s gaze. Her lips purse and mouth out words that make her heart sink.

*It's okay,* Alex mouthes with a mournful nod, *let go.*

Kara's breath catches in her throat as she sees the tears in Alex's eyes. She doesn't need Alex to say anything to know exactly what the other woman is thinking. Alex is giving her an opportunity to fall back, to remove herself before she exposes her identity. She looks into her sister's watery gaze, and she knows that despite whatever happens next, she won't let her die.

Her entire life, Alex has been her protector, her saviour.

But Kara won't let her die for her, not like this.

She gives her sister a smile and a shake of her head, before returning back to the task at hand. She can hear Alex's voice in her head, protesting her choice, but she ignores it. Alex can be angry at her, and she wouldn't care. She just wants her sister alive. She focuses on steering the plane over the bridge before she settles it down on the water as safely as she can.

It’s turbulent, but it’s better than the city.

Once she’s managed glide the plane to a halt, Kara finally breathes out and slumps against the now cooling metal of the wing. She looks back to the window to see Alex staring at her proudly, but there’s that worry and concern that is so characteristically Alex. She knows that there's no turning back now. She can't hide anymore, but she doesn't care.

Kara smiles again, feeling tired as she hears the cheers of relief from the passengers and the crew as the emergency boats deploy and people start to exit from the plane. Kara watches them as they hug and cry with each other, still in disbelief they are breathing. She climbs up onto the wing and stares at the night sky, before a bright, beautiful laugh tears from her throat.

When a bright light flashes down on her and Kara makes out the distinct whirring of helicopter blades, she knows what is coming next. The world—a world that Alex and Eliza and Jeremiah and Kal had been protecting her from—knows who she is.

But when Kara looks to Alex, she knows it’s worth it.

Her sister stares at her, shaking her head in disbelief as she chuckles through the glass.
And then, her lips curl upwards and she mouthes the only words Kara knows will never be untrue.

I love you.

No matter what the world throws at her, Kara has Alex.

And that will never change.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for all the lovely comments! <3
Eliza cards her hands through Alex's short hair as her daughter fits in her sleep. Her fever is still high, though significantly lower than a few hours ago when she'd been in a delirious state. The infection in the bullet wound seemed to be healing up relatively quickly. The process of the Black Kryptonite has her in shambles. Lena had explained the basics, but Eliza isn't daft. She knows what this means.

Her Alex is neither human nor alien.

More importantly, her Alex will never be the same again.

She'd watched the news; she'd seen the destruction Invictus had brought to National City, the lives it had taken.

Alex had killed people.

A gasp leaves her lips when she finally hears the thought, the truth, in her head. She looks to her daughter, trying to reimagine the girl she'd birthed, the tiny infant with a set of lungs powerful enough to nearly break glass. She remembers holding that tiny girl in her arms and thinking that she would always protect her from the evil in the world. Eliza hangs her head, barely holding back tears at her failure.

"Why?"

Eliza's head snaps up at the croaked voice. For a moment, she almost doesn't catch the soft interruption.

She looks to see Alex's eyes cracked half-open, still feverish and red-rimmed. Eliza swallows thickly.

"Alex, honey?"

"Why?" Alex croaks again, coughing lightly. Eliza immediately reaches for the glass on the bedside drawer before gently placing it at Alex's cracked lips. She soothes her daughter, scolding her lightly for taking overly eager gulps. Once she's finished, Alex sighs and leans back.
"Why did you save me?"

Eliza isn't expecting that. She looks to Alex's eyes, brimming with guilt and pain and so much heartbreak.

"You're my daughter," Eliza whispers, "Alex, I love you."

Alex shakes her head, scoffing lightly. "I was never your daughter, Mom."

Like a dagger to the chest, Eliza physically recoils under the weight of her daughter's words. "Alex—"

"You know something?" Alex interrupts softly, looking down to her lap. "All I ever wanted was for you to love me the same way you love Kara. I wanted to be comforted like she was, held like she was, felt like I was enough—more than enough—like she was. But I wasn't."

Eliza swallows at the accusation, but she hangs her head and admits, "you're right, Alex."

There's a silence that befalls them and the tension is heavy. Each breath Eliza sucks in feels like fire in her throat, but she eventually finds the words. She looks up to her daughter, choking down her tears as she reaches out and gently takes Alex's hand into her own.

"You're right," she repeats, her voice cracking. "I neglected you—forced you to become a mother to your sister and a caretaker to me. I saw your strength and resilience and I didn't bother to question what I had done to make it develop so unhealthily. You've done so much for our family—sacrificed so much for our family—and I never bothered to see the effect of that on your development. You've taken punches and stab wounds and bullets to protect our family, but when it matters most, no one is there to take the pain from you."

Alex stares at her blankly as Eliza swallows down the pit in her throat. "I'm sorry, Alex. For everything. And I know that an apology now, when things are far past the point of recovery, is almost pointless. But I'm sorry, Alex. I love you so much and I am so incredibly proud of everything you are. I wasted so much time never showing it to you, never proving it to you. I've been a terrible mother, and I'm sorry."

Eliza's sobbing by the time she's finished saying what she needs to say. Alex remains quiet, mulling over her words.

Sniffling, she hangs her head. "I understand if you don't accept my apology—"

"I don't."

Eliza stiffens, her eyes widening as she takes in the pained expression of her eldest. Alex swallows as she shrugs sadly.

"Not yet, anyways."

A hope blooms inside Eliza's chest at the sad, small smile that tugs at Alex's lips. Eliza nods, wiping at her tears uselessly.

"Of course, honey. I'm sorry—"

"You hurt me," Alex says, though her voice doesn't contain malice. "For years, I repressed everything about me. Do you know what I went through in college? I mean, I'm pretty sure I'm a functional alcoholic, Mom. I smoke and drank my way through graduate school because the
thought of disappointing you made my sober life a misery. When I joined the DEO, they trained me to withstand pain—all pain."

Eliza freezes when Alex's voice cracks on the last sentence. "What are you talking about?"

Alex's spare hand plays with the edge of the blanket nervously before she sighs, "I had to learn how to keep a secret—Kara's secret—no matter the cost." At Alex's avoidance of her gaze, Eliza can piece together exactly what her daughter is trying to tell her. She feels sick.

She can't help herself as she blurts out, "they tortured you."

"Simulations," Alex corrects, but it does nothing to reassure Eliza. "There was the physical component, yes, but it was mostly psychological. You'd be surprised just how common brain-washing techniques are nowadays." The joke falls flat for both of them.

"J'onn let this happen?" Eliza growls protectively. "How could he?!"

Alex looks up at her, shrugging haphazardly. "He did it."

"He did it?" Eliza echoes. "What do you mean?"

Alex sighs. "He trained me, Mom."

"He hurt you—"

"He made me stronger," Alex snarls as she glares up at her mother. "He hurt me to teach me how to be stronger, to work harder. But you know what he also did? He respected me. He supported me. He held my hair back when I puked my guts out due to withdrawals. He stayed at my bedside when the nightmares were so bad that I contemplated taking my own life to just end it all. He never abandoned me."

It stings, but Eliza knows it's the truth. She nods, her throat bobbing as she feels another sob aching at her throat.

"I love you," Alex says softly, squeezing their hands together. "But I'm not the same girl you knew, Mom. I don't think I ever was. I've done things that would make you feel sick. The blood on my hands… the stain will never fade. I'm a murderer, Mom, and being Invictus..."

A shudder courses through Alex's frame before she finishes, "being Invictus only made things worse."

Eliza tries to block out the news reports, the devastation and the death, but she can't stop picturing it all unfold so terribly. She looks to the conflict brewing in her daughter's eyes and she immediately knows that whatever happened while Alex was her vigilante-self still haunts her in more ways than one. She squeezes Alex's hand tighter, trying to convey her strength and courage for her daughter.

"I killed people," Alex croaks as she looks up. Eliza watches her daughter crumble, feeling lost and unsteady as she watches Alex's gaze harden. "It wasn't even like I wasn't aware of what I was doing, because I was. I knew exactly what I was doing. I am a monster."

"Honey," Eliza whispers, reaching out to smooth back her daughter's hair. "You aren't a monster. What happened to you, what you did, you did because you wanted to help people. You protect people, Alex. Nothing about that is monstrous."
Alex shakes her head dismissively. "I didn't protect them. They didn't look at me like they looked at Supergirl. They feared me, Mom."

"People fear what they don't know," Eliza says as she offers a small, trembling smile. "And they don't know you like I do, sweetheart."

* * *

Maggie sits outside, watching the sun rise over the beautiful mountainside. Her hands are clutching a cold mug, the tea inside now long cold. It doesn't matter, though, because no beverage or sunlight could ever warm the aching pit inside her. She's cold and numb.

In fact, Maggie isn’t even really here—so to say.

Her mind is back in Alex’s bedroom, listening to her whimper the same two words over and over again in a delirious, pained chant.

My daughter.

They’d only been broken up for a few months. Maggie isn’t sure if Alex had found someone new in the elapsed time or if she had just wanted to have a baby then and there. She knew her lover to be impulsive, but never enough to make such a rash decision. Then again, she knew how much Alex wanted a child, how much she wanted to be a mother. Maggie doesn’t even dare to imagine if Alex was pregnant during their last few days or weeks together. The thought of knowing she left a pregnant Alex, her Alex, sickens her violently.

Maggie doesn’t want to fall down the rabbit hole, but she does.

She imagines a mini-version of herself and Alex. A fiery girl with brown eyes and a strong jaw. Maybe she has her dimples and head-tilt. She’s stubborn and cute and caring and small and soft. She runs too fast and is too curious. She’s loud and boisterous and a trouble-maker and has a smile that lights up the world. She’s witty and smart and calculated and cool. She'd be the best of the both of them.

Maggie closes her eyes and she sees it. She sees their daughter wrapped up in her ex-fiancée’s arms. She sees Alex kissing her hair, whispering soothing lullabies when she cries. She sees Alex on their couch, with her baby napping atop her chest. She sees the proud glint in Alex’s eyes when her child goes to school for the first time. She sees Alex clapping and hooting and hollering when her daughter graduates at the top of her class, valedictorian, full distinction, just like her mother. She sees Alex at their daughter’s wedding, proud and happy and a teary-mess because it all came full circle again. She sees herself beside Alex in every single one of those visions.

Yeah, Maggie thinks as she opens her eyes, wiping uselessly at the tears which drip down her cheeks. *Fuck the rabbit hole.*

“Hey.”

Maggie sniffs, trying to wipe up the evidence of her tears as she turns to see Lena walking out with a fresh cup of steaming tea. Maggie tries to smile, but the movement falters and she sighs. She can't bring herself to be happy while Alex is suffering. Lena cups her hands around the mug, giving her a sympathetic look. Maggie ignores it, biting at her bottom lip in worry.

“How’s Alex?” She asks instead, her voice hoarse. Lena sighs.

“How’s Alex?” Lena replies, taking a seat beside her on the porch as she follows Maggie’s gaze to the
sunrise. “Dr. Danvers—Eliza,” she corrects herself with a bite of her lip. “We managed to stop the infection from spreading. She’s pumped full of high-grade antibiotics, but it’s not really us that’s keeping her alive. She shouldn’t be alive, to begin with—that kind of physical trauma would’ve killed anyone.”

Maggie swallows thickly at the underlying message behind Lena's words. “The Black Kryptonite.”

Lena doesn’t reply at first. She just raises her cup to her lips and sips slowly. Maggie picks at a stray splinter of wood on the steps, not even bothered when it pricks her and draws some blood. She watches it slowly slide down her fingertip and soundlessly splatter on the grass. Lena follows her gaze, but Maggie ignores those piercing green eyes on the back of her neck as she stares at the tiny hole.

Good, she thinks miserably, I deserve to bleed.

“Alex,” Lena says softly, drawing her out of a dazed state. “Maggie, she… um… the Black Kryptonite…”

Maggie hates the unease in Lena’s voice. “What is it, Lena?”

Lena sets her cup down. “It’s… remarkable, truly. I know you’ve told me a lot to stop thinking about it like she’s some science experiment, but it’s hard. She shouldn’t be alive right now.”

Maggie growls and glares at her, urging the other woman to get on with her point. Lena blushes and picks at her nails nervously.

“Go on then,” Maggie says bitingly, “spit it out, Luthor.”

“Alex is dying.” Lena says quietly, unable to look at her as the words punch a hole straight through Maggie’s chest without warning. “We’re saving her right now, but overall, she’s dying, Maggie.”

“W-What,” Maggie stutters, “what are you talking about?”

“The Black Kryptonite is slowly consuming her,” Lena explains, finally mustering the courage to meet her teary gaze with her own pain-riddled one. “The scans I’ve taken reveal that only eighteen percent of her organs are not affected by the stone. Everything necessary for functioning—her heart, lungs, liver, kidneys—it’s all covered in the stuff. It’s like she isn’t even Alex anymore.”

“Don’t,” Maggie growls as she stands abruptly. “That woman in there is still Alex Danvers. She’s still the best damn agent this world has ever seen. She’s the best damn girlfriend and fiancée to ever exist, and she’s sure as Hell the best sister Kara will ever have.”

“I know,” Lena replies sadly, her voice cracking. “But Maggie, to try and parse out what’s Alex and what’s Kryptonite, I can’t—”

Maggie cuts her off with a cold glare. “Can you fix it?”

Lena’s eyes widen before she hangs her head. “I… I don’t know.”

“You can try, though, right?” Maggie asks, desperate now as she looks to Lena pleadingly. “Aside from Alex, you’re the smartest mind this world has to offer. If anyone can fix her, it’s you. Please, Lena, you can't give up on her. Alex has given up so much, to lose her to this…”

“I’m trying,” Lena tells her, though her voice wavers slightly. “But Maggie, I can’t get anyone’s hopes up, but I’m trying to figure out a way to save her, but this is all so new to me too, and I know what Alex means to everyone, not just to me and you, but to Kara—”
Maggie’s heart thuds to a halt in her chest.

She didn’t even think about Kara.

Alex was Kara’s whole world and more. Sure, she is in love with Lena and has a plethora of support from not only the DEO but also CatCo and some of the people at L-Corp, but none of them matter when it comes to Alex. Kara would destroy everything to save Alex, and if she lost her… well, Maggie can’t even fathom it. She knows the youngest Danvers would be not only lost, but completely devastated.

“I can’t give Kara false hope,” Lena sighs, rubbing the back of her head as she looks to the stars. “I’m working on a plan, but given Alex’s timeline, I’m not sure if I will be able to figure it out in time. And that’s only if she’s as healthy as she is now—barring recent events.”

Maggie looks up, cocking her head sadly. “How long, Lena?”

Lena’s face falls as she looks away. “You don’t want me to—”

“How long?”

Lena sighs, rubbing at her brow. “Two years at the most.”

Two years.

All the plans she and Alex had talked about when they’d been tangled up in each other’s’ arms late at night, they were more than just ‘two-year’ plans. The house, the picket fence, the mortgage, the dog, the neighbours, being aunts—that’s a whole life.

Not just two years.

“She’ll need you,” Lena whispers, her voice growing hoarser as Maggie knows she’s begun to see her thought process. “I know you two are still dancing around something after everything, but Maggie, if you love her, you have to stick with her for this. She’s going to hurt.”

If she looked up the word everlasting in the dictionary, Maggie knows she’d find a picture of Alexandra Danvers. She’d see her beaming face and those kind eyes staring back at her because that’s who Alex was—everlasting. She was permanent, thick-and-thin, twenty-four seven. Everyone else came and went, but not Alex.

Not her Alex.

“I will,” Maggie promises, her head held up and strong as she stares up at the bedroom window of the love her life. “I will.”

If she has two years, then let it be damned.

Maggie will make them the best two years of their lives.

* * *

“Did you know?”

Kara looks up from where she’s watching Alex sleep to Eliza’s ashen expression. Her foster mother hadn’t left Alex’s side since her sister’s moment of weakness. She’d been as shell-shocked as Kara
still currently is, and Kara can tell that the news is still alarming.

“No,” Kara replies softly, glancing back down to Alex’s face. “She never told me. When I was in Ireland, we weren’t exactly on speaking terms. I… I was so angry at her, but I think… I think I was scared, more than anything. I was scared she’d never forgive me for leaving without really telling her goodbye. I was scared she’d thought I had abandoned her.” Kara scoffs, shaking her head bitterly as she feels tears burn at her eyes. Looking down to her hands, she fumbles with her fingers as she struggles to orient herself. She swallows thickly.

“But the sad thing is, I did abandon her,” Kara sighs, “and my sister had to endure the greatest loss of her entire life alone.”

“Kara, honey, don’t do that.” Eliza’s words are meant to bring her comfort, but Kara just feels hollow inside. “Alex knew you went to heal, not to parade around and take a vacation. She knew you needed time, the both of you. She could never be mad at you for that.”

“But missing the death of her child?” Kara spits back angrily, glaring up at her foster mother. “She was alone, Eliza, no one even knew she was pregnant. God, a child was all she ever wanted. Nothing mattered more to Alex than her family, and she was alone when she lost it.”

A sob tears at Kara’s throat as she breathes out, “all Alex ever wanted was a child, one that she could love and cherish, and she had it, Eliza. For a brief, beautiful second, she had it.” She hears Eliza crying with her as Kara pulls Alex’s limp hand to her lips. She presses a soft kiss to the back of it, hanging her head. She tries to not think about loss of trust in her sister, or the anger she feels inside of her.

She can still hear her own words, cold and harsh.

Take the shot, Maggie.

The sound of the bullet leaving Maggie's gun will never stop haunting her. Kara's heart wrenches in two at the memory.

“I’m sorry,” Kara whispers, as she looks to her slumbering sister. “I’m so sorry, Alex.”

But apologies won’t fix the past.

Apologies won’t bring that beautiful little girl back.

* * *

November 13th, 2018

When Alex wakes again, it’s to a soft thudding in the back of her skull and a warm weight atop her chest. She blinks her eyes open blearily, gazing at the swirls and dizzying vision of her room as she tries to steady her bearings. She closes them again until her head steadies. Then, she blinks again to see that she was wrong. There wasn’t one warm weight on her chest, but two.

Alex looks to the familiar blonde mop of her sister as she snoozes against her right side, her arms protectively woven around her middle. She can feel Kara drooling into her shirt as she snores, but the sound is comforting, even if it she sounds like a bear.

On the opposite side is the polar opposite: a light brown mess of curls and the tan skin of another arm laced around her middle. Maggie’s head is resting just atop Kara’s, nearer to her collarbone. Alex peers closer and her chest bursts as she sees Maggie’s arm is not only draped over her, but
also over Kara, too.

“You’re awake…”

Alex looks over to see her mother walk into the room with a tray of food. Alex swallows thickly, her throat dry. Eliza gazes at her sympathetically before taking a glass of water from the tray and sticking a straw inside of it. She leans down, holding the straw to Alex’s lips. Alex eyes it suspiciously, but Eliza fondly smiles.

“Slowly,” she instructs as she places the straw to her lips. "We don't want a repeat of last time, sweetheart." Alex wraps her lips around the plastic and sucks, at first hesitantly but then greedily. Eliza pulls the straw away and Alex pouts.

It’s an automatic reaction, but it makes Eliza smile.

“Always so stubborn,” Eliza muses as she returns the straw back down to her lips. “You’ve always been just like your father.”

Alex doesn’t want to think about her father right now. She wished Jeremiah was here to help her get through this. Her father always had solutions to every problem; he always knew what to do to help his family. When she was young, she was always closer to her father than she ever was to her mother, even before Kara came into her life. She held a special bond with her father, but it was gone.

Secretly, Alex had always wanted that bond with her own child.

*Little Bean,* she thinks as she closes her eyes, *my Allie.*

What a beautiful name.

She knows Kara had said it was just a nightmare, but she’s spoken before to Clark about the meaning of Kryptonian dreams. They were never superficial, as human dreams often are. Clark had told her that sometimes their dreams were memories of the past, or glimpses of alternate realities and futures. Dreams were never just dreams.

They were so much more.

“Alex,” her mother’s voice draws her from the rabbit hole. Alex looks up to see Eliza nervously settling in the chair at her side.

“Mom?” Alex asks hoarsely. “You okay?”

Eliza’s face softens at her question. “Oh Alex.”

Alex screws her face up in confusion. “What?”

“I’m sorry,” Eliza says softly, her eyes clouding over with grief and regret. “Not just about your… about the baby,” the words sting at Alex’s already beaten heart, but Eliza presses on, swallowing.

“I’m sorry,” she repeats, clearing her throat. “For the way I treated you, before and after Kara came into the picture. Your sister and you were right. I never treated you the same way I did her. There’s no excuse for what I did and said to you.”

Alex just looks at her blankly before she asks, “but why?”

Eliza’s eyes blink back tears. “Why what, sweetheart?”
“Why did you treat me like that?” Alex asks, trying to contain her own emotions as she looks to the one woman, she had always strived to prove herself to. “Why wasn’t I ever enough for you, Mom?”

She hates how her voice cracks, but she can’t help it.

Eliza’s breath stutters and Alex hates the guilt which runs through her when she sees her mother unable to hold back her tears. She tries to not let it get to her that she shouldn’t feel guilty. She shouldn’t feel remorse to the woman who had torn her down, who had doubted her, who had always consistently made her feel less than her worth. Alex knows her mother loves her, but it is conditional.

It has always been a conditional love.

“Honey,” Eliza croaks emotionally, “you were always more than enough. I… I was hard on you because I knew that you could take it. I knew that even though I was the parent, no one would be able to care for and love Kara the way you do. The day she walked into our home, you stepped up, and I know I put a lot on your shoulders, but I never… never thought that you weren’t enough for me, baby.”

Alex feels tears slide down her cheeks as Eliza stands up and leans over her, pressing a soft kiss into her forehead as her hands slowly card through her hair. “Kara is the sun,” Eliza whispers, looking down to her sister lovingly, before nodding back up at her, a loving expression full of pride and hope adorning her face.

“But you,” Eliza whispers, “you are the moon and all its’ stars.”

Alex feels herself fall apart when her mother reaches over her sister’s body to cradle her face in her hands. Alex’s chest heaves as she tries to figure out how to breathe with this touch, this comforting touch she’s always yearned for, a touch that had always been so far out of reach and yet always so close. She can’t stop the tears that slide down her cheeks when Eliza holds her close.

“I love you,” Eliza whispers against her forehead, “my sweet, baby girl. I love you more than I could ever love anything in this world. I know I’ve made mistakes, but I have always loved you.”

Alex sobs as she realizes that she’s finally safe. Kara and Maggie are still resting atop her chest, and she has her mother next to her and her mother loves her, and even though the world as they know it might be ending, at this point, Alex wouldn’t be scared.

Because she has everything she’s always wanted.

She looks to her mother, her sister, her lover.

Alex has a family.

* * *

Lena is typing at her computer when she hears footsteps in the hallway. She looks up from where she’s at the kitchen table to see Kara stumbling in, rubbing her eyes sleepily. On any other day, Lena’s heart would beat faster at the sight of her girlfriend so vulnerable and soft, so innocent and free from the world’s burdens.

“Lena?” Kara asks blearily. “You’re still awake?”

Lena swallows, blinking back her remorseful thoughts as she nods, glancing back down to her
screen. “I’m working on figuring out how the Black Kryptonite is affecting Alex. I’m trying to figure out if there is a way to safely remove it or create an alternate power source—one that doesn’t leech onto her organs and consume her.”

Kara winces at the explanation as she nods, settling into the chair beside her. Lena looks to her lost expression and sighs, closing her tablet and setting it aside. She reaches out and gently takes one of Kara’s hands into her own, squeezing lightly in comfort.

“You know,” Lena says, looking around the kitchen. “Then I thought about the first time visiting your childhood home, this wasn’t what I was expecting. It’s so… tucked away from the city.”

Kara chuckles airily at that, resting her head on Lena’s shoulder. “We used to live downtown, but then I caused a bit of trouble, so Eliza moved us back up here. Truthfully, Alex and I liked it more up here than we ever did in the city. It’s peaceful here. Calm.”

“I can’t imagine the kind of trouble you’d get up to,” Lena says, reaching up to weave through Kara’s greasy hair with her spare hand. “You’re the friendly neighbourhood superhero. Not trouble.”

Kara smiles again faintly, shaking her head. “No,” Kara says she turns her head to kiss her shoulder. “I always wanted to explore and use my powers. Alex was the one who had to keep me in check.”

“So, what would you two get up to here?” Lena asks, looking up at the various pictures of them scattered around the room. Kara leans up off her shoulder and sighs, looking outside to the ocean.

“Alex would surf in the mornings before I woke up,” Kara says wistfully, lost in the memory. “When I first came to Earth, everything scared me, but especially water. Krypton was a dying planet, and we didn’t have large bodies of water like you did. It was a greatly mechanical planet. The ocean was terrifying to me.”

Lena squeezes her hand as she watches Kara delve deeper into her past. “Anyways,” Kara says, looking back at her. “Alex would take me, tell me to just dip my toes in at first, to let me feel it.”

Lena smiles as she hears the happy lilt in Kara’s voice. “She would tug me in, tell me about all the different types of fish and sea animals that lived under the water. She taught me to listen to waves to calm me down if I couldn’t focus on her heartbeat.”

Kara smiles again, glancing back to Lena almost hopefully. “Alex used to tell me that the ocean was Earth’s heartbeat. That if the waves didn’t crash against the shore, that the Earth wasn’t alive.”

“That’s why you liked sitting at the cliffs,” Lena muses with a smile. Kara blushes and shrugs, but Lena can see the recognition in her eyes as she nods. Lena leans over, pressing a kiss to her temple. Kara just squeezes her hand tighter in brave response.

“Come on,” Kara whispers, leaning over to kiss her lips. “Let’s get you to bed, Luthor.” Lena blushes as she feels Kara, despite her fatigue and grief, reach under her and hoist her into her arms. Lena allows herself to relax in those familiar strong arms as Kara carries her up the stairs and towards the spare bedroom. Only now, as she’s in Kara’s arms, does Lena start to feel a weeks’ worth of fatigue crash down upon her. She tiredly rests her head on Kara’s shoulder, her nose nuzzling into those long, corded neck muscles.

“I love you,” Lena murmurs as Kara settles them in the bed, tucking the sheets and comforter up around their bodies. Kara just kisses her and wraps her in her arms, letting Lena’s body finally
relax.

For the first time in what feels like years, Lena actually sleeps.
Life

Chapter Summary

The Danvers family continue to heal.

Chapter Notes

ahh sorry this took so long!!

November 16th, 2018

Kara never meant to stumble upon it, but she does.

It’s an old Gibson J-45—the standard edition.

Well, originally it was Alex’s guitar, but when her sister noticed that she’d picked up an affinity for music, Alex gifted it to her, telling her that she actually had a decent singing voice and could make better use out of it than she could. Looking back now, Kara smiles when she knows that was just another way her big sister gave her comfort and love so selflessly. Alex would have given up the world for her safety and comfort, and in some ways, Kara knows she did that.

She remembers the painful nights, filled with the acrid scent of smoke still fresh in her lungs, or the dark abyss of space still frozen in her mind. She remembers sobbing for her mother, of banging against the glass, of the desperation as her parents stood and watched as her pod was shot from the observatory alongside Kal’s, never to return again.

She remembers how she saw her planet explode, how her pod had rattled with the force.

Slowly, Alex replaced the booms and cackles with soft lullabies and gentle words. The alarms of her pod were replaced with the melodic plucking of strings. The loneliness and heartache was soothed over with a calming wave of love.

Looking back down to the guitar with misty eyes, Kara sighs. It’s been so long since she last picked it up, but when she does, a small smile graces her face. She reaches down and lets her fingers slide over the coarse metal of the strings, to feel the defined ridges in each fret. Her eyes settle on the small scratch in the hardwood and she chuckles sadly. It was from the first time she tried to pick it up and underestimated the amount of strength it took to strum the thing.

But Kara’s older now, more in control.

So, this time, when she picks up the guitar, she’s gentle.

She sits on the small couch beside the large, open windows overlooking the calm lake and the sun reflecting off the water. For a moment, she can ignore the impending doom and the loss. She can set aside the war. Kara smiles at the tranquility of it all, and before she knows it, her fingers are
moving on their own accord to form familiar chords.

“I forgot I left that here.”

Kara turns, gasping as she sees Alex leaning against the frame of the door, her shirt sliding off her broad shoulders to reveal a sculpted and well-healing collarbone. She looks sickly and pale still, but the fire in her eyes is no less dim than it ever has been. A cold, glean of sweat lines her brow as she nods down to her younger sister. Kara goes to stand, to scold her for being down in the living room when she should be resting, but Alex waves her off, grinning cheekily.

“Don’t,” Alex says as she limps into the room, sighing as she takes a seat beside Kara. She winces as she rubs her side. “I was going stir crazy up there. Mom, Lena, and Maggie finally found some time to sleep so I made a run for it.”

“Alex,” Kara whispers, reaching out to graze her sister’s shoulder. “You need to rest… I… we almost lost you.”

Alex smiles at her sadly, reaching up to weakly squeeze at Kara’s hand before she nods down to the guitar, a nostalgic expression falling over her eyes. She gazes over it and sighs once more, slowly leaning her head on Kara’s shoulders.

“Well, you weren’t just going to sit there and fiddle with it, were you?” Alex asks, her voice light and carefree as she reaches down to finger over the wood. Kara swallows, looking down to where her palm is splayed over the body.

“I guess… I don’t know.”

“Sing for me?” Alex hums, looking back up. “Please?”

Kara gulps, blushing. “Alex, I don’t know if I…”

“Please,” Alex says again, her eyes misting. “I want to hear you.”

There’s something unsaid in her words, but Kara and Alex have been attached at the hip since they were teenagers. Because of it, Kara knows what Alex is actually asking for, and she sets her jaw when she sees the vulnerability in her big sister’s gaze. If Alex wants her to sing, if it would make her feel even an ounce better, she’ll do it. Alex gives her another nod, before tilting her head back down to Kara’s shoulder and resting it there. She takes a deep breath.

Kara smiles as the guitar hums out as she palm-mutes her strums, closing her eyes as she remembers the first song Alex taught her.

All this feels strange and untrue.

And I won’t waste a minute without you.

My bones ache, my skin feels cold.

And I’m getting so tired, and so old.

She feels Alex smile against her shoulder and Kara clears her throat, strumming a bit more confidently as she continues singing. The anger swells in my guts.

And I won’t feel these slices and cuts.
I want so much to open your eyes.

‘Cause I need you to look into mine.

Kara feels her voice crack as she trails off softly. She continues strumming, trying to keep her emotions as she goes into the chorus.

Tell me that you’ll open your eyes.

Tell me that you’ll open your eyes.

Tell me that you’ll open your eyes.

Tell me that you’ll open your eyes.

Alex hums along with her, one of her hands reach down to squeeze her thigh. Kara gains more confidence as she feels Alex’s tears in her shirt, and she knows from the way Alex’s spare hand is curled loosely around her stomach, that this isn’t just about her anymore.

Get up, get out, get away from these liars.

‘Cause they don’t get your soul or your fire.

Take my hand, knot your fingers through mine.

And we’ll walk from this dark room for the last time.

Alex is crying against her as Kara continues singing the chorus, strumming harder now as she sings her heart out. She closes her eyes, reimagining her nightmare, reimagining that beautiful little face, those captivating dark eyes, that heartwarming laughter...

Every minute from this minute now.

We can do what we like anywhere.

I want to do so much to open your eyes.

‘Cause I need you to look into mine.

By the end of the entire song, Alex and Kara are both crying. Kara nearly tosses the guitar aside as she wraps up her big sister in her arms and holds her closer. Alex tries to pat her back, to comfort her, but Kara shakes her head, knowing it’s her turn to be strong this time. She can tell the moment her sister realizes she doesn't need to be a protector anymore. Alex's body practically deflates in her arms as she collapses against Kara's front with a pained cry. Kara holds her close as Alex clings to her, sobbing as Kara coos in her ear. She presses kiss after kiss into Alex’s choppy hair.

“She was beautiful,” Kara whispers, knowing it can’t help, but she can’t stop herself from telling Alex because her sister deserves to know. “She was so amazing, sis. She looked just like you, Al. Same eyes, same nose. She was you. All you.”

Alex cries harder, her chest heaving as Kara's eyes film with tears at the memory of her dream, of a dream that Alex has always carried. Kara grips her tighter, even if she feels her own strength fading at the pulsing warmth of the stone wedged in her sister’s chest. She doesn’t care. If she perishes, so be it. All that matters right now is Alex, her Alex.

Her big sister.
Her protector.

Her world.

And Kara will fly herself into the sun for her.

“W-Was… was she…,” Alex chokes, her voice garbled with emotion as she clings to Kara. “Was she… happy?”

Kara smiles, nodding as she presses her lips into Alex’s shoulder.

“She was the happiest girl I’ve ever seen, Al.”

Alex lets out a sound that’s somewhere between a laugh and a sob as she allows Kara to practically tug her into her lap. Alex nuzzles into her neck, allowing herself to be weak as Kara holds her protectively. She whispers soothing stories of Allie, barring the part that made it become a nightmare. Alex listens, and Kara can tell that she’s trying her hardest to not feel devastated. She tries not to focus on how her sister miscarried alone, how she was forced to become Invictus alone. She tries not to focus on how Alex ended so injured she nearly died. She tries to ignore her part in Alex's demise.

But she can’t.

"I'm sorry," Kara says, her voice cracking. "For not being there when you needed me."

Alex remains silent, her body still trembling in Kara's embrace as the Kryptonian continues, "and I'm sorry I doubted you. In all my years on this planet, you've never turned against me. We've disagreed on things, have had fights and arguments, but I've never not trusted you before. I… I don't know what caused me to do it that day, I honestly don't."

Kara stifles a cry as she sniffs and hangs her head. "I let you down, Alex. I'm so, so sorry."

"It's okay," Alex croaks back, her hand weakly rubbing Kara's back. "It's okay, honey."

"But it's not," Kara replies, shaking her head as she closes her eyes. "I gave the order, Alex. I almost killed you."

"You had to stop Invictus," Alex reasons, though her voice is distant. "You wanted to protect the people, Kara. I wasn't a hero to National City. I stopped crimes and I delivered justice, but at what cost? I murdered criminals. I didn't give them a fair trial. I didn't allow them to plead their case. I executed them in painful ways. I ripped them from their own families. Invictus meant to stand for something more than just a Godlike power, but the stone… I went too far."

Kara hiccups, gripping Alex tighter. "Alex, no—"

"When this war is over," Alex whispers defeatedly, "I have to face the people. I have to repent for what I did."

"Alex—"

"I won't stand for injustice," Alex tells her, nuzzling her neck as Kara continues to cry. "I will atone for my actions."

"But you… you were just protecting them," Kara says, pulling back to look at her sister desperately. "Alex…"
But Alex only gives her a sad, sympathetic expression. "If I wasn't your sister, if you didn't know me, what would you do? What would the Justice League do? Maggie was right, Kara. Who was I to make the decisions I did? I am not a God."

"It was out of protection—"

"It may have started like that," Alex says, gazing down in shame. "But it turned into something far less noble."

"Alex," Kara whispers, "please…"

"Don't," Alex says as she looks back up and nods solemnly. "You know this is the right thing to do, Kara. I have to."

Kara shakes her head and pulls Alex back into her chest. She clutches her sister closer, burrowing her face into her ragged, dark brown hair. Alex's grip around her shoulders is weak but still strong enough to ground her as they both cry into each other's arms. Kara's eyes slide shut as she realizes the implications of Alex going to trial in the future.

As if she's read her mind, Alex sighs gently, "it'll be okay, Kara. You'll be okay."

"Not without you," Kara chokes out, gripping her sister tighter. "I can't live without you, Alex. I don't know how."

"Yes, you do." Alex's voice is firm but warm as she rubs her back. "You're strong, Kara. You'll find a way."

"I can't—"

"Kara," Alex sighs as she burrows into Kara's chest. "I'm tired, Kara."

It's the way in which her sister utters the words so desolately that Kara understands Alex isn't talking about fatigue.

"I miss her," Alex sobs defeatedly, her eyes sliding shut. "I miss her, Kara."

As she feels Alex tremble in her arms, she realizes the implications of Alex going to trial in the future. It's the way in which her sister utters the words so desolately that Kara understands Alex isn't talking about fatigue.

"I miss her," Alex whispers defeatedly, her eyes sliding shut. "I miss her, Kara."

Kara loses the will to speak as she feels Alex tremble in her arms. She chokes on a breath again as she finds herself thinking about a life without her sister. She almost had it when she ordered Maggie to take the shot. It settles and festers, with a dreadful pit in her stomach, that she gave the order, but Lena made the bullet and Maggie took the shot. All three of them, the three women Alex considered to be her closest confidants, betrayed her and nearly killed her.

When she dwells on it further, Kara picks up on someone else sobbing.

Both she and her sister look up to see Maggie in the doorway, a hand clasped over her mouth as she holds back her own tears. Alex tries to pull herself away from Kara, and she knows her sister is most likely about to try and apologize, but Maggie shakes her head as she bounds over to both of them. Kara moves aside slightly, watching as Maggie wraps her arms over Alex's chest, hugging her from behind. Alex cries harder, but Maggie hushes her soothingly.

"She was mine," Alex sobs as she shakes her head, "she was mine…"

Kara’s heart shatters in her chest when she sees Alex’s arms wind around her waist, holding her stomach with anguish and sorrow.
“She was mine,” Alex repeats tiredly, “my Little Bean.”

* * *

**November 17th, 2018**

To say that her recovery is slow is an understatement.

Alex is still trying to figure herself out amongst the pain and loss. She’s still trying to accept Kara’s love and support. She’s trying to figure out how to forgive the ones she loves, but she finds herself stirring inside. Something isn’t settling, and most of it stems from the stone. She’d been fighting for so long. For once, she is knocked down and unable to do anything other than rest. But all pain and grief fades over time, this Alex knows, but this is taking so incredibly long.

And it is driving her insane.

“The wound is looking better,” Eliza murmurs as she lowers Alex’s shirt and gives a pat. “I’m still in disbelief.”

“Do you know how you survived it?” Kara asks from where she’s sitting on the other end of room with Lena at her side, typing at her tablet. Her sister's eyes rake over the bandage. “The fusion of the Black Kryptonite to your DNA?”

Alex rubs at her head tiredly, still feeling exhaustion ebb through her body as her mother takes a seat at her bedside. “I’m not entirely sure,” Alex says, “I had a look at my scans after the incident and found my DNA contains dormant Kryptonian genes. It doesn't make sense, especially considering the fact I have my blood on file and the sample didn't match. Something changed my entire sequencing. I couldn't figure out what, but I'm neither human nor alien.”

“That’s impossible,” Eliza says, shaking her head. “You’re human, and I know this because you came out of me.”

Alex smiles sadly. “I was human,” she corrects with a shrug, “but now I’m not so sure what exactly I am. I don't even think I can be classified as a meta-human, either.” Kara gets up from her seat to lay down beside her, sensing her distress as she wraps her arms around her middle. Alex reaches up and lightly tangles their fingers together.

“You used the UHEN,” Lena says, glancing up at her from the tablet. “Why?”

“It was the only option I could think of that would stabilize the chemical reaction of the Kryptonite to my body. If I hadn’t the expansion would have been catastrophic and it wouldn’t just be me dead right now,” Alex explains, swallowing thickly. “I wouldn’t have broken in unless it was necessary, Lena. The power of the stone is nuclear.”

“I couldn’t care less that you broke in,” Lena says dismissively, though her brow still remains furrowed. “However, I do care about the fact that you were able to crack the code for Project X—more importantly, that you know what Project X is. It’s completely classified information, that while you are the second-highest ranking member of the DEO, you shouldn't know about it.” Lena keeps her green eyes glued on Alex's own. Kara and Eliza both stare at them confusedly.

"Alex?" Kara asks, arching her brow. "What's Project X?"

Alex worries at her lip, looking down. Lena leans forward in her chair, and Alex knows the other woman is worried and confused. Both of them are ignoring her sister, but Kara's antsy body practically vibrates with nerves. Granted, Lena's concern is justified, Alex thinks, L-Corp created
Project X. Alex looks to Kara's worried face before she sighs.

“Think about it for a second, Lena.” Ignoring Kara's question again, Alex deflects. She tries to keep the quiver out of her voice before she looks back up at the Luthor. “You know what Project X is about. You weren’t hiding it from the DEO.”

Lena gulps as Alex looks back to Kara and hangs her head.

“It was commissioned by the DEO themselves.”

Kara sits up then, frowning. “You guys are acting like it’s this big bad, top secret thing. What is it?”

Alex glares in Lena’s direction, and the Luthor looks away.

“It’s a… failsafe.”

Kara frowns again. “A failsafe?”

Lena just glances up painfully as she nods. Alex keeps her glare on the younger woman as Kara turns her head in her direction.

“Alex?” Kara asks, suspicion dripping in her voice. “What is it?”

Alex knows she can’t hide this from Kara anymore. She drops her glare on the Luthor, knowing that she’s not exactly guilty in this, either. As much as she’d advocated against the plan with J’onn, even she knew deep down, Project X was necessary… just in case.

“Project X is a failsafe to contain and neutralize this world’s greatest weapons,” Alex explains, watching the realization dawn on Kara’s face. She reels back in confusion and horror, her gaze flickering between Alex and Lena as she pieces the words together.

“It’s a weapon meant to contain… me?”

“And Kal,” Lena adds, but at the glare both Alex and Kara send her way, the Luthor has the decency to look ashamed. Eliza guffaws as she practically jumps to her feet in a mixture of rage and disgust at the implications of Project X.

“Kara and Kal would never hurt anyone,” she says, defending her foster daughter as she stands in front of the bed subtly. “Kara has saved this planet as much as he has, and this is their reward? This is how you thank their sacrifices?”

“It’s not a device we created with the intention of destroying them,” Lena says with a bit of urgency, flinching under Eliza's scathing look. “When it was created, it was done so with the purpose to stop them should something happen, and they turn. Eliza, I love your daughter, but even you must know that if Kara or Kal ever lost control, it would all end.”

Eliza opens her mouth, ready to fire off insults, but Kara holds her hand up.

"No," Kara says sadly. "Don't, Eliza."

Eliza looks at her ashen expression and splutters. "Kara—"

“No, Eliza, Lena is right.” Alex hates the defeat and shame in Kara’s voice as she speaks. “I’ve been possessed by Red Kryptonite before, and that time I almost killed Alex and nearly destroyed National City with my powers. If I was possessed again and couldn’t be brought back, Lena’s right,
morality and trust would be the last of your concern. Just because I can control my powers now doesn’t mean that will always be the case. I’m a liability.” Alex feels Kara slip out of the bed and stand a few feet away, drawing her arms up to her chest as she looks to the floor pensively.

“It doesn’t matter,” Lena says, and Alex detects shame and bitterness in her voice. “Because Project X is unfinished.”

Kara swallows thickly. “You should finish it.”

“Kara…,” Lena whispers, “sweetheart…”

“No.” Kara growls and Alex can see she’s fighting back tears. “I’m not mad, Lena. You were right. It needs to be there, but that doesn’t stop me from feeling hurt about it, okay? I… I have given so much to National City, to this whole world—a world that is not mine, and to be treated like an enemy… it hurts, okay? It may be necessary, but it still hurts.”

“I know,” Lena says again, wincing. “And I’m sorry, Kara.”

“Would you go back and change it?” Kara asks bluntly. ”Would you, Lee?”

Lena’s mouth closes, and Alex holds back tears when Kara turns on her.

“What about you?” She asks, her voice hoarse. “Would you change anything?”

Alex takes a deep breath, trying to convey the apology in her gaze as she looks at her sister.

“No,” she says softly, “I wouldn't, Kara.”

Kara just looks at her before she smiles sadly.

“Good,” Kara says defeatedly, “that’s good.”

“Is it?” Eliza spits out, walking over to her foster daughter as she wraps her arms around Kara’s trembling frame. “I can’t believe you two—the two people in the world who care about her the most—that you would do this to her. Have you no guilt, whatsoever?”

“It’s because they love me that they did it,” Kara says, pushing Eliza away gently. “Please don’t be mad at them, Eliza. I understand why they did it. After what happened, with J’onn, who turned out to not be J’onn, it makes sense. I can kill a human just by lifting my finger. Nothing on this planet could kill me.”

“Except for Project X,” Eliza growls fiercely. Alex sighs and steps in front of her foster mother.

“Project X isn’t designed for termination,” she interjects before her mother can turn on her again. “J’onn and I made sure L-Corp knew that was the deal-breaker. All it does is permanently remove their powers. It’s designed for neutralization and threat containment. They've designed a similar project to defeat Martians, should J’onn also ever lose control.”

Alex looks over to her sister, who glances up at her hopefully.

“I wouldn’t ever intentionally hurt Kara,” Alex continues to say, protectiveness leeching into her tone. “You know that, Mom. Neither would Lena or even Maggie. You are right; we love her. And this was the best compromise. I would never let anything happen to her, not while I still breathe. Project X would only ever be used as a last resort, that’s it.”

“Alex,” Kara says quietly, “it’s okay.”
“No,” Alex says, shaking her head bitterly. “It’s not okay. It’s necessary, but that doesn’t mean it’s okay or that I like it. You’re more than a weapon or a hero, Kara. You mean more than that to me. If I had to approve a project that brought harm to you…”

“Ssh,” Kara hushes as she moves past Eliza to reach for her on the bed. She draws Alex’s face into her hands, holding her close as Alex feels like she’s hovering on the edge of falling apart.

“I love you,” Kara tells her strongly. “And I understand, Alex. I did the same thing, remember?”

The sting of the bullet feels fresh again and Alex flinches at the shame in her sister's eyes. She looks up to see Lena look away, her own eyes filming with tears at the weight of her sister's words. Eliza looks between them distraughtly.

"Yeah," Alex says as she reaches out and brushes away the stray tear from her cheek. "I know, kid."

Despite the truth in her words, the guilt never leaves.

Alex knows, as she looks at her stricken sister, it never will.

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November 18th, 2018

Lena stares up at the television, her heart sinking as she looks into the destruction and chaos erupting in the city since the battle between Invictus, Supergirl, and the White Martians. Without a president or a stable government, the city was erupting into a purge-like state. Riots, crime— everything was increasing, and no one was there to stop it.

It’s like the whole world is on fire.

“It’s getting worse, isn’t it?”

Lena looks to where Eliza is watching in the doorway, a tired expression on her face as she trudges into the room to look at the television. Lena’s shoulders slump as she follows her gaze. She wrings her hands together nervously.

“We don’t know when or how Darkseid is going to come,” Lena says, rubbing at her face as she turns to face the older woman with a defeated expression. “With most of the Justice League off on another planet and both Kara and Alex recovering, they’re vulnerable. We all are. Even if Kara was recovered, she’s not enough to defeat the forces of this being. I’ve been sifting through the files J’onn had left me on the mongrel and it’s not pretty stuff, Dr. Danvers.”

“Then I suppose we better get our butts in shape.”

Lena and Eliza turn to see Kara and Maggie half-carrying a tired Alex between their arms. Lena had heard the soft strumming of music yesterday, but she’d just assumed it was a one-time thing. But Alex is determined with each shaky step she takes forward. Eliza rises, worry clearly laden on her face, but Alex smiles weakly and waves her off with confidence. Lena stands as well, biting at her lower lip as Alex limps into the living room where they’re both standing.

“I’m better now, and I'm getting better with each hour.” Alex says as the three of them settle on the couch before she looks up at the screen. She takes a breath before looking over to Lena. “You said you had information on Darkseid?”
Lena gulps, but eventually nods after initial hesitation. She takes a minute to look at Kara, who is staring back at her with an equally steadfast expression. Even Maggie looks ready to get back into action as she squeezes Alex’s hand. With the encouragement of the three women, Lena turns to Eliza, who looks worried, but nods with a rueful acceptance.

"It's not like I can stop them," Eliza sighs as she looks to her daughters, "unless you got some spare Black Kryptonite?"

"Mom," Alex says with a soft chuckle, "I think I took it all, sorry."

"A relief," Eliza mumbles as she settles on the sofa. "I'm quite enjoying my retirement, you know."

“Okay,” Lena says, redirecting the women in the room as she types at her tablet, pulling up the necessary files and broadcasting them to the television. All the women lean forward to peer at the various reports and findings.

“You missed the part about how he has almost every power under the sun,” Alex interjects, looking over at her curiously. Lena frowns as she types and struggles to find the admission. Curiously, she glances and arches her brow.

“You know that… how?”

Alex flushes then, rubbing the back of her head. “Um… Kelex told me. It’s in the database.”

Now Lena is really concerned. “Alex, are you feeling alright—”

“I’m fine,” Alex says, cutting her off and Lena watches as she avoids both Maggie and Eliza’s incredulous looks. “Kelex is—”

“The matrix of Krypton,” Kara finishes, astonished. “It holds history of every world that has ever existed, including Krypton. It is the most powerful information unit to ever exist.” Lena watches as Kara turns to Alex in a mixture of awe and confusion.

“You said you know Kelex? How? Is it with you?”

Alex winces again. “Well, in a sense… yes.”

“Like what?” Maggie asks, finally having found her voice. Lena watches as Alex continues to squirm even more. “Is it in the suit?”

“No,” Alex says, rubbing her forehead. “It’s—he—is in me.”

Kara frowns. “In… you?”

Alex sighs, leaning forward with a wince. “Look, when I woke up after using the UHEN to stabilize the Kryptonite, I woke up with this weird… chip, in my hand. I didn’t know what was happening with me, but all I could do was build this computer system using some of my spare parts from my garage. When it was done, all that was left was the chip. I couldn’t stop it… I put it in the stone.”

Kara takes all the information in with a puzzled look, and even Lena, who had been pouring over everything to do with Black Kryptonite after Alex explained how it had fused to her DNA, doesn’t even understand the logistics of the computer inside her.

Alex takes a deep breath, before she stands unsteadily.
“Let me just show you.”

Before anyone can move, Alex closes her eyes and the stone within her chest begins to glow, dark and bright, until it projects a light from within it. Everyone in the room stands, gasping as small black pixels form the shape of a human man’s head. The lights in the room all go out as the face illuminates in a dark green.


Kara’s eyes water as she steps forward, her hand held outwards.

Kelex’s gaze turns to her girlfriend and it scans her.

“Greetings, Kryptonian, Kara of House El from Argo City, Krypton; daughter of Zor-El and Alura In-Ze, cousin to Kal-El and niece of Jor-El and Lara Lor-Van; direct descendant of the ancient Rao. How may I assist you today?”

“Wait, what?” Alex asks, bewildered. “You’re related to Rao?”

Kara purses her lips, but before she can answer, Kelex replies.

“All Kryptonians are direct descendants of Rao,” Kelex says calmly. “As a result of your Kryptonian DNA, you are also a descendent of Rao. However, your lineage is altered by your human DNA. The folkloric myth you are most familiar with would be a Demi-God.”

“Huh,” Alex mutters, her brows raising. “That’s new.”

“If you’re a Demi-God, then Kara is an actual God?” Maggie asks.

Kara nods, looking confused. “I thought you all knew this?”

“Um, no, none of us were aware of this,” Lena says, chuckling as she runs a hand through her hair and shakes her head. Kara frowns.

“Oh,” Kara says, shrugging. “Well… I am.”

“This is true,” Kelex agrees, nodding. “However, the God you might be imagining, one of immortality and limitless power, this is not the equivalent on Krypton. There, Kara is like one of you. The red sun on Krypton dissuaded the development of supernatural powers.”

“But since coming here, I was able to harness the power of Earth’s yellow sun, and it augmented my abilities. I was able to do things that I wouldn’t be able to do on Krypton,” Kara explains, and then her eyes brighten with sudden discovery. “Wait, I think I get it!”

“Get what?” Eliza asks. “Because I’m still confused.”

“I know how Alex got the Kryptonian DNA,” Kara says as she looks to her sister. “When that woman, Barda, stabbed Alex in the leg, there was a golden light that went from my hand to her body, I think she was draining me of my DNA, unfurling it and fusing it to Alex’s in order to save her life. That’s how she was able to merge with the stone without perishing almost immediately. So, by every definition, we are sisters, Alex, both by choice and by blood.”

Lena watches, her heart swelling with affection as Alex steps over towards her sister—her real sister now—and wraps her in her arms.
“Oh Kara,” Alex mumbles, squeezing her shoulders gently. “I never needed Kryptonian blood to be your sister. We were sisters the day I first saw you. We are still sisters; we’ll always be sisters. No stone or power will ever change that.”

Kara reaches under Alex to wrap her arms around Alex’s lower back, her face blushing as she hides it in Alex’s neck, safe and warm.

But the moment doesn’t last forever.

Before either of them can truly appreciate the moment, however, a sharp crackles booms through the air. Kara pulls away, immediately putting herself between Alex and the rest of the women. Lena stands, walking over to her girlfriend as the air starts to charge.

Electricity sparks around the entrance of the hallway. All of them tense as blue starts to appear, swirling until it turns into a massive sphere. Lena gulps, her hair flying in the wind as she recognizes the sphere to be the portals of the para-demons.

She goes to warn Kara, but before she can, someone familiar steps out of the portal, followed by another, before the portal closes.

“Kal?” Kara asks, shocked as she looks to her cousin. “How?”

To his credit, Superman looks exhausted and solemn as he steps aside to reveal who is beside him. This time, it’s Alex who gasps.

“J’onn?”
J'onn and Clark reveal the disturbing, bleak future in store for Earth.

Sorry for the long wait! School and work are hectic but I'm hoping the long chapter makes up for it. We're starting to make our final descent into the last third of this story shortly! The action will start to pick up in the next few chapters.

“J'onn?”

Alex is struggling to her feet, tears in her eyes as she looks to the man she considers to be a father-figure, a man she’d killed only days ago—even if she knows that this was not actually J'onn. She stumbles forward as J'onn rushes towards her, sweeping her up in a hug. Alex barely can choke back a sob as she feels J'onn grip her tightly, his hands rubbing soothing patterns down her back as she cries.

"I thought you were dead," Alex chokes out, curling her arms around his side. "I was so worried…”

“Ssh,” J'onn sighs in relief as he holds her closer and Alex draws in all of his comfort. “You’re alright, little one. You're okay.”

After Alex draws back from the hug, she looks over to where Kara is latched onto her weary-looking cousin. Kal looks worse for wear, and when Alex takes in J'onn's appearance, she realizes he looks none the wiser. J'onn only waves her off with a half-smile and pulls back.

“What happened?” Alex asks, looking to Kal. “Where did you go?”

“Apokolips,” Clark replies, rubbing his brow as he extricates himself from Kara's grip and moves to sit at the dining table. He holds his head in his hands and rubs at his eyes tiredly. It’s only then that Alex notices the tears in his suit and the fatigue in his eyes. There are faint stains of blood on his cape. “The Justice League is there, trying to figure out how to stop Darkseid. He’s… he’s more powerful than we could’ve ever imagined. Bruce is trying to figure out his vulnerabilities, but even he is struggling.” Clark takes a breath, looking up.

Then, his eyes zero-in on the Black Kryptonite.

“Your chest,” he says, frowning, “is that…?”

“Black Kryptonite,” Alex finishes, nodding. “I’m Invictus.”

Clark's eyes narrow. "You killed him. You started this."
"Kal," Kara interrupts, "it's not like that. Alex was trying to help—"

"You killed him and now look what has happened! You threw this entire city into shambles!" Clark snarls, a slight suspicion underlying his tone as he stands and steps over to her. "Kara, Alex didn't help with anything. You created this mess. You killed innocent people, Alex."

"What?" Maggie asks, aghast. "Sanders murdered children—"

Clark snorts, shaking his head. "And she murdered him."

"She did what she had to," Lena says quietly, "Clark, this isn't the time to discuss this."

Clark snorts, shaking his head as he continues to glare at Alex. "Then when is?"

"Kal, please. We need to focus on Darkseid," Kara pleads, but Clark waves her off as he continues to stare at Alex menacingly.

"You rush in, bullheaded and guns-blazing. He had a trial, Alex. He had to face the law."

Maggie growls. "Yeah, a trial that was rigged."

"But it was a trial nonetheless," Clark interjects disgustedly as he hazards a glance to her girlfriend. Alex barely flinches when those red-rimmed eyes glare back at her. "That's what democracy is, Alex. Not everyone agrees. And I know that the families of those victims did not agree, but that does not give any of them the right to kill, either. Crime should not be answered with crime. It's injustice."

"Kal, stop. It's over," Kara says, placing her hand on his shoulder and gently pushing him backwards. "We can't change the past, okay?"

"But you can change the future," Clark says, looking over Kara's shoulder to Alex with a guarded expression. "The question is, have you considered what you want to do with your future, Alex? Is killing and violence and death really the answer you want to show?"

"No," Alex says softly, "it isn't."

The room falls silent as Alex looks up, tears welling in her eyes. "It's why, when this is over, I will turn myself in."

"Alex," Maggie gasps softly, "you don't—"

"But I do," Alex growls as she looks around the room. "I won't ignore what Clark said, because it is true. While I wasn't completely in control of my actions under the Black Kryptonite, I still killed people. Their blood, the blood of their families, is on my hands. If I don't atone for that, what kind of figure of justice could I ever hope to stand for, Maggie? Clark's right. Killing Donovan didn't solve anything."

"Oh Alex…," Eliza murmurs as she blinks back tears. "Please consider what you're saying, what you've done could warrant more than just a life sentence without parole. If they decide to try you on a federal level, the implications of what you're suggesting…"

"I know," Alex says softly, her eyes downcast. "But it's nothing less than what I deserve, Mom. I killed people."

"Enough," J'onn tiredly interrupts. "We can discuss morality later. Right now, we have more
pressing issues, specifically regarding Darkseid and his plans to invade Earth in the coming future.” The morbid topic settles both Kryptonians (and the semi-Kryptonian) into a silence.

J’onn rubs his brow before he sits next to where Clark had just been. He taps at the electronic watch on his wrist, pulling up a video recording. “This was recorded two nights ago when we attempted to lay siege to Darkseid’s fortress. The plan failed.”

Alex watches as Batman, Superman, and the Martian Manhunter himself are flying around, destroying para-demons that seem to be coming out of the waterworks. From the corner of the screen, she makes out the zooming of the Flash and the roar of Aquaman as they take out some of the ground soldiers. The camera angles to the left, showing Wonder Woman and a familiar tall, broad woman with a sword.

“Wait,” Kara says, frowning. “I know her. She came through the portal—she was the one who helped me save Alex with her sword.”

“That’s Big Barda,” J’onn answers solemnly as Alex watches his eyes mist at the sight of her on the screen. “She was formerly the leader of Darkseid’s elite force, The Furies. She trained them, actually. But then Barda turned on Darkseid once she realized the destruction he left around the galaxy. She saw the path he was taking, about how there would be an end to all civilization. She barely escaped Apokolips with her life. She knew Earth was his next target, but also Earth held a weapon far greater than Darkseid had ever previously encountered.”

“Weapon?” Kara asks, looking at Clark. “Does she mean us?”

“No,” Clark replies quietly. “It’s not us.”

“Barda said that Earth’s greatest weapon,” J’onn cuts in with a rough cough, “is something, or someone, called the Champion.”


“Me.”

At her response, they all turn to look at Alex. She can Kara looks a bit confused, obviously not used to not being the first line of defence when it comes to fighting super-villains. Maggie and her mother also look confused, and a bit in disbelief, but when she looks at Lena, all she sees is solemn understanding. Clark looks on with a mixture of disgust and disbelief, no doubt remembering the first encounter they had while she was still an unnamed vigilante. She remembers Clark trying to reach out to her, to guide her back and talk it all out.

He held hope then, but now, Alex looks and Clark and all she sees is doubt.

“But Barda didn’t create you,” Kara says, arching her brow. Alex snaps from the gaze she holds with the Man of Steel and looks back at her confused sister. “Those two dead Kryptonians with the stone created you. How could they have known what you’d become? They—”

“They worked for Darkseid,” Alex says pensively. “They must’ve known that I was the Champion and thought they could sway me over to their side instead of turning on him. Can a parallel universe exist with Darkseid, too? One in which he knows I defeat him?”

J’onn purses his lip and contemplates the suggestion. Alex watches him rub his jaw before he shrugs and nods. “It definitely isn’t implausible. So far, from what Barda’s said, his plans to invade Earth have changed. It’s possible he knows that you exist, at least.”
“Steppenwolf,” Alex says suddenly. “He sent Steppenwolf, remember? He was Darkseid’s uncle. That was his attempt to take me out.”

“An attempt which failed,” J’onn continues, his voice picking up on some confidence. He nods in Alex's direction, his voice growing steadier as he follows along. “But that does not mean that Darkseid himself will fail, Alex. He is more powerful than any of us in this room.”

“Even Kara and Clark?” Maggie asks in disbelief. “That's like two-and-a-half Kryptonians, J'onn, That has to stand for something.”

“Unfortunately, J'onn is right.” Clark speaks solemnly. “Darkseid possesses every power we have, and he possesses this power to an extreme intensity. We had one fight with him directly and he… he killed some of our closest friends.” Clark practically spits the words out in anger.

“Who?” Kara asks, her voice cracking. “Kal?”

“Hal Jordan was the first,” Clark says, hanging his head. “He took one of Darkseid’s fists to the chest. His ring was knocked off and he… he just crumpled. His body… it was so broken, Kara. There was nothing to bring back, nothing to hold. He… he looked at me and I couldn't save him.” Alex reaches for Kara’s hand as she practically deflates in the seat. Clark clears his throat, his eyes tearing up as he swallows.

“The second and third were Ollie and Dinah,” Clark chokes out, his hand clenching into a fist as he tries to hold back tears. “They stayed behind so we could escape the fortress and regroup. Darkseid’s furies ripped them limb from limb. But as awful as it sounds, they died together, and for that at least, I’m grateful. Unlike Hal, they found solace in each other's final breaths. Diana, Bruce, Barry, and Arthur all barely escaped with the skin of their teeth. Barda sacrificed herself so we could get away and recover with whomever was left.”

"How?" Lena gasps as she shakes her head in disbelief. "The Justice League—"

"The Justice League is destroyed," Clark growls as he glares up at her. "We can't stop this, Lena."

"I don't get it," Maggie says as she looks to Alex and then Kara. "How are we supposed to stop Darkseid, then?"

Alex clears her throat, trying to dislodge the emotion there as she imagines her friends, people that granted, she’d only met a few times, but she considered to be a family. She’d heard of Hal, Ollie, and Dinah from J’onn’s old Justice League stories, but she’d never thought they would perish. They always seemed impenetrable. Gods in the face of mere mortals, and yet they were so easily ripped apart by one person.

“I can’t believe it,” Kara says, shaking her head. “That… it doesn’t… it can’t make sense, Kal—"

“I know,” Clark says bitingly, “but we’re failing, Kara. We can’t stop Darkseid’s invasion to Earth, but Bruce and Barry are figuring out a way to figure out how to slow him down, if not destroy him. It's all we can do right now, delay the inevitable—if we don't find a way to stop him.”

Alex grunts, looking at the defeated man. “And how long will that take?”

“Time we don’t have,” J’onn says, eyeing Kara before he redirects his attention to Alex. “But our only lead onto stopping him lies in what he believes you to be, Alex. He fears something in you. I need to know the full extent of your powers, the range, the strength, the intensity—"
a White Kryptonite Kara,” Lena says, and Alex is surprised she’s talking at all, considering her previous silence. But there’s something in her tone that’s pensive.

“What are you thinking?” Alex asks, cocking her head. Lena stands, takes a breath and paces around the room before clicking on her tablet. She pulls up a side-by-side comparison of their scans.

“I think that J’onn might be right,” Lena says as they all gaze at the differences in the structure of her mutated DNA. “And I think I know why you are considered the Champion and not Kara or Clark. We're ignoring one key piece of evidence, if based on your DNA, which could hold the answer to why you are the one who could bring this to an end.” Alex frowns as Lena rummages through encrypted data files.

“Great show of support babe,” Kara mutters bitterly but without malice at the lack of attention, but Lena ignores the quip as Alex watches her type something else. When the tab comes up onto the screen and Alex’s eyes widen in confusion as she recognizes the label.

“Project X?” Alex asks. “What does that have to do with this?”

“Project X was always a containment and neutralization program,” Lena gulps nervously as she flips through scans. “But, the DEO specifically told me to make sure there was a termination program installed as a back-up. Project X Prime. Only I know about it, well until now.”

Alex growls at the realization. “You directly disobeyed my order, Luthor?”

J’onn sighs, rubbing his neck. “Technically, it was my order.”

Alex whirls on the man with anger in her eyes. “You told me—”

“It had to be done, Alex. I didn’t like it either.”

“But you still approved it?”

“Stop it,” Kara interjects, glaring at the both of them. “Lena, please, continue.”

Lena swallows, reddening at the bite to Kara’s tone. "Kara, I—"

"I don't care," Kara says coldly as she looks to the screen. "Keep going." Alex can hear the hurt in her voice and she wants to tell her sister she has no idea about this project, but judging by the data presented on the screen, she can tell Kara couldn't care less about that.

Alex follows her sister's gaze and stares at the formulas in utter shock and anger. "Lena, this is…"

“I know,” Lena says as she hangs her head and avoids the scathing gaze of both the Danvers siblings. “Project X Prime, as we called it, is a weapon crafted from each planet’s most deadly elements. It’s 43.4% pure Kryptonite, 22.6% Plutonium, and 34% Botulinum Toxin. Together, when mixed, it produces a substance so powerful, it can cause the degeneration of most species’ cells. It's the ultimate fail-safe.”

"How would the weapon even be employed?” Alex asks, looking up at the screen. “I mean, if it’s destructive to everything, then wouldn’t it kill the person who wields it as well?” Lena gulps and fiddles with her fingers, avoiding her gaze further as Alex feels herself numbing.

“Theoretically, yes.”
Alex’s brow raises. “But…?”

Lena takes a deep breath. “But the only species it doesn’t affect are humans.”

Alex can practically feel Kara glaring a hole into the wall from beside her. She places her hand on her sister’s knee. "Kara…"

“Did anyone think about how this would work?” Kara asks, snorting incredulously as Alex squeezes her knee as comfortingly as she can. “I mean, you’re talking about a weapon to destroy a being that flies, has super-speed, and can throw you into space? This is your answer?”

Lena has the decency to nervously blush. “We didn’t think that far ahead. *Project X Prime* only got put into motion a few years ago.”

“But this could work,” Maggie says next, trying to diffuse the tension in the room. “If we used this weapon on Darkseid, would it work?” Lena types at her calculations before looking at J’onn’s data. The computer runs some scenarios before generating a result.

They all gasp at what words are displayed on the screen.

* * *

“A ten percent chance of success? That’s it?”

Lena gulps and looks back to Maggie’s angered face. “It hasn’t been tested in the field, so obviously we don’t know if it will work at all. This is all based on a few years of loose theories.”

“Listen, Luthor, I’m not one for science, but even I know that we need a Hell of a lot more than loose theories,” Maggie says, leaning back into her seat. Lena bites her lip worryingly.

“Hey,” Alex interrupts, “it’s more than nothing. Right, J’onn?”

“Alex has a point,” J’onn says, and Lena looks over her shoulder to see him staring at her with a mixture of gratitude and relief.

“When is Darkseid scheduled to invade Earth?” Kara asks, turning to Clark and J’onn. The latter sighs, rubbing at his forehead.

“Current estimates are that by December he should be here. We will do our best to delay him as best we can, but hopefully we can buy you enough time to figure out if this weapon will work on him.”

“A month,” Maggie says, astonished. “That’s not enough.”

“It’s all we can do,” Clark says, gritting his teeth. “We’re lucky enough that Barda was able to get us a portal here to warn you.”

“We should evacuate the city,” Alex suggests grimly. “We’ll need to get someone to step in and rally the efforts. The people don’t have a leader right now and they need guidance.”

“I’ll pose as Supergirl and try to convince the remaining councilmen to evacuate the city. You and Kara should stay here and prepare while Clark goes back to Apokolips,” J’onn says, looking to the fellow Justice League member with a hurt expression. “I have set up a secure communication link with Bruce, so should there be a need for them to contact us, they should be able to.”

Lena watches as Kara gets up and walks over to Clark, who’s now standing up and walking back to
where the portal had first opened. She hears her murmur something in a low voice before she wraps her arms over his shoulders and burrows into him. Clark whispers something in her ear as he squeezes her, before he slowly lets go. She doesn't need super-hearing to know what was exchanged between Kryptonians.

"I'll be back," Clark announces as he squares his shoulders and faces the rest of the group. "Godspeed. Earth is in your hands, now."

"Be safe," Kara says, her voice cracking as her eyes well with tears. "Come back home, Kal."

"I will," Clark replies as he places his hand over his chest, over the House of El. "Stronger together, Kara."

Kara nods and mimics the gesture over her own chest. "El Marayah, Kal. May Rao guide you."

Clark nods and looks around the room before turning to face the hall with a determined set of his jaw.

Lena watches as Clark Kent—the Superman himself—taps at the foreign band on his wrist. A blue sphere opens up behind him and Clark nods at them all once more before he flies into the opening. Within seconds, the portal is closed and all that remains is falling dust.

* * *

November 20th, 2018

It's raining, pelting, when Kara steps outside.

Everyone else inside, bar for J'onn, who is currently helping with the evacuation process downtown. Maggie had been helping Eliza repair parts of their house while Lena was working on Project X Prime, making sure all of her calculations and formulas were correct. It left Kara aimless, overwhelmed in the face of all the new information within the last twenty-four hours. She didn't know who to talk to, and especially after the revelation of the fail-safe Lena had been tasked to create—tasked by none other than J'onn himself—Kara feels lost and alone.

But there is only ever one person who's never made her feel lost alone, the person she needs right now the most.

Alex.

Alex, who's holed up in the shed—which she'd converted into a workshop only a day ago—to work on her suit. It had been damaged in the fall she'd taken when she'd been shot, but given the materials in the shed and her natural intelligence, Kara knows she will be able to fix it up and even make it better in no time. But she worries. She knows that she's still healing from her wound, but Alex had been ignoring it.

Kara sees the sparks against the floor of the workshop as she ducks out of the rain and into the work shop. Gulping down the anxious thoughts rushing through her brain, she pads into the dank room. Alex is wearing a tank top, her shoulders slick with sweat and grease as she continues to work at the armour of her suit. She's using her heat vision to meld two of the lead pieces together. Kara swallows thickly.

“Dinner's ready.”

Alex just grunts, stopping her heat vision and groaning as she rubs at her temple. She squints,
stumbling backwards. Kara steps forward as Alex starts to sway slightly. “I’m fine,” Alex mutters, shoving her off lightly as she stumbles her way over to where her mask is. "I'm okay."

“Alex,” Kara says, her voice cracking. “Stop.”

When Alex ignores her, Kara reaches out and grabs at her wrist. "Stop, Alex. Please."

Alex’s back tenses and she pauses, still not looking at Kara.

“Let go of me, Kara.”

“No,” Kara says as she twists their bodies so Alex is facing her. “I know you’re scared, Alex. I am too. I'm petrified, in fact. But we will get through this. We always do. You and me, remember? Together, forever. Superteam. You and me, we take on the world and we win. Always.”

“Kara,” Alex sighs, looking down. “This is different.”

“You don’t think I know that?” Kara scoffs, letting go of Alex’s hand. “You don’t think I’m uncertain, too? I don’t even have full range of my powers without Lena’s suit. I’m half-baked, Alex. Useless. With Kal and the League on Apokolips, it’s just you, me and, J’onn against Darkseid. I know how this is probably going to end, but I don’t want my last moments, the last time I look at you, to be in anger or regret.”

“Regret?” Alex snarls, anger filling her gaze. “You shot me!”

"And I regret it!" Kara snaps back, her voice shrill as it cracks. "I don't have a single moment where I don't, Alex!"

Alex rips off her apron in a fury. Kara swallows, her eyes burning as she sees the swirling black beneath Alex’s tank top. There is still a bit of padding over the bandage near her side. The sight of it makes Kara nauseated, and she stumbles backwards in shock and self-hatred.

"I did this to you," Kara whimpers as her fingers hover over the padding. "I never meant to hurt you."  

"We took a vote,” Alex says again, but this time her anger is replaced with desolation. "You raised your hand, Kara. You gave the order.”

“I didn’t know it was you!” Kara exclaims, her eyes stinging with tears. “I swear, Alex, if I had known it was you, I wouldn’t have said it.”

“It didn’t matter if it was me or not,” Alex growls. “You didn’t hesitate to shoot down the one person which had protected National City in your absence. You never questioned J’onn’s behaviour or his words, and you know him as well as I do. You know that he would never, ever, talk to either of us the way he did. He’d never hit me or touch me the way he did. He threw me against the wall and pinned me there and you watched. You didn’t question it! You believed him over me, even when I tried to warn you he was different. You didn’t listen, Kara.”

“I’m listening now,” Kara says back, clutching her arms around her waist as she can’t stop the tears from sliding down her cheeks. “Alex, I swear, I’m listening now. I was stupid before. I just… I had been gone so long, and I was so afraid that people were going to realize that I was weak after what happened at the bank. I… I was selfish. I didn’t like the fact that you had stepped up. I didn't know where I fit in!”

“You wanted to kill Invictus over jealousy?” Alex asks, snorting. “Come on, Kara, we both know
you're not that shallow. You wouldn't do that to someone over pure jealousy or envy. Come on. Tell me, why did you actually do it? Why did you actually call for the shot?"

"Because I was scared!" Kara blurts out. "I was scared, okay? It was stronger than me, better than me, faster than me. It was everything I wasn’t and if I couldn’t stop it, then who could? Who am I if I’m not Supergirl, Alex? Because I’m not a human. I’m not Kara Danvers, your sister. I’m an alien. The last daughter of Krypton. I’m the sole survivor of my entire species. I don't belong on this planet and I never did. I wasn't raised her like Clark. I'm an outsider, but when I wore that suit, I felt like I finally had a purpose! I felt like I had a reason to be on this planet. Without Supergirl, without the purpose that suit gives me, I’m nothing. That's the truth, Alex. Without any of it, I'm worth nothing.”

Before Kara can collapse with her sobs, Alex’s arms jut out and pull her into a tight hug. Kara cries against her older sister, feeling the guilt and the pain suddenly all bubble up to the surface. Everything she'd been feeling suddenly overflows and she's left a wreck in her sister's loving embrace. Alex coos in her ear as Kara shakes her head, feeling undeserving of the comfort after everything she’s done and said.

“Never—ever—for a second think that you’re nothing,” Alex tells her, gripping her tighter. “You are a friend, a girlfriend, a sister. You’re my sister, Kara. You are my family. And I need you. More than anyone on this planet, I need you. You're my other half, my soulmate. I love you.”

“I… I can’t protect them,” Kara admits softly, gasping the words into Alex’s skin. “I’m not… I’m not good enough anymore, Alex.”

“You are,” Alex says confidently. “You have to believe yourself. Trust me. With the suit—"

“The last time I put on Lena’s suit I almost killed you,” Kara says, tearing herself away from Alex’s embrace. “Every time I think about it, I just see your blood, I see your face, and I’m there again. I can’t risk that again, especially with Darkseid now coming into the picture.”

“You won’t turn on me,” Alex says confidently. “You were conflicted before, about Invictus, about your role as Supergirl, but right now, right here, you know what you have to do. You cannot allow yourself to doubt, Kara. You are strong, stronger than any of us. Always have been.”

Kara just looks down guiltily. “I don’t feel strong, Alex.”

There’s a pause before Alex’s finger tips her chin up and Kara looks up to see her sister smiling at her proudly.

“Then let me help you feel strong again, kid.”

Before Kara can ask what Alex means, she feels two hands grip her shoulders before they’re both catapulted up into the air. Kara grips onto her sister for dear life, letting out a surprised yelp. She glances up to see Alex’s face covered by the same mask that she’d flipped on before taking off after being shot. Alex looks down at her, her eyes still visible through the glass slits in the mask. Kara gulps as Alex nods.

“Let go, Kara. Feel the sky.”

Kara is hesitant at first, but then Alex squeezes her.

“I’ll catch you if you fall. But you have to let go, Kara.”

Kara swallows thickly, tears burning in her eyes as she watches them climb higher and higher,
almost towards the last level of the atmosphere. Kara can see Alex’s exposed skin start to crack and bleed as they keep climbing, and the sight makes her skin crawl.

She can’t let Alex get hurt again.

She won’t hurt Alex again.

So, Kara takes a deep breath, closes her eyes, and lets go.

She free falls through the clouds, feeling the wind around her back as she continues to plummet towards the Earth. She can hear Alex in her mind. *Follow your senses*, she hears that soothing voice whisper, *listen to your instincts, Kara. You are strong, kid, stronger than all of us.*

Kara keeps her eyes closed as she hears Alex's voice in her head one more time.

*Now fly, Supergirl.*

Kara opens her eyes and barrel rolls before she rockets forward. She cuts through the rain and the clouds, feeling the wind brush through her hair as she continues to fly. She feels her doubts ease as she confidently juts her arms out in front of her and soars through clouds.

When she looks to the side, she sees Alex right beside her.

“That’s my girl,” Alex says, grinning through her mask. Her voice isn't modulated like before, leaving Kara more assured than ever. “Now follow me, kid. And try to keep up, yeah? Let’s go.” Kara laughs as Alex shoots forward, creating a trail of clouds and steam behind her.

Kara follows her sister through storms and clouds, rain and thunder. They’re going fast—not enough to break the sound barrier, but enough for them to lower themselves over the ocean. Kara looks down to see the waves bursting up under the pressure of their flight. Beneath them, sea creatures swim along, struggling to keep up. The sounds and the sights of the waves, coupled with the wind blowing through her hair, leaves Kara in a state of warm peace. She blinks slowly before looking up to see a familiar cliffside approaching.

Then it hits her: Kara knows this place.

The Cliffs of Moher.

She watches as Alex gracefully lands on one of the cliff’s edges without barely a sound. Kara slows down her speed and joins her, panting as she comes to stand at her sister’s side. Alex closes her eyes and a small smile paints her face as she breathes in the salty air of the sea.

“Did I ever tell you I’ve always wanted to come here?” Alex asks, keeping her eyes shut as the wind sweeps over them. “It’s one of the most tranquil places on Earth. It’s where you don’t just see life, but you hear it and feel it, too. It’s in air, the land, the water, the grass…”

Kara looks out to the water, watching as it crashes against the cliffside below in an almost bellowing rage. The sound is so loud, so terrifying, that it makes Kara shudder. She draws closer to Alex instinctively, her heart beating out of her chest at the noise. She’s reminded of her nights spent curled up under blankets, with the comfort of Alex’s strong arms wrapped around her middle. Alex grunts softly.

"Alex?" Kara asks. "Why did you bring me here?"

Alex's lips curl up into a nostalgic smile, still staring at the water. “Do you remember what I told
you about the water?”

Kara gulps, looking up to see Alex glance down at her now.

“It’s the Earth’s heartbeat,” Kara replies softly, reciting the words she remembers Alex telling her that day on the beach. She toes the grass. “You told me the water is why this planet is alive. That there’s no need to be afraid of something that’s sole purpose is to bring life.”

Alex smiles, nodding as she looks out to the sea. The rain continues to pelt down on both of them, matting their hair to their face as they both look out into the turbulent, violent waters. It doesn’t feel cold, and oddly enough, the sensation is not stifling, but in fact, freeing.

“Something happened when I was about seven-years-old,” Alex says softly, drawing Kara’s attention again. “I was surfing with my dad when this huge wave knocked me over. I got cut loose from my board and the current carried me out into the ocean. I was scared and lost for hours. I don’t remember how long I tread water for while I waited for help to arrive. The entire time, I kept thinking I was going to die.”

Kara watches Alex’s throat bob as her sister tenses her shoulders and doesn’t break her gaze. “I was terrified, Kara. I wanted to stop moving, but I remember that my Dad always taught me to keep swimming, to keep moving, to let the water carry me, to let it give me energy and life. So, I did. I tread water for almost four hours before Dad found me and brought me back home.” Alex chuckles sadly.

“That experience should have scarred me for life from going back in, but it didn’t.”

Kara frowns, looking back to her in confusion. “Why didn’t it?”

Alex smiles, glancing back at Kara. “Because the water saved me, Kara. This big, bad scary thing which had so much power and could have killed me, didn’t. It kept me afloat. The water kept me alive, even though I was scared of it.” Kara still feels confused at the point of it.

“I don't think I get it,” Kara says, looking back down to the crashing waves. "Why are you telling me this, Alex?"

Her sister sighs, a smile playing at her lips. "You are like the water, Kara."

Now Kara’s really confused.

“No, no, just hear me out,” Alex says, and she knows her sister’s seen the frown on her face. “You have all of this power and sometimes you don’t know what to do with it. To you, it's overwhelming. Sometimes, you’re scared of it. Sometimes, you revel in it. There’s so much of it.”

Alex reaches down and squeezes her hand gently. Kara looks into those familiar, warm eyes and she steadies herself in the strength in Alex’s gaze. “Despite how it all feels, you have to do what I did. You have to let it carry you. You have to let go of that fear and swim, Kara.”

Kara takes a deep breath as she follows Alex’s gaze back over to the rippling tides. She gulps, closing her eyes as she lets Alex’s words settle within her. She smells the salty air, feels the chill nipping at her skin, the warmth of Alex’s palm in her own, the strength between them. She feels all of her feelings, from the dread to the power, and she lets them sink beneath her skin and run through her veins.

“Let it carry you,” Alex whispers, clear and crisp despite the howling winds and pelting rain. She hones in on it like a lifeline.
"Let it carry you," Alex repeats, "and let go, Kara."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!
Chapter Summary

The Danvers sisters prepare for Darkseid's arrival with some training.

November 21st, 2018

“Is it too late to say that I object to this, or nah?”

Lena sighs as she looks to where Maggie is standing with an unimpressed look on her face as she watches Alex strip down to her tank-top and shorts on the rocky beach. On the other end, Kara is in similar attire. Lena shivers at the sight of the hard outlines of Kara's muscles.

"Not the time, Luthor."

Lena snaps from her daze as she looks to where Maggie is smirking in her direction. Flushing, Lena looks away and grumbles, "not like you're fairing any better with Alex."

Maggie shrugs from her peripheral, her head turning in the direction of the older Danvers' sibling. Lena follows her gaze to see Alex lightly hopping from foot to foot. Even Lena, though thoroughly committed to Kara, can't help but appreciate the toned and strong muscles of her girlfriend's sister. Alex had always been strong, but as Lena looks between them now, she knows Alex's body has changed to become even stronger than that of Kara. Not that either Lena or Maggie were complaining about the recent changes, the latter especially.

"Still," Maggie says, her voice taking on a more serious tone. "Alex nearly died. Is this the best course of action?"

The reminder of the fight against the fake-J'onn makes Lena shiver. Her hands tremble as she reaches for the tablet at her side. Maggie looks over at her, a mixture of worry and guilt in her deep brown eyes. Lena sighs and rubs the back of her head as she powers on the device.

“It needs to be done,” Lena says from where she’s standing beside her, tablet in hand with both of their vitals lit up. “I understand hesitance, Maggie. With everything that happened, especially after what we did, but they're our only shot at saving Earth. I also don’t think this is the best method of testing their individual limits without the suits on, but the two of them insisted on doing it, so there was no stopping it.”

Chuckling, Maggie rolls her eyes at that. “Danvers Sisters, am I right?”

“I heard that,” Alex mutters from where she’s taping up her wrists. “We Danvers sisters are tough as nails. We can handle this, Mags.”

* * *

Mags.

Oh, how Maggie has missed being called that.
She tries not to squirm when it rolls off Alex’s tongue almost instinctively, but she knows she’s not kidding anyone. She’s still in limbo when it comes to Alex. They’d taken each other back, but without a clear label, she has no clue where they’re really at. Besides, she's not sure if she even deserves to get back with Alex after she’d practically almost killed her. The memory of pulling the trigger keeps her awake at night, and no matter how many times Alex tells her she forgives her or that she understands, it doesn't ease the remorse she feels towards the love of her life.

Maggie looks over to Alex, her eyes flitting down to the light bandage on her abdomen as her heart sinks.

"Maggie," Alex says softly, drawing her attention as she walks over. "It's okay. I'm feeling better."

"You only just started walking," Maggie sniffs as she blinks back tears. "And for a doctor, you're the worst patient."

Alex chuckles, the sound sweet and melodic in Maggie's ear. "I'm not that bad."

The response she gets is a smirk and a wink, and Maggie swoons as she feels her heart speed up at the sight of Alex so relaxed. She knows she needs to have a proper talk with Alex, to clarify some things as well as to get closure from recent events, but she can't bring herself to do it. Besides, that's not a priority right now, Maggie thinks. This is.

"Dumbass jock," Maggie grumbles, though she can't help blushing at the sight of Alex’s chiseled shoulders and rippling muscles as she stretches before dropping into a fighting stance and facing her sister. Even Lena looks affected at the sight of Kara looking very similarly attractive.

Lena sighs. “Alright, just, take it easy. Both of you.”

“Ready whenever you are,” Alex says, bouncing on her toes as Kara steps closer onto the beach. “Don’t hold back, Kara. Give it everything you’ve got. Remember what I taught you years ago.” Maggie watches Kara’s gaze narrow determinedly, but the younger Danvers still looks hesitant.

Lena takes one final check before she nods to both of them. “Go.”

Kara flies forward, fist extended as she roars with a burst of adrenalin. Alex quickly juts her hand up and clamps on Kara’s wrist before spinning and releasing. When she lets go, Kara goes flying into the rocks, leaving rubble and dust in her wake. Alex shakes her head and sighs audibly.

“You have to plan your moves accordingly,” Alex chastises as Kara stumbles to her feet. “Don’t rush in headfirst without a plan.”

Kara growls and flies forward again, but Alex juts out her fist, slamming it into Kara’s chest and sending her tumbling back again.

“Kara,” Alex scolds, “you’re not thinking, you need to—”

Before Alex can finish her statement, Kara grabs at the rock behind her and throws it towards Alex, who barely ducks in time before it makes contact. The small distraction is enough, however, as Kara bounds forward, tackling Alex and sending them both to the ground with a grunt.

“Alex!” Maggie gasps worriedly as she watches the older Danvers sibling wheeze in shock. “No!”
Kara places one hand on Alex’s chest while the other is raised in the air, prepared to deal the final blow. Before she can do anything, however, Maggie watches as Alex swings her legs around, hooking them around Kara’s thigh before twisting hard. The move somehow reverses their positions, with Kara flat on her back. Kara attempts to wriggle free, but Alex's grip is like iron as she pins her sister to the cold pebbles.

“You can’t hesitate like that,” Alex growls, roughly shoving herself off Kara and back to the edge of the beach. “Again, Kara.”

Kara growls in frustration, flying forward again. Alex snarls and sweeps her leg out. Maggie winces as Kara trips and falls forward. On her way down, Alex grabs at Kara’s arm and throws her over her shoulder, landing Kara on her back with a huff. Alex plants her foot at Kara’s neck.

Maggie can see Kara struggling, but Alex doesn’t hold back.

“Again,” Alex says, lifting her foot and marching back to the other end of the beach. “You can’t hesitate.”

“Forgive me if I don’t want to hurt you,” Kara spits out, rolling to her side as Alex takes a few steps backwards. "You're still healing."

Alex lifts her fists again, ignoring the jab from her sister. Despite her strength, Maggie can see that even Alex is struggling with her breathing. There's a slight sheen of sweat on her brow and she looks paler than usual, but Maggie holds back the urge to make a comment at Alex's stare.

“Darkseid won’t say that,” Alex says, though Maggie can see the slight wince in her facial expression as Kara steps up and brushes herself off quickly. “Kara, when you’re in the heat of it, you can’t be thinking about not hurting your opponent. In the end, only one person can walk away.”

“I don’t kill people,” Kara growls back, dusting herself off as she gets back to her feet. “I won’t do that, Alex, no matter who or what it is. After… after what happened last time… I just can’t.” Kara looks away as her voice cracks on the word, tears welling up in her eyes with remorse.

Maggie feels her heart break inside of her chest.

She remembers her finger on the trigger. She remembers Kara’s voice in her ear telling her to take the shot. She remembers Lena desperately trying to reach her and to tell her not to shoot, that Invictus wasn’t the enemy, that Invictus was Alex, but she hear it and she couldn’t stop herself. She remembers the collateral boom of the shot, the ringing in her ear as she watched that body crumple and collapse weightlessly.

Alex stiffens and keeps her jaw set as she growls, “again, Kara.”

When Kara flinches at the intensity of Alex's demands, Maggie finally steps in.

“Maybe we should take a break,” she suggests, swallowing down the anxiety building in her. “I think some space would do good.”

“I agree,” Lena says from beside her, no doubt equally concerned judging by the look on her face. "Your vitals are spiking slightly, Alex. I don’t want you to overdo it. I know your side is healing decently well, but any last-minute problems will cost us long-term. Take a break. Please.”

Maggie watches Alex contemplate it, before she finally relaxes and gives them a nod before looking to Kara.
“Fine,” Alex says bluntly, “but next time we try it with the suits.”

“What? No,” Kara blurts out, her hands waving out in front of her. “Alex, I told you—”

“You have to learn to control your power, Kara, just like I taught you when you first landed on this planet,” Alex says, walking up to her and placing her hand on Kara’s shoulder. “You aren't that scared, lost alien anymore. You're Supergirl. You're Earth's hope. Remember what I said, kid. You have the power to do anything you want with this world, but you can’t do it without having faith in yourself, Kara. You have to have faith.”

“I could hurt you,” Maggie hears Kara whisper pleadingly. “Alex, please… the first time it happened was hard enough. I can’t…”

"El marayah,” Alex tells her, and Kara stiffens.

"Alex."

“You remember what it means,” Alex whispers, pecking Kara’s forehead as she wraps her sister in her arms. “Stand strong. Stand together.”

Kara takes a deep breath and nods.

"Stronger together."

Maggie watches Alex release her sibling, but not without another kiss to her forehead. Kara nuzzles into her before Alex moves away and heads over to her workshop to retrieve her suit. Maggie can’t stand still any longer as she bounds after her lover, ignoring Lena’s not-so-convincing protests from behind her and Kara's arched brow. Besides, she thinks, Little Danvers could use a moment alone with her girlfriend, anyways.

But right now, Maggie needs to talk to Alex.

“Alex, wait!” Maggie calls out, running behind the older woman as she enters her shop. Alex’s head cocks over her shoulder as Maggie follows her into the workshop. She pauses, her shoulders tense. Maggie swallows nervously at the sight of Invictus’ suit laid out neatly on the table, repaired.

“She needs to be ready,” Alex mutters as she grabs at the metal chain beside the table and pulls. Beads of sweat roll off her shoulders slowly and Maggie finds herself thinking some not-so-innocent thoughts. Alex releases the chain once the suit is upright and reaches for the soldering gun and the thick apron and gloves.

“She needs you,” Maggie says, trying to get rid of the knives stabbing at her throat as she looks to the suit with guilt. She pushes away the thought of a blossoming blood stain. “Alex, it’s not just her out there anymore. Before, she couldn’t care less because she knew she’d never get hurt. She knew that you have powers, you’ll take even more risks than you did before you had them. And she’s helpless, Alex, because she knows she can’t stop you anymore.”
Alex sighs, hanging her head and letting go of the soldering gun and the gloves with a sigh. Maggie looks over her shoulder to see the full suit standing upright, opened up to reveal the lycra interior and the dark metal of the exterior. She looks to the small glass curve meant to house the stone. Maggie takes a deep breath, winding her hands from Alex’s back to her front, weaving them up her abdomen to her chest, over the stone.

It pulses beneath her grip, reminding her of the life it houses.

“Kara’s not alone anymore,” Maggie whispers, pressing a soft kiss into the back of Alex’s neck. “You need to remind her of that.”

"How?" Alex asks, her voice small. "Maggie, I can't…"

"Alex," Maggie hums, "you're not just her sister."

Alex turns her head in confusion. "Mags?"

Maggie only smiles and leans up, her eyes flickering to Alex’s lips as she leans in and whispers, "you're her hero, Danvers."

* * *

"Stupid, dumb, idiot…"

Kara kicks at a stone, flinging it across the water as she grumbles at herself under her breath. She watches the flattened stone skip nearly a thousand times before it submerges. She keeps thinking about what Alex said, but she can’t stop seeing the events of what happened before it all fell apart. She wasn’t ready for the suit or the power of White Kryptonite then, so who’s to say that she’s ready for it now? If she turned again…

If she turned again, is she sure she could ever come back?

She's already lost one world, and she's barely gotten over the memories of that loss. Even to this day, she can't keep her mother's screams and her father's desperate pleas from her ears. She can't stop herself from seeing the explosion, from feeling the vibrations of a lost culture surround her pod and knock her off course for years. She smells the gas of the sedative meant to put her into cryo-stasis, to make her forget that loss.

Kara lost Krypton, but she couldn't do anything to save it.

She won't lose Earth, not if she can do anything about it.

One lost home was more than enough.

“It’s ready.”

The sound of her girlfriend's voice startles Kara from her morbid thoughts. Sighing, Kara turns to see Lena approaching with a large crate wheeled behind her. She types a few things on her tablet before a hissing sound comes from the metal. She watches as the crate swings open to reveal that pure white suit embedded inside the foam casing. But something is different about it, and Kara sees it at the top. She frowns at the sight.

“Is that… a tiara?”

Lena chuckles, shaking her head as she steps beside Kara. “No,” she says as Kara reaches out to
touch the band curiously. “It’s a brainwave transmitter. It will buffer any negative or unwanted
effects and help to slow down burnout and flares. It also increases the temperature of your heat
vision by two hundred percent. It's meant to aid in the successful moderation and transfer of your
powers across all areas. It helps control it.”

“Still,” Kara mumbles, cocking her head at the headpiece with disdain. “A tiara?”

Lena rolls her eyes. “It’s not a tiara, Kara. It’s a headpiece. Diana has one too, remember?” Kara
grumbles, nudging Lena’s side.

“That’s because Diana is the Princess of Themyscira,” she says, sighing as she looks back to the
not-tiara. “Hence, the tiara.”

Lena’s brow arches. “I can make it sparkly if that's what you want, you know.”

“No,” Kara says quickly, blushing. “No, it’s fine. You said it will help?”

“Yeah,” Lena says, setting her tablet on the top of the crate. “I went back and re-run some
calculations and I found no differences or areas of improvement for the suit aside from the
headpiece—”

“Tiara.”

“Headpiece,” Lena corrects firmly. “But what I’m saying is—”

“It’s up to me to control it,” Kara finishes, eyeing the suit warily. “I… I don’t know, Lena. The last
time I was in this thing…”

“You were misguided,” Lena says, reaching down to hold her hand gently. “It was a different time
when you were under the influence of the White Kryptonite. You were scared, Kara. Alex was
right and so were you, Kara. That fight, with the Martian, it was because you were vulnerable, but
also because you didn’t know what to believe. You just wanted to do what was right.” Kara shakes
her head bitterly, looking down to the dirt.

“I acted on impulse,” Kara mutters, “I was emotional. I can't be emotional again. I can't risk it all
again.”

“Emotions make you who you are,” Lena says, stepping in front of her and reaching up to cup at
her cheeks. “There’s a reason why the world considers you their hero, Kara. You, Kara Danvers,
use your emotions for good. You don’t kill people, you save them. You are more than a cape.”

Kara closes her eyes and lets herself get lost in the kiss that Lena gives her. It’s slow and sweet and
passionate, but most of all, it's reassuring. It calms the doubts seeded in her mind. She doesn’t
move as Lena’s arms wind around her neck. She doesn’t deepen the kiss or try to hold back.

Kara just gives in.

And lets go.

* * *

Alex walks out, donned in her improved suit as she flexes her gauntlets. The armour is a bit thicker
than before, made out of some of the material Lena brought from L-Corp. She steps back out onto
the beach, hearing Maggie padding after her. She can feel the stone whirring inside of her, finally
reunited to the suit. Alex has her visor, new and improved, tucked under her arm. Instead of the one
she had before, she changed it.

Instead of the glossy outer coating, she now sports a helmet with two small enough slits for the eyes. The eyes are coated in a resin able to withstand the heat of the hottest star in the galaxy, effectively making them blacked out. The sides are angled for optimum aerodynamics, and she has two winged tips near the ear. The outer edge of the mask is coated in the leftover pure silver. The entire armour set is far more sleek.

It’s a better design, and less bulky.

Alex slips the helmet on, grinning as Kelex powers up and her eyes are immediately met with a holographic screen of her surroundings.

"Welcome back, Alex."

Alex sighs and smiles beneath the helmet. "I missed you too, buddy."

When Kelex is done running a quick systems diagnostics, the screen clears and Alex finally sees Kara standing before her.

She looks to her sister in awe, looking almost like royalty as she hovers on the beach in her White Kryptonite suit. The silver and blue glows from the outlines around the S crest in the middle like it's pulsing. But then, Alex looks up to Kara’s face, and notes the silver addition to her head.

Her voice is still modulated as she asks, “is that a—"

“Don’t say it,” Kara growls, “it’s a headpiece.”

"Sure it is."

Kara frowns teasingly. "Don't make me fight you, Alex."

“Really?” Alex chuckles with a shrug. "Why don't you show me what you got, Supergirl?"

* * *

“I’m turning on the White Kryptonite,” Lena says, clicking at the tablet as Maggie returns once again to her side. “You’ve got the floor, Kara. I’m monitoring you in case anything goes wrong.”

Kara looks back at her from where she’s hovering. Lena can hear the hum of the power coursing through her. She looks to the cape floating out from behind Kara’s back, swirling in the faint wind. Lena licks her lips and prays as she watches Kara flex her fingers.

“I’m ready,” Kara says, her voice slightly deeper now. “Alex?”

Lena looks over to Alex—Invictus, if she’s to be correct—and watches as the older Danvers’ head bobs in agreement, her fists raising. The sight makes her stomach swerve slightly with guilt.

The last time she’d seen that suit, Alex had been dying.

But there’s no time to think about that now, because Kara is flying forward, jutting her arms out as she catches Alex in the chest. Lena watches as Alex digs her left foot backwards, ripping through the sand and rocks before she twists and throws Kara away easily.

“You’re predictable,” Alex growls, her modulated voice making Lena feel incredibly uncomfortable. “You always attack first. You mustn’t lead with the same move every time. You
will get caught and soon the element of surprise will be lost. You can't move on only brute strength, Kara.”

Kara flies back from where she’d been tossed on the other end of the beach, raising her fists as Alex hovers above the ground.

This time, however, Kara doesn’t attack first.

She waits.

Lena watches as the two sisters circle each other in the air, their fists raised and ready. She knows what Alex is doing, because of the two of them, Alex is the patient one. Lena looks down to her tablet, relieved to see that Kara’s vitals and data are normal.

This time, however, Alex moves first.

Lena watches as Alex roars and shoots forward, going supersonic and ramming into Kara’s chest. Lena gasps as she watches Kara’s body get slammed into the rocky side of the mountain. Lena feels the ground vibrate as Alex keeps pushing them through the stone.

In moments, Lena loses track of them.

“Where did they go?” Maggie asks worriedly. “Lena—”

But then, the ground quakes as a cackling boom erupts.

Lena and Maggie both startle and look up to see Kara holding Alex’s chest plate and soaring towards the sky. The two of them grapple and fight with each other in the air, trading equally formidable blows as they continue to ascend higher into the sky. Maggie jogs forward, her hands reaching into her hair as she watches them.

Lena looks back down to see Kara’s vitals spiking.

“What’s going on?”

She turns at the panicked voice of Eliza as the Danvers’ mother scrambles down the rock, her a mortified expression on her face as she looks to the destruction already caused on the beach and the tail-end of her property.

“Is it here?” Eliza asks, her voice. “Is Darkseid—”

“No,” Lena is quick to assure her. “It’s just… sibling bonding.”

“Sibling bonding?” Eliza asks, bewildered. “What—”

Before she can finish, another thunderous boom interrupts them. All three women look up to see a speck of black hurdle towards the ground before it makes a crater-sized impact on the beach. The force splits some of the Earth into two jagged pieces.

Eliza gasps in horror. “Alex—”

“No,” Lena growls, reaching out to tug her backwards as the older woman goes to bound towards her eldest daughter. “They need to do this. I promise, neither of them will get hurt. I’ve got it under my control, Eliza. Please… just stay here and watch quietly or go inside and ignore it.”

Eliza looks ready to give her a piece of her mind and another raucous cackle bursts through the air.
They both watch as Alex quickly leaps up from her spot, meeting Kara halfway in the middle of her downwards plunge. Her hands grip her shoulders and turn, using Kara’s momentum to force them back down into the crater.

Kara lands chest first into the dirt, deepening the hole as Alex pins her there with a firm knee to her back. Lena gasps as she looks down to see Kara’s vitals spiking rapidly now. Before she can act, she hears the searing ring of Kara’s heat vision. She looks up and ducks in time before a blaze of white roars over her.

The searing heat blares into Alex’s shoulder, flinging her off her back and into the water. Kara growls, a near-inhumane sound as she rises. Lena can see that her eyes are fully white and blazing with the power of her heat vision. Kara looks to where Alex’s body is hovering over the ocean, waiting for her next move patiently.

Kara snarls and flies after her, grabbing at Alex and throwing them deep into the water. Tidal waves ripple outwards violently as Eliza cries out from beside them. Even Maggie looks distressed now as she turns to Lena desperately. Lena swallows and looks down.

“Turn it off,” Maggie demands, her voice shaking. “It’s enough, Lena.”

Lena presses the button, but an error message pops up.

“No,” Lena gasps as she tries again, “no, no, no…”

“What?” Maggie asks, grabbing at the tablet. “Turn it off, for God's sake!”

Lena just shows her the blaring red error message and feels her heart shatter.

“I can’t.”

* * *

Kara feels outside of herself.

She’s in her body, but she’s not controlling it. It's like she's in some weird daze. In the place of her mind, all she feels is an infinite rage, a limitless power. It’s addictive, and Kara feels like a moth drawn to a flame. She wants nothing more to be consumed by the white hot inferno.

And right now, that flame is the power of the White Kryptonite.

Crashing deeper, down into the dark abyss of the ocean, she tightens her grip on her sister.

Kara can feel the power of the White Kryptonite taking over completely as she moves faster, her hands tightly gripped on Alex’s shoulders as she drags them deeper into the darkness. She’s breathing through the water, the air going in and out of her like she is invincible.

And oh, how she is just that.

Alex’s hands grip at her wrists, drawing her attention.

But Kara only feels the urge to grip tighter, to inflict pain…

To kill.

Remember, she hears a voice whisper in her head, distracting her from her sadistic desire, you are like the water, Kara.
“No,” Kara growls, her voice muffled by the water as she drives them down deeper into the ocean. “You don’t control me anymore, Alex.”

No, Alex’s says softly, but you do.

Kara grits her teeth, feeling the rage burn in her mind. Her eyes are on fire as she struggles to keep her heat vision at bay. She looks down to the mask, to the body of the woman who is still plummeting, still sinking deeper into the endless pit of water. Alex remains unaffected and calm.

You are stronger than the pull, Alex says again, dig deep, Kara.

“No!” Kara screams, clutching harder as the rage burns brighter. “I won’t!”

You are the water, Alex says again, let it guide you.

Kara shuts her eyes, trying to break away from Alex’s voice in her head, but when she does, she doesn’t get the silence she seeks.

Instead, all she sees are her memories.

She sees herself curled under the blankets, sheltered in Alex’s arms as thunder and lightning wage wars outside her room. She sees herself in the parking lot of their highschool, holding Alex’s bloodied body against her chest while her sister smirks at her, telling her that she’s proud of her for sticking up for herself. She sees Alex in that plane window, shocked and afraid as she saved her. She sees herself at the park in front of the D.E.O., watching Alex come out to her nervously. She sees Alex giggling after Maggie’s first night over, blushing and smiling uncontrollably.

She sees every memory, the good and the bad, lets it fuel her.

That’s it, she hears Alex’s soothing voice, take control, Kara.

Kara blinks her eyes open, the heat blazing at them dulling as she looks to see the ocean floor rapidly approaching. Letting out a grunt, she clears the last of the rage from her mind as she looks to Alex’s plummeting body. She looks into Alex’s helmet determinedly, before she grabs at her sister and changes direction. She powers upwards, leaving a stream of bubbles in her wake as she takes them up, hurdling towards the surface.

As soon as she breaks through, the sun shines down on her.

And then, as she looks to see Lena, Eliza, and Maggie staring up at her in a mixture of awe and shock, Kara feels her hope restore.

She feels a hand slap at her back proudly, and Kara glances over to see Alex, now with her visor tipped back to reveal her pale face, soaked with sweat but grinning with pride, nonetheless. Kara can’t help but smile back, wide and true at Alex’s love for her. Her sister beams and nods.

“That’s my girl,” Alex says proudly, “Supergirl is back, baby.”

* * *

Alex sits at the dinner table, holding her stomach gently as Eliza settles a plate of steaming food in front of her. As it turns out, even being a meta-human still meant getting the bends from rapid decompression. Luckily most of the symptoms had passed, but she still feels queasy as she looks at the food in front of her. Letting out a quiet burp, followed by a sheepish wince, she plays with the fork and knife. Alex mumbles her gratitude, but Eliza serves up a familiar—and well-deserved if
she must begrudgingly admit—side-eye. Alex looks down nods her thanks.

Beside her, Kara looks equally bashful.

Eliza takes her seat at the head of the table with an effortful grunt, glaring at her daughters, before the proverbial shoe drops.

“Not only did you ruin my house,” Eliza growls, “but you two destroyed an entire half of the beach, not to mention my garden.”

Alex and Kara wilt slightly under Eliza’s stern voice.

“Mom, we—”

“Save it, Alex.”

“Right.”

“Eliza, if I could just—”

“Kara, I swear to God—”

“Sorry.”

“I just…,” Eliza sighs tiredly, shaking her head. “What were you two thinking? You could have killed each other! We already have so much to deal with and now you decided it was good to roughhouse? You two are sisters, and I don’t care what happened between you two, I taught you that family comes first. I understand that maybe I was never the best example of what a good family is, but good God I thought you knew better!”

“In their defense, ma’am—”

Alex and Kara both wince at Lena’s slip up, and even Maggie has the decency to look away when Lena utters the words. Alex clears her throat when her mother doesn’t look necessarily pleased at the word either. Lena blinks, blushing as she continues with a croak, “Dr. Danvers, Eliza, it wasn’t meant to get so out of control. We just needed to test it before Darkseid brings his army here. If something went wrong, I could—”

“Could have fixed it?” Eliza asks, arching her brow. Her voice is firm, but not unkind as she says, “you told me your tablet was broken, that you couldn’t fix it when Kara threw Alex under the water like a ragdoll.”

Alex looks to her dish as she feels Kara stiffen beside her.

“What?” Kara exclaims, looking to her girlfriend. “You told me—”

“I know,” Lena says apologetically, “but I don’t know what happened. The device just bugged out and I couldn’t do anything.”

“I could have killed Alex,” Kara says frantically, rising to her feet as fear fills her gaze. “I can’t use the suit anymore if—”

“Stop,” Alex says gruffly, reaching out to tug Kara back down with a firm yank to her elbow. “There wasn’t a malfunction with the device. I just jammed the connection before we fought.”

Now, everyone whirls on her in shock. Alex flinches at the four pairs of daggers glaring at her angrily.
Great.

"You what?!" Kara and Lena exclaim at the same time.

"Danvers, what the fuck?" Maggie guffaws only a second after, her eyes widening in shock.

"Alexandra," Eliza gasps, as she lets her cutlery drop with a clatter. "What were you thinking?!"

Alex sets her fork down and looks to her sister seriously, ignoring the others' pointed gazes. "You needed to experience the full depth of your powers without something to fall back on. The only reason why you regained control is because it was you doing it, not Lena. You proved your strength and resilience today, Kara, and you did it all by yourself."

Kara's mouth opens and shuts like a fish out of water. “But you—”

“Don’t,” Alex says, raising her hand to stop her from talking. “Don’t overshadow your accomplishments with doubt, Kara.” Her sister still looks ready to fight, but then she hears Maggie talk.

“I think Alex has a point,” Maggie says, “but don’t let it get to your head, Danvers. It was a stupid plan, but… it worked. Your sister’s right, Kara. You overcame your insecurities today. You took control of yourself and your power. Be proud. You did it.”

“I also agree,” Lena says, and Alex can tell she’s furiously avoiding her mother’s pointed gaze. “With both points, really. Alex, if you ever mess with my stuff again, I’ll spray paint your suit hot pink and make sure the colour doesn’t come off. Don’t test me, I have my ways.”

Alex rolls her eyes, but Lena clears her throat and continues, fixing her gaze onto her sister now. “But you did do it, Kara. You have to keep that confidence in your head, that you wield the power of the White Kryptonite, and that it doesn’t control you.”

Kara looks between all of them before nervously glancing at Eliza.

Alex glares at her mother, daring her to say something bad.

“Stop, Alex.” Her mother mutters, sighing tiredly. “I’m still mad, but after all of you talked about it, I guess I understand. I’m not happy with what you did, Alex, but Kara… if this is what it took to make you believe in yourself again, then I can’t deny it.”

Alex’s lips turn up in a smile, but her mother keeps glaring.

“Don’t you even dare Alexandra,” Eliza says. “You’re grounded.”

Alex scoffs, cocking her head as Kara giggles. “What? You can’t—”

“I can and I will,” Eliza mutters, “as soon as this apocalypse is over, you’re coming back to fix my house and my garden. God, and thinking raising one super-powered child was a hassle this is just incredible. Who would have thought my two intelligent children would be so idiotic…”

As she trails off, Alex smiles. Even though she is scolding her, Alex can hear the underlying pride and fierce protectiveness in her voice. It draws something warm and settling in Alex’s gut, and she can’t stop herself from sighing as her mother tries and fails to hide her small smirk.

Eliza eventually stops her rambling to sigh. She stands and walks over to both Alex and Kara and opens her arms.
“Get over here,” her mother mumbles, tears welling in her eyes. “Come on, girls.”

Alex and Kara rise, unprepared for when Eliza sweeps them in for a crushing hug. Alex is resistant at first, but then she eventually concedes and pulls herself closer to her mother’s side. Her other arm winds around Kara’s back, pulling them both closer into her.

“My babies,” Eliza mumbles into their hair. “I love you so much.”

“We love you too,” Kara whispers back, hugging her tighter. “Mom.”

At the use of the name, Eliza bursts into tears. Alex closes her eyes and smiles against her mother’s shoulder. She’d known that since childhood, Kara had never called Eliza Mom. Only in the darkest of moments would the moniker slip, but that would quickly be corrected with an ‘Eliza’ or ‘Dr. Danvers’ before it could be accepted. And while Eliza offered multiple times to adopt Kara, her sister had always refused out of guilt towards her own mother.

But now, Alex thinks happily, Kara has found her strength.

“No more fighting,” Eliza begs them quietly, “at least between you two, okay? I know you both have to go out and save the world, but please, for the sake of my old heart, no more between you two.”

“I promise,” Alex says, chuckling. “Unless Kara’s being a brat—”

Kara groans. “I will turn you into Kryptonian toothpaste.”

“That’s different from human toothpaste?”

“Why don’t you let me show you?”

“Alright,” Eliza mutters, moving off them. “I’m going to need a bottle of wine to get through the rest of this. Just… please… no more destruction of property or flowers? It’s all I ask.”

Alex and Kara both laugh again as Eliza moves back to her seat with a tired smile. She takes up chatter with Lena and Maggie, allowing Alex to keep her arm looped over Kara’s shoulder lazily.

To think of how much she’s lost to get to this point, where she’s surrounded by her friends and her family, Alex can only feel a poignant sense of relief and gratitude. She may not have long left on this planet, and even shorter still if the next few weeks don’t go as planned, but she allows herself to exist in this moment.

“So I guess I finally get my own running buddy?”

Alex smiles as she looks over to where Kara is grinning at her cheekily. She reaches up and tousles her sister’s hair lovingly.

“As long as I’m not your side-kick, that works for me, sis.”
Legends

Chapter Summary

Darkseid comes one step closer to National City…

Chapter Notes

WOOO THIS IS A DOOZY.

"If Barda's intel is any good, Darkseid's fortress and is only a few clicks from here."

Clark looks up from where Bruce is slumped over a map. The scratches and bruises on his face and body are still healing, but if he's in pain, he surely isn't showing it. Clark's respect for the man only grows tenfold as Bruce looks up and nods.

"Kate and I will infiltrate his labs, see if there is anything we can gain."

"And I suppose we're the muscle… again?" Arthur grunts, brandishing his pitchfork. "Not that I'm complaining."

"You're a giant who talks to fish," Barry cuts in, smirking. "I wouldn't put you down for espionage, no."

"I can be stealthy when needed."

"Sure, and I can lift a mountain."

"Boys," Diana chides with a tsk. "Enough. There'll be time for demonstrations when we return home."

Both Barry and Arthur blush under the stern tone of the Amazonian. Clark smiles at them, earning a confused head tilt from Diana. He clears his throat and looks to the other heroes, his chest aching as they all turn to him in earnest.

"You smiling for a reason, Supes?" Arthur asks, arching his brow. "End of the world got your giggles on?"

"No," Clark sighs, but his smile doesn't fade. "I'm just relieved to not be alone."

The mood of the people in the dark cave shifts and Arthur coughs. "Yeah, well, me too."

"I could imagine no greater heroes to stand beside in this war," Diana says as she taps her sword on her shield. "The Gods are smiling upon us, Zeus and Poseidon be our witnesses. We shall send Darkseid to Hades to meet his gruesome fate."

Barry nods and points to Diana with his thumb as he grins up at Clark. "What she said, boss."
"Well then," Clark says as he looks to Bruce. "Have you got a plan for us, Bruce?"

Bruce only rolls his eyes, but Clark can see fondness in his gaze as he grumbles, "when do you ever listen to my plans?"

"Now's a good time as any to start, right?"

"We'll see, Clark. We'll see."

Before Clark can respond, a high-pitched screech pierces the air. The remainder of the League whips around to see a hoard of demons flying in the direction of the cave, their eyes glowing and their teeth glinting in the light of the sun.

"We'll table this discussion," Arthur says as he reaches for his pitchfork."Right now, we fight."

* * *

November 22nd, 2018

"Please, I urge you to follow my warning. The military is rolling in to provide relief and evacuation support."

J'onn, dressed as Supergirl, hovers amongst the mass of civilians in front of the courthouse as he gestures towards the people. He looks to the sea of fearful and confused faces, no doubt concerned with his state of address. Sighing, J'onn does his best to channel Kara's supportive and empathetic mannerisms as he straightens his shoulders and nods.

"Please, do not panic—"

"How can we not panic?!" One civilian shouts, his voice cracking. "We're going to die!"

"No—"

"Where is the Justice League?"

"Just wait now—"

"I have a family! Children! Where are we supposed to go?!"

Before J'onn can open his mouth to respond, a familiar voice interrupts him.

"At ease, citizens of National City!"

A gasp falls over the crowd of people as J'onn turns to watch as two figures float down from the skies.

"Is that…?"

"It's Invictus! It's alive!"

"Is that another Supergirl?"

"What's going on?!"

"Please," Kara says as she floats down to rest next to J'onn, donned in her white suit. Beside her, Alex touches down dressed as Invictus in her new armour. J'onn looks over to Kara, who places her
hand on his shoulder and nods gently.

"It's okay, J'onn. You can show them your true self."

For a moment, he hesitates before he looks to the crowd of confused civilians. Sighing, he allows himself to shift into his natural form. The crowd erupts in confusion and disgust, no doubt betrayed by his impersonation of their beloved hero.

"That's the alien who destroyed our city!"

"It almost killed Invictus!"

"Who are you? What do you want with us?"

"Fucking aliens, coming after our city and our people!"

"Yeah, fuck them!"

"Enough," Alex's rumbling voice interjects, calming the crowd once again. "I know you are all scared and confused, but now is not the time to panic. We only a few weeks before Darkseid's army come to Earth. The League is on his planet, delaying his arrival so we can evacuate and prepare for his attack. We need you to follow our orders and cooperate."

"Where will we go?" Someone shouts. "And with what resources? How will we survive? We don't have powers!"

"But you do," Kara says next, a small smile curling at her lips. "I may not be of Earth, but humans are as powerful as any God. Use your strength and your compassion to guide you. Stand together, as the brothers and sisters of this planet. You must become family. Cast aside your meaningless divides and work together to move away from this city. You can do it."

"Martian Manhunter will help you," Alex says as she hovers on J'onn's opposite side and clasps his free shoulder. "We will move as much heavy cargo and resources as we can to the shelters set up in the closest city, San Diego. Transport will arrive with the military. Without the League, we will be understaffed, so we need to move you all away as soon as we can."

The crowd is silent again, taking in Alex's words with cautious glances before they murmur in agreement.

"Good," J'onn says as he stands straighter. "Now, let's move."

* * *

"You're sure about this?"

Clark looks up from where he's wrapping a piece of cloth around the gash in Diana's arm. The Amazonian looks over at him with a mixture of sadness and remorse. Swallowing thickly, Clark offers her a tight-lipped smile as he stands up.

"Earth is my home," he says as he looks to the horizon, where Darkseid's army is rapidly approaching. "I must protect it."

"We must protect it."

Clark turns to see Bruce limping forward with Arthur and Barry at his side. Kate lingers behind him, warily watching as Bruce takes hesitant steps. Clark bounds closer, reaching out to steady his
friend. The two men exchange a knowing glance. Blinking back tears, Clark hangs his head and looks to the remainder of the Justice League with a gentle nod.

"Today, we fight not just for Earth, but for the family we have lost along the way," Clark says as he looks back at Bruce, Barry, and Arthur. "We fight for Hal, for Dinah and Oliver, for Barda. For their sacrifices have given us another chance. We all have our differences, but together we are Earth's last hope. I am honoured to stand amongst you in the League."

A tear runs down Clark's face as he takes a breath and whispers, "and as my family, I love you all."

"I hate feelings," Arthur grumbles, but Clark can see his eyes misting. "But I guess I kind of love you all, too."

"Ditto," Barry squeaks out in a croak. "If I'm gonna die, I'm glad to die with you guys."

"We're not dying," Kate says, arching her brow under her broken mask. "We're too young to die. At least, I am."

"I suppose this would make a good retirement mission," Bruce says with a low grumble, earning a few chuckles from the remaining members. Clark sniffls as Bruce looks up at him, his eyes shiny with respect and gratitude. He extends his hand and Clark looks to it with disbelief. Before Bruce can say something, Clark winds his arms around his friend's shoulders, drawing him into a hug. Bruce seems hesitant at first, but then he eventually reaches up to hug him back.

"We'll come home, Clark." Bruce says to him quietly. "One way or another."

* * *

Maggie swipes a cloth over her gun, cleaning the different metal bits as she tries to keep her hands from shaking.

"You're worried."

Looking up, Maggie watches as Eliza enters the room and places a cup of tea on the desk. Her girlfriend's mother, a woman she herself considers to be a mother, only gives her a knowing smile before sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Alex does the same," Eliza says as she nods to the gun, "the cleaning soothes her."

Maggie sighs. "And here I thought she was just really good at cleaning guns."

"My daughter is good at many things, but cleaning was never one of them."

"Really?" Maggie asks as she sets her gun down. "Our—her—apartment was always so well-organized."

"That's mostly Kara's doing," Eliza says with a slight smile. "They think I don't know how close they both are, but I do. Those two may not be related by blood, or I suppose they are now, but they've always shared two kindred spirits."

"I'm happy Alex has her," Maggie says back, her own smile quivering. "I never had any siblings before."

"You do now," Eliza says, her voice quiet. "And a mother, too. I know yours is still alive, but I'm here for you."
"Alex and I… I don't know what we are," Maggie says helplessly. "I don't expect you to take care of me, too."

"Oh honey," Eliza says as she moves across the room to wrap her arms around Maggie's shoulders. "Even if you and Alex don't work out, you will always be a daughter to me. You mean so much to Alex and Kara, both. I'm here for you."

Maggie wrenches out of her grip, looking to the ground guiltily. "I shot her, Dr. Danvers."

"I know."

Maggie's head whips up, her eyes glassy with tears. "And you're okay with it?"

"No," Eliza sighs, but offers Maggie a small nod. "But I'm too old to hold grudges. If Alex has taught me anything, it's that if anger and revenge can turn an ocean into a barren desert, then true love can also bloom flowers there."

Maggie frowns. "What does that mean?"

Eliza sighs and leans forward, pecking Maggie's head.

"That sometimes forgiveness and peace are one and the same, my dear. I forgive you and I'm at peace."

"But Alex—"

"My daughter is alive," Eliza says, her voice cracking. "That's all that's ever mattered to me. I haven't been the best mother either, Maggie. I've casted her aside, made her feel unworthy and small for her entire life. I may not have pulled a trigger, but my damage on Alex has been a long and slow process, one I'm trying to undo, stitch-by-stitch. I may still be learning about Alex, about how brave and strong my daughter is, but one thing is for sure, Maggie; it's her love for you."

Maggie looks down, blushing slightly. "I love her too, so much."

"Good," Eliza says as she rubs Maggie's back, "but tell her that, Maggie."

"I don't know how."

"You'll find a way," Eliza says, smiling again. "And I hope you do it soon. The pining has gone on long enough."

* * *

"Fuck, I could really go for some of those infinite powers right now!"

Clark looks over at Kate as she kicks a para-demon in its' thigh with her boot. Bruce leaps up from behind her, flinging a few Batarangs in the direction of a few on-coming demons, the blades exploding on impact. Up ahead, he can make out the wide doors leading to Darkseid's armoury and space-ship hanger. Anger fills his bones as, in the distance, he makes out the sight of the warmonger himself standing atop his fortress, his hands clasped behind his back as he watches the destruction at his gates with a smirk. Clark's eyes burn red with heat as he growls and shoots two beams in his direction.

Darkseid moves to the right slightly, barely missing the singing heat. The man chuckles, low and hard.
"Oh now, boy. Surely you can do better?"

"Face me," Clark snarls as he hovers into the air. "It's me you want, isn't it?"

Darkseid remains standing, his brow arched. "The Last Son of Krypton. How arrogant you are to demand things of me."

Before Clark can reply, the eerie sound of laser firing zaps him from his state of rage. He barely has the chance to react before two omega beams collide with his chest, throwing him backwards and into the dust of the battlegrounds.

"Clark!" Diana cries out as she throws a demon over her shoulder. "I—"

But before Diana can finish her statement, Darkseid flies forward and punches her in the side, sending the Amazonian clattering a few feet away. Clark stumbles to his feet, gasping as Diana's body rolls and crumples like a rag doll.

"Stop," Clark says as he looks to Darkseid, "it's me you want!"

"You keep saying that," Darkseid sneers as he stalks forward, his eyes glowing red. "Who do you think you are?"

"I'm Clark Kent," Clark announces, watching as Bruce and Kate leap forward and past the slew of soldiers into Darkseid's armoury. He knows that, if the information Barda had given him from before is correct, this may be their only shot.

All he has to do is keep Darkseid distracted.

"Clark Kent," Darkseid spits, chuckling. "You think yourself of Earth, boy? You are not a human!"

"Krypton was my birthplace," Clark says as he hovers above the ground. "But Earth is my home."

"Kal-El," Darkseid growls, "you bring shame to your father's clan, to your people. You have forsaken them."

"Clark," Bruce's anxious voice comes over his earpiece, "we're in the lab. We've figured it out. It's Apokolips"

Darkseid's eyes remain red, but his lips twitch into a slow grin. "I see your little bat has found my secret."

"Bruce," Clark says as he hovers closer to Darkseid. "Get out of there."

Darkseid leaps forward, wringing his large hand around Clark's throat before throwing him to the ground face-first. Clark snarls as gravel and dirt slice against his cheek, threatening the durability of his regenerative Kryptonian genetics. Eventually Darkseid halts them both, pinning a knee to Clark's back as he leans down, his lips next to Clark's ear.

"Now now," Darkseid tsks, "share with the class, Bruce."

"Bruce!" Clark growls, spitting out pebbles and dirt. "Get out—"

"I said," Darkseid snaps as he slams Clark's head into the dirt. "Share with the class what you've learned, Bat."

"Clark," Bruce gasps, breathless. "Apokolips... it's not just a planet..."
"Yes," Darkseid croons, smirking wider, "go on, little Bat."

"It's... it's..."

"Spit it out!" Darkseid roars, lifting Clark up and tossing him into a mountainside. "Tell him, Bruce Wayne!"

Clark stumbles to his knees, breathing hard as Darkseid hovers above the ground, his arms wound around his back. There's some static and commotion over the line, before the anxious clacking sound of keyboard buttons depressing.

And then, Bruce's voice comes back, shocked and depleted of hope.

"Apokolips isn't just a planet," Bruce says in awe, "it's a power source. Specifically, his power source."

Clark frowns as he watches Darkseid chuckle manically. "What? Bruce, you're sure?"

"I told you, Kryptonian," Darkseid hisses as he hovers backwards, towards his fortress. "Your efforts are futile."

"No," Clark gasps as he tries to get to his feet, but stumbles back down. "No, I won't let you take Earth."

"You have no control," Darkseid says as he reaches for something in his belt before he pulls it out. It takes half a second for Clark to register the device as a portal-opener, the same one he and J'onn had used to get back to Earth.

"And now," Darkseid sighs dramatically, "I will have to teach that same lesson to your cousin, back on Earth."

"No!" Clark yells as Darkseid's finger hovers over the depressor. "Stop—"

But, just as his finger lowers, a figure collides with him, knocking the device from his hands. Clarke looks over to see Diana atop Darkseid, her sword raised above her head as she lets out a ferocious roar and plunges the sword into his shoulder. Taking the distraction to his advantage, Clark leaps forward and grabs at the device before snapping it in two.

"You fools!" Darkseid growls as he reaches up and tosses Diana away. "You think you can stop me?"

Clark bounds forward, fist extended, but Darkseid catches him and tosses him to collide with Diana. The two of them tumble backwards in a heap of dust and bones. Rolling off his friend, Clark crawls back to his knees, watching as Darkseid glares at him, his eyes glowing red in preparation to send omega beams in their direction. His lip curls.

"You are only delaying the inevitable," Darkseid snarls, "the Earth and its' Champion will be mine, Kal-El."

Before Clark can reply, Darkseid sends a stream of omega beams in their direction, hurling them back further. Clark hears a distinct snap before Diana screams out in pain. He rolls beside her body until they both collide against a cliffside, sending rock and debris atop them. A jagged piece clips his head and the world goes dark and fuzzy for a few minutes.

"Clark? Clark? Are you there, Clark?"
Clark blinks past the haze to the sound of Bruce's voice in his ear. "Bruce?"

"He's taken his ship," Bruce says, and Clark blearily looks up through the dust at the massive space-ship accelerating into the stratosphere. "He's headed for Earth. I've got a communicator and I'll get in touch with J'onn."

"We have to go after him," Clark rasps, shoving off a rock and stumbling to his feet. "I have to go after him."

Just as he prepares to take flight, Bruce's voice interrupts again, this time more confident and assured.

"No," Bruce says, "we can't stop him there, but we can stop him from here."

Clark rubs his head, trying to clear the haze from his vision. "How, Bruce?"

"By getting rid of his only power," Bruce says, "by destroying Apokolips."

* * *

Lena slaves over her computer, trying and retrying different combinations of formulas and equations to try and figure out a way to slow the rapid progression of Black Kryptonite in Alex’s system. The news is playing on the TV in the distance, outlying the evacuation efforts from early this morning from Kara, J’onn, and Alex. Lena looks up to see the sea of people walking convey-style towards military transport vehicles. Her stomach drops as it dawns on her that National City may be unrecognizable after the incoming battle. It dawns on her, then, just how important it is she figures Alex's problem out.

And yet, even with the help of Kelex, she finds herself coming short.

No matter what she plugs in, the answer is always the same.

Death.

Taking a breath, Lena moves away from her computer after what feels like the fiftieth combination and looks outside. Rubbing her head, Lena feels a gentle rumble beneath her as she watches Kara and Alex touch down on the beach, both of them looking far less stressed. A small smile turns up at her lips as she looks to where the two of them embrace in a hug, Kara’s head sliding into the crook of Alex’s neck. The older Danvers’ helmet retracts, and Lena winces at her smile.

It doesn’t reach her eyes.

But why should it?

Theoretically, if Lena can’t crack the code, Alex won’t have many moments like this left.

Lena looks to Kara next, a mournful tug aching at her heartstrings as she looks at the pure, unadulterated joy on her girlfriend’s face. She’d still not told her lover about her sister’s limited mortality, and while Lena knows that she can’t withhold the information forever, a small, selfish part of her wants to keep it all locked inside, to protect Kara’s light.

Because really, what gave Kara Danvers more hope than Alex?

From outside, Alex playfully shoves her sister off, resulting in Kara shoving back with equal tease. The two soon end-up scuffling in a light spar, wrestling and grappling at each other like children.
Lena watches as Kara twists Alex's arm and flips her upside down, the older woman landing with a grunt while Kara bounds upwards and pumps her fists gleefully.

"I did it! I flipped you!"

"Oh yeah?" Alex grins as she leaps upwards and grabs Kara's shoulder. "You're sure about that?"

"Hey!" She hears Kara shout when Alex tosses her into brambles. “Alex, that’s not fair! I wasn't ready!"

"You snooze you lose, Kara. Remember what I said: the enemy doesn't wait."

"Ugh," Kara grumbles as she picks leaves out of her hair. "You messed up the headpiece."

"You mean tiara?"

"It's a headpiece!"

"It's a tiara, Kara. Lena's only trying to make you feel better," Alex chuckles and shrugs cockily, but the shit-eating smirk on her face disappears when Kara tosses a wad of grass and mud in the older woman's direction in her face. Lena's heart beats at the smile on Kara's face as she flies up and rubs more mud in her sister's face, chuckling as Alex whines.

“Real mature,” Alex mutters, wiping the dirt. “I’m sure that’s the best way to stop a maniacal overlord. Just blind him with dirt.” Kara shrugs and wipes the remaining mud on Alex's suit, ignoring the disapproving grunt her sister makes.

“Whatever works,” her girlfriend chimes back, dusting herself off as she gets to her feet. “Now, let’s go again. I’ve got it this time.” Alex fondly smiles at her and chuckles, raising her fists before curling her fingers in a 'come hither' motion.

Lena looks back down to her calculations and sighs again.

Before she can set to work again, a crackling boom tears through the air. Lena stands up abruptly, rushing outside to where Alex and Kara are equally poised and ready to face whatever threat was heading their direction. Heavy footsteps echo from the steps and within moments, Lena sees Maggie in her peripheral with Eliza on her heels. They both look terrified as they approach closer. Maggie has her hand on her pistol’s handle, a determined glare fitting at her lips.

“What was that?” Eliza chimes from behind her worriedly, her voice trembling. “I heard a boom! Is it here? It's too soon!” Lena goes to reply when something slams into the ground, startling her from the response she was about to give.

“J’onn?” Kara asks, swatting at the air to clear the dust to reveal the kneeling Martian in the centre of Eliza’s backyard. “What are you doing here? I thought you were still working on evacuations? Are there still people needing our help?”

“No time,” J’onn whispers sadly, looking to all of them before he pulls out his communicator. “Bruce and Clark just contacted me. They managed to destroy the portals, but Darkseid still took his ship and is on his way to Earth now.”

“Fuck,” Maggie growls as she crosses her arms. “How long?”

J’onn shakes his head. “Not long. A few days, maybe.”
“We’re not ready,” Alex says as she steps forward. “We only began our work today. The city hasn’t been fully evacuated yet, and we need backup. Did you hear from the other members of the Justice League that didn’t go off planet?”

“They’ve been M.I.A.,” J’onn says, looking up at the agent sadly. Lena feels her heart slow inside her chest as J’onn rubs his head. “Even Young Justice is unavailable. We’re unsure where they are. I believe it is just us, Alex. We’re alone.”

“Hopefully they’re safe,” Eliza frets, wringing her hands together worriedly, and Lena can understand her ignoring the last half of J’onn’s proclamation. “In the meantime, what are we supposed to do, J’onn? How will we be able to fight him?”

J’onn pauses for a moment before he sighs. “I might have an idea. But I am not sure if it will work. For now, we must prepare for the worst. I do not know if there is a way to stop him, but—”

J’onn’s rambling is interrupted by a buzzing noise. Lena watches as J’onn frowns at the communicator in his hands. He presses the small red button on top, illuminating the space between them with a familiar, pixilated face.

“Kal!” Kara exclaims, brushing past Alex to the communicator. “Are you alright? What’s going on over there?”

“Kara,” Clark’s voice is garbled as he speaks, the signal fading in and out. “B-Bruce… figured out… Darkseid… planet…”

“Clark,” Alex cuts in as she takes the communicator from J’onn’s hand and holds it closer to her face, “the connection isn’t strong. What are you trying to say about Darkseid and the planet? I need you to repeat it.” There’s some more static, followed by the sounds of gunfire and carnage in the background. They watch as Clark speeds away, hovering mid-air.

“Darkseid,” Clark says again, “his energy… he draws… it…”

Before he can finish, the communicator goes blank and the sound cuts out. Kara stumbles forward, wide-eyed and afraid as she takes the object from J’onn’s palm. She tries to press the red button again to get her cousin back on screen, but nothing works.

“The connection’s lost,” Lena says, placing her hand on her girlfriend’s shoulder sympathetically. “I think what he was trying to say was that Darkseid draws his power… from the planet?”

“Apololips?” Alex asks, frowning. “Kelex, anything?”

There’s a humming noise before the stone on Alex’s chest lights up and projects an image of a burning world, filled with nuclear craters and fire pluming at every conceivable curve and edge. Alex reaches out into the hologram and spreads her fingers, zooming in.

“Apololips is the lifeblood of Darkseid,” Alex says as she twirls the image around. “If the Justice League can destroy Apolonips, then maybe we can destroy Darkseid when he comes here. It must be what Clark was trying to tell us before the signal got lost.”

“But how will we know if they succeed?” Kara asks, following her sister’s gaze. “We’ve lost the connection with them and now…”

“No,” Lena says, shaking her head. “No, we don’t need the connection to know if they’ve done it. I think that if I can link the Kryptonian matrix and Apokolips’ records to my tablets, we might be able to track Darkseid’s power generation. It’s a long shot, but I think I could be able to do it. I
would need to get back to the lab. Besides, I’ve finished the solution to Project X Prime. I’ve already processed the synthetization request and I should be able to get the product accessible.”

“"The weapon is ready?” Alex asks warily, jutting her chin up. Lena nods, reaching into her back pocket for her hand-held tablet. “Since the UHEN was still at the lab, I remote ordered the synthesis at our basement lab that we barely managed to repair. No one else has access, so I have no doubt that we’d be able to get to it first. But there’s a small problem.”

“Of course there is,” Maggie grumbles, “what is it, Luthor?”

Lena draws a sharp breath, looking over to Kara worriedly. “If we get the weapon now, there’s a chance that it could kill you, Kara. We need to keep you away from the substance until Darkseid arrives. The minute his ship lands on Earth, I have to get it from the lab. Until then, it’s locked in the vault where only my biometrics can open the door.”

“But it’s ready,” Alex says, “right, Lena?”

“Yes,” Lena says as she presses a button on her touchscreen, linking her projection to Alex’s chest ray to display a long, double-sided spear, with both ends forming a golden, crystal tip. She gulps as she hears Kara’s small gasp ring out.

“Gold Kryptonite,” Lena says, swallowing thickly. “It’s locked in the vault, but it’s ready, whenever we need to use it.”

“Okay, so if it’s poisonous to Kryptonians, how exactly are we going to use it?” Maggie asks, looking to Lena. There’s a small silence which falls over the small group before Alex clears her throat, moving forward and crossing her arms with a sad expression. Lena makes eye-contact with the older Danvers, guilt gnawing in her chest as Alex gives her a slow nod.

“No,” Kara growls protectively, “Alex, you’re half-Kryptonian—”

“I will need the use of my powers to attack Darkseid,” Alex interrupts, staring Kara down. Lena hates the amount of pain and regret lacing those black-speckled brown eyes. Alex lays her hand on Kara's shoulder. “Kelex ran the calculations. Of the three of us—you, me, and J’onn—only I would be able to sustain flight or strength long enough to deliver it.”

“And then what?” Kara guffaws. “If you get caught in the radius—”

“Kara,” Alex sighs quietly. “There’s… something we should talk about.”

"Alex," Lena warns, "you want to do this now?"

Alex sighs, still looking at her sister as she whispers, "I have to."

Kara shakes her head, tears welling in her eyes as her lip wobbles. "No," she growls, "no, I don't to hear it, Alex. I can't har it." She shoves her hand up, not willing to listen to whatever Alex has to say as she storms away, towards the beach.

Lena watches as Alex goes to follow her, but is halted when Maggie places a hand to her chest. “Don’t,” the detective whispers softly, “I know what you need to tell her, but now isn’t the time, Al. I know you want to do it now, but wait.”

Alex just looks after her sister mournfully. "For how long?"

Lena swallows and stands up, her eyes trained on the retreating form of her girlfriend.
"Not long enough, it seems."

* * *

"Idiotic, sacrificial, dumbass, selfless…"

Kara kicks at a rock on the beach, sending it shooting across the sea at speeds faster than a bullet. She glares after it, wishing that her heat vision would work without the use of the suit for once. She’s so stupidly, so incredibly angry, but not at Alex.

She’s angry at herself.

She is Supergirl, or she was at least.

Wasn’t saving the world always supposed to be her job?

“She’s not doing it spite you.”

Kara keeps her arms crossed and her lips pursed as she hears the crunch of sand and rock behind her. She doesn’t turn, even if she’s confused at the person who’s come to give her consolation.

“I don’t want to talk, Maggie.”

“Well too bad, Little Danvers, because we’re going to talk.”

At that, Kara finally whirls around in fury. “You can’t possibly be okay with this, Maggie! She’s literally telling us that she’s willing to die for this! She’s my sister and your… whatever you guys are now. How are you not mad at the suggestion that she—”

“Wants to protect us?” Maggie finishes, a small, sad smile tugging at her lips. “Alex has laid down her life time and time again, Little Danvers, and that was before she had powers. This kind of response from her shouldn’t surprise you anymore. Right?”

Kara shakes her head despondently, looking away again. “She doesn’t get it,” she whispers hoarsely, her voice cracking on the words. “She’s everything to me, Maggie. Without her, I don’t know who I am. If she goes through with this, she will die, and I won’t… I…”

“You know,” Maggie says, walking up to her side, shoving her hands into her bomber jacket as a cool breeze passes over them both. “If I had to bet on anyone to kick some alien ass, it would be your sister. Not that I wouldn’t bet on you, either, but Alex is… well…”

Maggie takes a deep breath before turning to face Kara, who finally looks up with a watery expression. “Alex is amazing, Kara. And right now, she is going to need you, more than she’s ever needed you. Just because she’s going to take the shot doesn’t mean that you’re not a part of this. You have to give her that opening. You are her only chance, Kara.”

Kara remains silent as she watches a tear slide down Maggie’s cheek and drip into the sand silently. “If you don’t, then all of this, Little Danvers, will be for nothing. You can’t hesitate, Kara. You can’t back down. She needs you. We all do.”

“I know,” Kara says, gritting her teeth, “I know, Maggie.”

“Then buck up, Supergirl,” Maggie says, slapping her shoulder. “I sure as Hell am not ready for the world to end, okay?”

* * *
“So, you understand what this means?”

Alex sighs as she sits at the dinner table, watching as Lena paces a line into the floorboards in front of her. Her mother is standing in the corner, a mixture of a glare and a worried expression in her eyes, but Alex doesn’t pay her much mind as she thinks about how she’s going to break it to Kara. J’onn left hours ago, claiming something about needing to round up the only help he thought they had left, which leaves her in her current predicament: getting berated by Lena Luthor.

God save her.

“For the last time,” Alex sighs, “I do, Lena. Just as you do.”

“Kara will—”

“Kara will be fine,” Alex says, gritting the words out painfully. “And there’s no guarantee that this will kill me. It’s just… less likely for me to die than either J’onn or Kara doing it.” Lena gives her a pointed look and Alex hates how her mother rolls her eyes in disappointment. Standing up, she looks at both of them.

“Look,” Alex says as she crosses her arms. “You can’t stop me from making this decision. Especially not when there’s not any other alternative to the problem. Unless J’onn comes back with a superhuman who can do what we do—and have no reaction to the Gold Kryptonite—I’m the only shot we have at defeating him, Lena. This is the only way to save Earth.”

“The odds of you dying—”

“Are the same of me surviving beyond two years,” Alex finishes bluntly, ignoring her mother's shocked gasp. “I’m dying, Lena, but Kara isn’t. I… I want an honourable death. And this… protecting my world, there is no greater honour.”

“Enough,” Eliza cuts in, sniffling. Her voice is raw and her eyes are red with tears. The sight festers up unresolved feelings within her, but Alex stifles the emotions to take in the devastation on her mother's face. Alex watches as she stumbles over from where she’d been standing, her arms extended. Alex doesn’t have time to react as her mother’s arms drape themselves over her shoulders, squeezing tightly and pulling her close. Alex swallows thickly, her throat bobbing.

“Please,” Eliza whispers into her ear, “no more talks of death.”

“Mom—”

“I’m your mother,” Eliza chokes out, “you’re supposed to outlive me, Alex. The thought of living in a world without you is unimaginable. And I know what you have to do what your sister has to do, but it doesn’t make it any easier for me.”

Alex reaches up, her hands loosely grasping at Eliza’s back. “I know,” she replies sadly, “but Mom… I… I’ve lost so much.”

She can’t say the words, but she doesn’t have to, not when her mother gives her that look. Judging by the hitch in Eliza’s breath and the tightening of her grip, her mother has figured out exactly what she means to say. Alex just closes her eyes and breathes in the familiar lavender scent of her detergent, grounding herself to the woman who’d raised her.

There are still mountains and valleys between them—years of unresolved angst and feelings that have gone astray, but Alex doesn’t care about her past right now. She just allows herself a moment to break down in her mother’s arms, to feel comfort instead of pain. She feels her heart thudding
against the stone in her chest, reminding her of what is about to come, but she ignores it.

“I love you,” Eliza tells her, rubbing her back gently. “I’m sorry for all the years I wasted not saying it, not showing it—”

“Mom,” Alex croaks, as she clutches Eliza tighter, “please—”

“No,” Eliza rasps tearily, “you deserve more than this world can offer, Alex. You’ve given up so much, sacrificed everything for Kara, for me, for your father. You make us proud every day, my love. And I’m sorry, so incredibly sorry, that I ever made you feel less than your worth. Because, Alex, you’re worth the entire universe and more. So much more.”

Alex sobs at the words leaving her mother’s lips, trying to ignore the storm pulling at her gut as she continues to wither in her mother’s grasp. Eliza grips her tighter when her knees wobble, determined in keeping them both afloat in the emotional current.

“And I bet,” Eliza says, stroking her hair gently. “I’d bet that your daughter, your Little Bean, is just as proud, if not more.”

And with that, Alex finally, completely, breaks.

* * *

"There's too many!" Barry shouts as he zips around the edge. "Clark, help!"

Clark gives up on the seemingly-broken communicator as he pockets it and flies back down to rip a para-demon off Barry's arm and fling it away. He uses his heat vision on the incoming hoard, searing them in half and giving Barry enough time to catch his breath. After the quick break in the infinite slew of soldiers, Clark looks down at his friend.

"Bruce?" He asks as he looks up at Diana and Arthur wrangling a bigger demon. "Did he get it?"

"He's at the core with Kate," Barry pants. "Hurry! Take Diana with you. Arthur and I will handle these guys."

Clark hesitates, but Barry gives him a famous lopsided grin as he nods. "I'll be okay, Clark. Go."

Before Clark can question him, the speedster zooms off towards the incoming shoulders. Arthur follows after him, slashing and hacking his way through the crowd with his pitchfork. Diana flies over to Clark, bleeding from a blow to the head as she lands at his side roughly. Clark looks over her questioningly, but Diana shakes her head and smiles.

"Come," Diana says, "we must find Bruce and figure out a plan to end this, once and for all."

* * *

Maggie looks out to the stars glittering over the water from her bedroom window. She’s wrapped up in one of Alex’s old high school sweaters (which is still, oddly enough, too big on her). She curls herself further into the soft cotton, taking in the faint scent of Alex’s detergent. Between her palms is a half-empty, long cold cup of tea. But she can’t bring herself to take another sip as she stares at the tranquil scene in front of her. She keeps thinking about what is to come.

“IT’s beautiful, isn’t it?”

Maggie turns at the sound of Alex’s voice. She looks to see her former fiancée lingering in the
doorway, dressed in a tank top and some boxers, even though it is freezing in the house. Must be those Kryptonian genes, Maggie muses as she watches Alex rub the back of her neck. Maggie offers her a half-hearted smile as she nods, turning back to the view. She hears the door close behind her, followed by the soft click of the lock. Maggie closes her eyes, taking a deep breath.

“When I was young, I used to get nightmares a lot. When I woke up, I would sit on that little ledge and count all the constellations until I got tired again. I used to know them by heart. I… I still do, actually. It was the only thing that ever kept me sane,” Alex says as she steps beside Maggie, following her gaze to the clear skies and glittering stars.

“When Kara came, I taught her to do the same thing,” Alex tells her, her voice dreamy and nostalgic. “When she had her own nightmares, I would place one of her hands on my chest, to make her listen to the sound of my heart beating, and then I would tell her to look to the sky, to focus on the infinite space of the universe, the expansion of time and energy.”

Maggie feels the cup being pried from her grasp and set down on the drawer, before it’s replaced with familiar, nimble fingers. Maggie’s breath pauses as she feels her hand being gently placed atop something smooth and warm. She looks to the side in confusion, only to see that her hand is atop the curve of Alex’s stone.

Maggie’s eyes flit upwards to see Alex looking to their hands with a misty-expression, her bottom lip trembling.

“Does…,” Alex trails off quietly, “does it still beat, Mags?”

Maggie gasps at the question, her body turning to face Alex’s as she looks into her former lover’s eyes. Her hand remains pressed to the curve of her stone, refusing to let go. She can feel it pulsing beneath her, thrumming with life and strength and resistance. She inches closer, her face only a small distance from Alex’s own.

She can smell the faint scent of whiskey on her breath.

“Yes,” Maggie whispers as she looks to Alex’s lips. “It does, Al.”

This time, there’s no hesitance or nervous fumbling when Alex’s head leans downward, and their lips attach. The heat and the adrenalin ignite a spark between them. Maggie feels fire rip through her entire frame, lighting her with a new motivation to feel Alex for everything that she is, and to never let her go. She clutches onto Alex like she's a lifeline.

And in some, strange sense, that's exactly what Alex is.

Her lover's hands move down to her hips and Maggie all but leaps into her arms, locking her legs around her powerful waist and kissing her deeper. Her mind swims with the lack of oxygen, but she can’t pull away. If she only gets the next few nights with Alex, she will make every nanosecond count, even at the cost of her life. She won't lose Alex.

Not again.

“Fuck,” Maggie breathes as Alex carries her across the small space towards the bed. Her hands scrabble down Alex’s back, her short nails catching in the skin of her exposed shoulders as Alex’s mouth moves from her lips to her neck, nipping and suckling lightly. Maggie's hips ruck upwards, desperate and tingling for more contact, more skin, more heat.

“I love you,” Alex whispers into her skin as she lays them both down on the sheets, tearing off her sweater with just enough strength to not hurt her. Maggie looks up to her through mussed hair,
those brown eyes glistening with nothing but adoration and respect. Maggie reaches up and tugs down at her lightly, drawing their lips together again roughly.

“Show me,” Maggie says, taking a break from their kiss to glance back up at the older woman. Alex nods, leaning down to kiss her again. Maggie allows her to kiss her, nipping at her bottom lip teasingly, before she pulls away with a smirk.

“And allow me to show you, too, love.”

Before Alex can even respond, Maggie hooks her knee and twists them so Alex is flat on her back. Maggie reaches for Alex’s tank top and damn near tears the fabric off before reattaching their lips in a heated kiss. Somewhere in the frantic movements of hands and mouth, they find the rest of their clothes flung across the room in a haphazard mess.

Cleanliness be damned.

Then, when Alex is bare beneath her, Maggie drinks her in, memorizing every blemish and scar to hold in her mind.

Forever.

Her hand hovers over the stone, her breath hitching when she feels the warmth and gentle pulsing radiating from it. It beats against her, strong and steady. The onyx curve reminds her of what she’d almost lost, what she’d nearly taken…

“Mags,” Alex whispers, placing her own hand over Maggie’s now trembling one. “It’s okay. I’m okay. Look at me.”

But Maggie can’t focus on that right now.

Because when she looks up at Alex, only two words are clear in her mind.

“Marry me.”

“What?” Alex asks, her voice hoarse as tears well in her eyes. “Mags—”

“Marry me,” Maggie chokes out, leaning her head down to rest their foreheads together. “Please, Danvers, I don’t care how much time we have left together, but I can’t spend another second without you, without being your wife. We promised each other a lifetime of firsts, Alex. And I still want it, I want everything, I want you. If this world ends, I want it to end with me at your side, by your side. You’re it for me, Danvers. You always have been. I need you in my life, love.”

Maggie’s heart clenches when Alex sobs against her, her hands reaching around Maggie’s bare back to hold her close. “I love you,” Maggie whispers again, pleadingly. “I love you, Alex. I love you so much and I can't hide it anymore, baby.”

“Oh Mags,” Alex chuckles sadly, her voice clogged with emotion as she reaches up to frame Maggie’s tearstained cheeks with her shaky palms. “I never stopped loving you, sweetheart. In some weird ways, I’ve always been yours, my love.”

“Then marry me,” Maggie says again, stronger this time. “Please.”

Alex looks deep into her eyes, a look of soft resignation and love replacing the tumultuous storm Maggie knows that was brewing. There’s a faint tremble in her touch, something reverent and strong and graceful in one. Alex just nods silently, craning her neck upwards so they can kiss softly
again. Maggie closes her eyes, losing herself in the gentle touch.

“Yes,” Alex whispers, “I’ll marry you, Mags.”

* * *

Kara is about to settle herself into bed when two firm hands wind around her waist, locking over her hips. She smiles when familiar lips graze her pulse point. Kara hums quietly before she turns, smiling when she sees Lena’s familiar green eyes staring at her.

“You okay?” Kara asks, gently tucking a strand of Lena’s hair behind her ear. Lena just sighs and nods, leaning forward to rest some of her weight against Kara’s chest. The two of them sway in the dim light of the room, surrounded by the soft, whistling wind.

“I love you,” Lena murmurs into her skin. “I don’t want to lose you, Kara. I know that what’s about to come… it’s something neither of us have ever dealt with before, but I just… I need you to know…”

“Ssh,” Kara hums, tilting her head so they can kiss. “No talking.”

“Oh?” Lena asks, and Kara can still sense the fear in her girlfriend, but she knows what Lena wants. And to be honest, it’s the same thing that she wants, too. Kara doesn’t want to think.

“Take me to bed,” Lena breathes against her lips, before their mouths meet in a slow kiss. “Show me your strength, Supergirl.”

“What about tomorrow?” Kara asks, but it’s a weak effort and the both of them know it. “Is this really what we should be doing—”

“Kara,” Lena shuts her up with a firm kiss. “I don’t want to think about tomorrow right now. I just… I want tonight. I want you.”

Kara looks at her girlfriend and sighs, nodding as she reaches down to hoist the smaller woman into her arms. Lena’s hands tangle in her hair, pulling her down for another heated kiss before Kara walks them back to the bed, keeping Lena close and warm to her chest. She can feel the wetness of Lena’s tears, and taste the saltiness of her own, but she doesn’t want to focus on that.

Lena’s right.

Tomorrow is tomorrow.

At least, for now, they can have tonight.

* * *

November 23rd, 2018

Eliza wipes at her face tiredly, her eyes trained on the small stain on her kitchen table as she hears the distinct sounds of four pairs of footsteps walking down the steps. She looks up to see her two daughters—because yes, even if Kara never was officially adopted, she’d always consider the Kryptonian to be her daughter—walking down into the foyer with their arms wrapped around their partners. They are lost in their own world, and Eliza feels complete and elated at the sight.

For a moment, Eliza sets aside the fatigue to smile bittersweetly at the scene in front of her, of the smirks on Maggie and Lena’s faces, and the matching blushes on Alex and Kara’s own. She can
put aside the fact that last night was horrifying—a side note, no mother should ever have to hear what she heard last night—to appreciate the love and commitment displayed in front of her.

“Mom,” Kara greets her cheerfully, smiling wider than Eliza’s sure she’s seen her smile in a long time. “You’re up early. You okay?”

“Just peachy,” Eliza teases back—sue her, she can’t help but rib her daughters at least once. “Was everyone having sex last night?”

“Sex?” Alex blurts out, blushing deeper. “No one had sex. I’ve never even had sex before. I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Alex,” Maggie chuckles with a sigh, leaning up to bite at her daughter’s shoulder. “You’re not the best liar, sweetheart.”

Alex frowns, but eventually sighs and slumps. “Fine. Yes. Sorry.”

“While it was traumatizing,” Eliza drawls, her lips turning up in a small smile as she looks to both her prudish daughters, “I’m happy that you all had a good night. It’s the least you deserve.”

Before anyone can respond, however, a crackling boom interrupts them. Eliza turns her head to see J’onn stumbling in from where he’d landed in her backyard, his eyes narrowed in concern and worry. Instantly, the mood in the room shifts to something solemn.

“Dr. Danvers,” J’onn greets her softly, before nodding to the rest of the women in the room. “I got word from Clark today. Darkseid is almost here. Given Bruce’s estimates, we have about a day or two until his ship is within Earth’s orbit.”

Eliza’s heart drops. "No…"

J’onn nods solemnly before turning to the others. "We must prepare. The battle is upon us."

“Did you find help?” Alex asks, stepping past Eliza to stand in front of the Martian. J’onn sighs, looking down.

“Yes,” he says, “though it’s not what you’d expect.”

Before Alex can question him, there’s a knock on the door. Eliza frowns, but J’onn simply nods at her and offers a half-hearted smile. She watches as Alex walks over to the door before opening it, a gasp leaving her lips as she sees who it is.

* * *

“Lucy?”

Alex nearly gasps her name as she looks to Lucy Lane standing in her doorway, next to Winn and roughed up Vasquez and James. She looks at the latter agents with a suspicious frown, but Winn shakes his head and places his hands on both of their shoulders gently. All four of them look slightly worse for wear, but they’re alive and ignited with determination.

“We found them at a containment facility outside of National City. Looks like the Martians weren’t out to kill them, just impersonate them,” Winn explains, and Alex’s defenses droop slightly. "We're still at a significant loss, however."

She looks behind the four agents to see a small handful of DEO soldiers. "Are these all the
survivors?"

“It’s not much, but it’s all we could round together so shortly,” Lucy explains, following Alex’s gaze. “Most of the others are still aiding in evacuation efforts. The rest are dead because they weren’t actual agents, but spies sent by Darkseid.”

“We won’t be able to defeat him,” James says, shrugging meekly. "But we can serve as folly for his ground soldiers.”

“Yes,” Vasquez chimes in a with a grin. “We can’t do much with that bastard, but we can give as good as we get, right?”

“Luckily, you and Kara don’t have to fight Darkseid alone.”

Alex turns at the sound of J’onn’s voice, confusion still written over her face as the man pads closer to him, holding out a small box. He presses down on the button in the middle, causing blue electricity to cackle around the room before a portal opens up and out steps five people. The portal crackles to a close behind them as Alex takes a good look at them.

A small blonde stands next to a taller blonde, and three men. All of them are dressed in super suits. The smaller blonde steps forward, brandishing her two swords with a grin. Alex eyes her suspiciously, before looking back up to J’onn.

“Who are they?” She asks, her brow furrowing. The blonde smirks and chuckles.

“We, princess, are your last hope,” the woman says, sheathing her two swords before extending out her hand.

Her eyes are a piercing blue as she stares up at Alex, her jaw set determinedly. "Go on then, I won't bite."

“Alex,” J’onn says as Alex takes her hand hesitantly and shakes it. “Meet Sara Lance and the Legends.”
“Lance,” Kara says from behind the man, “as in Dinah Lance?”

Kara watches as something in Sara’s expression twists painfully at the name. When she sees that Alex isn’t going to shake her hand, Sara drops it and sighs, rubbing the back of her head with her free hand mournfully.

“Yeah,” Sara says, looking back at Kara with a half-hearted shrug. “She’s my mom. Or, was, I guess. In this world, she’s dead right? I think the same goes for Oliver, my father?” Kara looks over to Alex and J’onn with a frown.

"I didn't know they had kids," Kara says, "aren't they only a few years older than us?"

"Your Earth differs from ours in multiple ways," Sara explains calmly. "The path of our lives are different."

When Sara's eyes look up to hers, Kara shivers at the depth in those ocean blues. There's a pain there, some sort of unrecognizable guilt or remorse. Sara's eyes flicker to Maggie and Alex, and Kara's gut churns as her gaze darkens.

“Your Earth?” Maggie echoes, breaking the tense silence. “You’re not from here?”

“No,” the other blonde says, stepping in beside Sara. “We’re from Earth One, but we’ve always maintained a close relationship to the Justice League after we worked with them on a multiverse mission a few years back. There isn't much time to go over it, but the multiverse is more expansive than you know. Each of us all the same with one minor difference, until we're nearly all unrecognizable. We were fighting a legion of Darkseid's minions when J'onn managed to track us down mid-mission. We know about the fight and his journey to your planet.”

“And you are?” Kara asks, crossing her arms suspiciously as the blonde woman stops her explanation with a curt nod. The taller woman looks down to Sara, who gives her a nod. The blonde steps forward, extending her hand.

“Ava Sharpe,” she says coolly. “I’m… new to the team.”

“Director Sharpe is a member of the Time Bureau,” J’onn explains as Kara reaches out and shakes her hand, “which is how we were able to get in track with the Legends quickly. These three men are Ray Palmer, Mick Rory, and Leonard Snart, respectively. Given their knowledge of his allies, their team is here to help us with Darkseid’s invasion.”

“Cool to meet you,” Ray—Kara presumes—says as he extends his hand with a goofy-looking grin. “You’re the legendary Supergirl, right? That’s pretty cool. We’ve read up on you a lot while we were multi-verse hopping. I’m from a different Earth from Sara and Ava. I also go by Atom.” Kara eyes his hand warily, but she still shakes it.
“We’re here to help in whatever means necessary, kid.” Mick speaks next as he gives her an encouraging nod. “You can call me Heat Wave, if you’re really wanting to get into the nitty-gritty. It’s not the first rough spot we’ve been in, but we’ve got your back. Darkseid ruins worlds for a living, but he won’t ruin this one. Not while we live.”

“I’m Captain Cold, and not that I’m not loving our introductions, but what’s the plan?” The final man, Leonard, gruffly says, crossing his arms boredly. “I don’t suppose winging it is an option, is it?” Kara looks over to Alex, who frowns.

“Well, we don’t really have a plan. We thought Darkseid wasn’t set to arrive for another month. If it’s only a few days, then I don’t know what to expect either,” Alex says, rubbing her brow as she takes in the new collection of other-worldly heroes beside her. “Besides, we don’t even have a clue as to what his powers are, or what he can do that we cannot. Clark mentioned something about him possessing the same strength and prowess as a Kryptonian, but—”

Before she can finish, Sara smirks and puts her hand up. “No need to worry, Danvers. Gideon, give me everything you know on Darkseid.” Before Alex can question the lack of formality in addressing her, Sara whips out a small box.

Kara frowns as a small projection comes from the device in Sara’s hand, illuminating the various scans and information related to the warmonger. Kara watches as Alex steps forward from the corner of her eyes, coming to stand beside her. Maggie and Lena also join, a little more warily than her sister as they look to the screen.

“Gideon is a supercomputer with artificial intelligence,” Ava explains, waving to the projections. “She has the codex of every living species, in this universe and all the rest of them.”

“Kinda puts Kelex to shame,” Alex mutters, wincing when the stone inside of her chest pulses. “Sorry, but it’s true.”

Kara chuckles as Alex rubs her chest and grumbles in annoyance when another pulse strikes her.

“Bruce and Clark were right,” Lena interjects as she examines the scans curiously. “Darkseid’s life-force is contained through the planet Apokolips. It seems to be the entire planet functions as an energy source, like a giant reactor. If the planet is destroyed, he would be rendered vulnerable enough to be killed by a direct attack by the weapon.”

“So the key to destroying Darkseid is destroying Apokolips?” Maggie asks, guffawing slightly at the implausibility of the plan. “Not going to lie, Luthor, the Justice League is a lot of things, but I don’t know if six of the remaining League, with only four of them with sufficient power to destroy the planet, can actually destroy an entire planet.”

“They can if they’re not distracted,” Alex says, cutting in as a small smile pulls at her lips. “If Darkseid is attacking Earth, it means Apokolips is vulnerable. It’s a war on two fronts. This could work. It’ll be tight, but it could work.”

“J’onn,” Lena says next, looking to the Martian. “Can you get a line to Superman and the Justice League on Apokolips?” J’onn nods, reaching into his pocket for his communicator before flicking a switch. Kara nervously waits as there’s a static in the signal before it comes to life, displaying the haggard features of her cousin in what looks to be a ring of fire and chaos. Fire burns around him, and she can hear shouting and yelling in the background.

“J’onn,” Clark says, his voice garbled, “are you there?”
“Kal,” Kara says, taking the communication device from the Martian and holding it up. “It’s me, it’s Kara. Look, I think we’ve figured out a way to stop him. You and Bruce were right, Apokolips is Darkseid’s life-force. The planet—”

“Kara?” Clarke interrupts in a garbled voice, shaking his head as something booms in the distance. Kara can see another plume of smoke, followed by more yelling. “We’re doing it already… we’re… destroying the planet…”

She should be relieved that her cousin thought of something similar, but when she looks to Clark’s weary expression, her heart sinks painfully. Clark looks into the camera, tears in his eyes as he gives her a solemn nod.

“Kara,” Clark says again, his voice lagging as he cuts in and out. More smoke and fire plume up at the rear of his head, casting him in a shadow. “Bruce and Barry are working on figuring out a way to get at the planet’s core. But listen, Kara… if the plan works… we don’t know if we will get back. The force of the destruction will likely—”

“No,” Kara growls as she feels her heart constrict. “Kal—”

“No,” Kara growls as she feels her heart constrict. “Kal—”

“Kara,” Clark says softer this time, his voice dropping to a defeated whisper. “I need you to find Lois. I need you to tell her that I love her and that I’m sorry. Tell her… tell her… in the drawer beside my bed, there’s a case, a ring…”

“No,” Kara says determinedly, shaking her head. “Whatever you have to tell me—whatever you have to tell Lois—you’ll tell when you get back, because you will get back. You won’t give her a deadbeat proposal, Clark. You aren’t going to die. None of you will. You’re the Justice League, Kal. You guys can do everything! You’re heroes.”

“Ha,” Clark chuckles sadly, “we’re the old Justice League, now. Bruce, Diana, Arthur—we all knew this was likely a one-way mission. We have enough juice in one of Darkseid’s teleporters to hop one person back to Earth, and that person is likely going to be Barry. He’s the only one who might be able to reverse the effect of time if needed.”

“No,” Kara hisses, tears streaming down her cheeks. “Kal—”

“I love you,” Clark tells her softly, his eyes brimming with nothing short of pride and adoration. “I’m sorry I wasn’t there as much as I should have been. Truth was… I was scared. You were my big cousin, my protector, and I didn’t know how to protect you. The Danvers… they took care of you when I couldn't. I'm your cousin by blood, Kara, but they're your real family. If I could go back, if I could change it, if I could watch you grow up, I would, Kara. I would.”

"Kal," Kara sobs as she clutches the device closer, "Kal, no, please…"

Clark smiles, tears sliding down his cheeks as he holds the device closer to him. "Lead them well, Kara Zor-El. You are the last daughter of Krypton, and the only hope of Earth. I was never meant to be this planet's hero. You were.”

Kara shoves off Alex’s comforting hand on her shoulder. “Kal—”

“Kara—”

Before he can finish, more static rings out and the line goes dead.

Inside her chest, Kara's heart breaks into microscopic splinters.
"It must be the magnetic pulse affecting the strength of the broadcast signal."

Clark looks up to where Bruce is fiddling with the communication device. He watches his friend cough and stumble to his knees. Flying over, Clark quickly lowers him to a comfortable position on the ground. In the distance, he can hear Arthur and Diana pounding away at the outer layer of the planet, trying to get deeper to the core. Barry and Kate are busy working out calculations on the super computer they'd transported down from Darkseid's lab.

The entire area is covered in smoke and dust.

"You were going to propose to Lois?"

Clark blinks as he hears Bruce's raspy voice. Glancing down, his friend smirks up at him sadly.

"About time, Clark."

"I missed it," Clark sighs as he leans back and closes his eyes, imagining brown hair and loving eyes, "the right time, I mean. There were so many moments where I could have asked, if I had just mustered up the courage, but I…"

He feels Lois's hand in his own, the press of her lips against his jaw. For a moment, Clark isn't on Apokolips, he's back on Earth, in his bed in Metropolis. Lois is beside him, curled up on his chest, with a hand on his cheek. His fingers tangle through her hair and he smiles down at her, imagining the sparkle in her eyes, the ghost of her laughter. He imagines the glint of the ring on her finger, the bubble of happiness surrounding them.

But when Clark opens his eyes, all he sees is fire and death.

"She knows," Bruce says softly, bringing Clark back into the present. "Told me she was going to do it if you didn't make a move. Said she kept a lead lined box under her bed, beneath the wood slats. She was waiting, too."

Clark chuckles sadly, tears welling in his eyes. "That's not surprising."

"No," Bruce sighs as he rubs Clark's shoulder. "But it would be rude to leave a lady waiting."

Clark's brow arches as he looks to his old friend with a sad smile. "Because you know all too much about that, huh?"

"Yeah," Bruce says wistfully, "and I suppose it's time we made good on our promises, Clark."

"Thought I would find you up here."

Alex turns at the sound of J'onn's familiar voice. He clambers through the window of her bedroom and takes a seat beside her on the roof. The night sky is only just emerging, revealing the early brightness of stars in the distance.

"I used to come here with my father," Alex explains. "Whenever I was scared, he told me to look to the stars."

"Your father said the same to me," J'onn sighs as he leans back on the tiles. "He had just found me after years of tracking me. Freed me from Henshaw's grasp. I was scared, lost, alone, though I'd
been here for three-hundred years. I spent most of my life on this planet hiding in plain sight, never making friends, nor imagining a family."

Alex watches as J'onn sighs and looks to his palms. "Your father didn't treat me like an alien. He treated me like I was his brother. He cared for me deeply. And when he would speak of you and Kara, it reminded me of my daughters."

Swallowing thickly, Alex nods and looks back up to the stars. "You think he would be proud of me?"

"Oh Alex," J'onn says with a rumble in his throat. "He knew your greatness before even you did. He was always proud of you. Alexandra, he told me, protector of humanity. Your father knew of your potential before your birth. He knew you would go out to be a force to be reckoned with, the strength of man. He loved you dearly, Alex. You and Kara."

"I miss him," Alex whispers as she tugs her knees to her chest. "He always understood me."

*If I was supposed to protect humanity, how could I have failed to protect him?*

"What Cadmus did to him was beyond your control, Alex."

"I thought I asked you to stop reading my mind without my consent," Alex snarks, arching her brow. J'onn smiles up at her, reaching out to place his hand on her shoulder as the two of them look out to where Kara is sitting on the beach by herself, the water now tranquil after several minutes of rage-induced heat vision spilling out of her.

"I can't read your mind," J'onn says, "not anymore. But I don't need to, because I know how you think."

"I don't know how to help her," Alex whispers as she looks to her sister. "I feel so lost, J'onn."

"Sometimes words aren't needed," J'onn says as he leans over to peck her forehead. "Just actions."

Alex looks to him, seeing the years of experience and loss in his gaze, before she smiles nostalgically.

"We've come a long way, haven't we?" Alex asks, her voice cracking. "Since you picked me up in that jail cell?"

"It has been quite a journey," J'onn muses, "but I wouldn't give it up for the world, my child."

Alex nods, her throat bobbing around the knot in her throat as she looks back up to the sky.

"I'm tired, J'onn."

"I know, Alex."

"I can't remember the last time I slept in peace."

J'onn stays silent as Alex feels hot tears well in her eyes. She places a hand over the stone in her chest, feeling its’ warmth and raw power. She remembers the day she'd broken into Lena's lab, writhing in pain as it consumed her.

"J'onn?" Alex asks, her voice raw with emotion. J'onn nods seriously. "I don't want to die, but…"

J'onn doesn't try to interrupt her as Alex sighs and sniffles, "but I think… I think I'm ready, if I
A hand lays itself on her shoulder as Alex crumbles into his arms, digging her face into his strong shoulder. J'onn murmurs comforting, soothing words as he rubs her back and pulls her in closer as she cries. Alex sniffs again.

"You'll look after them," Alex says as she looks up at him. "You'll look after Kara and Mom?"

J'onn nods. "Always, my child. They will never come to harm."

Alex nods back, sniffing again as she looks back up to the stars.

"I love you," she says before she looks back to J'onn with a small smile, "Dad."

J'onn's smile has never been more bittersweet.

* * *

"He'll come back."

Kara ignores the sound of her sister's voice as she hovers over the water, lost in the memories conjured up by the deepest, darkest parts of her mind. She can't stop hearing Kal's voice, watching Krypton explode, seeing her people die. Shaking her head, she turns to look at Alex, who's hovering beside her now, a confident expression in her eyes.

"How could you be so sure?" Kara spits out, glaring back down at the water. "He never keeps his promises."

"Which is why he didn't make one," Alex says softly, "he's Superman, Kara. He'll come back."

"He's destroying a planet, Alex—"

"And he has a flair for the dramatics," Alex interrupts gently, placing a hand on her shoulder. "Lex Luthor's Doomsday couldn't even take him down. He still saved the city and got the girl. He'll do the same here, though I have no doubt Lois will have some choice words for him when he gets back."

"If he gets back—"

"When," Alex corrects, "when he gets back, Kara. Because he will."

"Why are you doing this?" Kara asks, her voice small. "Why are you trying to get me to believe it will work?"

"I can't force you to believe in anything," Alex says, shrugging. "I don't know what will happen in a few days. Either this Earth, our universe as we know it, will cease to exist, or we'll be victorious. We can't see the future, Kara."

"Your point is…?"

Alex sighs and looks up at the stars. "Did you know the stars we see in the sky aren't even alive?"

Kara frowns. "Alex, what—"

"Yet, when we look up at them, we give them different meanings. For some, they're burning balls of light. For others, they're remnants of lost galaxies, a life unknown. To others, they're the
"We can't dwell on them—stars," Alex says as she turns to face Kara. "Because we can't ever see them for what they are, Kara. So why are we dwelling on what will happen in the future if we can never truly see it until it comes?"

Kara's memories start to lighten as Alex takes her hand and smiles.

"We must focus on the present," Alex tells her, squeezing her hand tighter, "if we have any hope to save the future."

* * *

Maggie sits outside, sharpening an old stick into a point while the sun sets over the mountainside. She can't stop replaying Clark's words in her head, and she knows by the way Kara is hovering above the water a few miles ahead of her, neither can Supergirl. Alex is standing beside her, talking to her in low-tones and holding her hand.

"Hey."

Maggie's movements stop as she turns to face the source of the sound. She sees the shorter blonde—Sara—walking down towards her. The other Legends opted to stay inside Eliza's house, strategizing with Lena and the DEO.

"Want company?"

Maggie shrugs, turning back to where Kara and Alex are still hovering.

"Great," Sara says as she takes a seat next to Maggie. "We didn't meet earlier. I'm Sara." Maggie just eyes the extended hand with an arched brow, not particularly interested in entertaining the gesture. Sara grunts and pulls her hand back, tilting her head. "Not particularly friendly, are you? That's a stark change from what I'm used to."

"What do you want?" Maggie asks. "And why are you so chipper?"

"My mom's dead, and the world is about to end," Sara says with a nonchalant shrug. "I don’t think chipper would be the best word to describe how I feel right now, Sawyer." Maggie frowns as she hears the familiar tone of her name.

"How do you know my name?" Maggie asks. "I never said it earlier."

Sara folds her palms across her chest, warming her up against the crisp November wind. "On the Earth where I'm from, you're actually not a Detective. You're a Captain of the Gotham Police Department. A damn good one, too."

"What?" Maggie scoffs, shaking her head. "That's nonsense, I'd—"

"You moved there after your wife died," Sara says, her voice quiet as she continues to stare at Kara’s hovering frame. Maggie’s chest rattles at the admission, but Sara only continues. "Actually, you and I—in my world, at least—are really close friends. Before I joined the Legends and was just a crime-fighting vigilante. I… I never met Alex, but you always thought the world of her. So did the actual world. She was—is—a hero. Loyal, brave, and a true leader."
Maggie’s eyes glisten as Sara looks over to the figure floating next to Kara, and Maggie follows her gaze to see Alex comforting her younger sister by wrapping her in a warm and gentle hug. Sara sighs, smiling nostalgically.

“I’ve only ever seen pictures of her,” Sara says, a tone of longing filling her voice as she speaks. “But you know, I think I get it. She’s just as easy on the eyes in person.” Sara chuckles at that, shaking her head. “And she’s everything they ever made her out to be. You guys loved each other a lot, and I know that her death wrecked you.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Maggie chokes out, trying and failing to hold back tear. “The world —”

“Can wait a few moments,” Sara interrupts gently, nudging Maggie’s shoulder as she looks up to Alex. “You told me that, after my sister passed away. I was so lonely and bitter and angry, and you told me that the world could wait a few moments. That I could lay down my suit and grieve, to just take a minute to let it all sink in. You told me that your biggest regret was never taking a minute to just enjoy the moment with Alex, to exist solely as her wife.”

Maggie wipes at her cheeks as Sara sighs and looks to where her fiancée is now cradling a crying Kara, her lips pressed into Kara’s blonde hair as her mouth moves, no doubt whispering encouragements and comforting words.

“Usually, when we go to different universes, people are different,” Sara muses softly, leaning back in the gravel. “Some exist, some don’t. My mother has kids in one universe, but not another. But for some reason, in every universe and every Earth I’ve been to, you and Alex have been together in some way or fashion. And she is the same person in each one of those Earths, no matter if she’s a cop or a lawyer or a soldier or a president. Just like you are.”

Sara takes a deep breath and looks to her wistfully before squeezing her hand. “I know that we don’t know each other on this Earth, Maggie, but on my Earth, you’re one of my best friends. And when I go back, I want to tell her about how I met the legendary Alexandra Danvers, Director of the DEO and the wife of the greatest detective I’ve ever met. And I want to tell her that you love her just as much as you do in this Earth as she does on mine.”

Maggie sniffs as Sara stumbles to her feet, wiping at the backs of her thighs to dislodge some of the dirt and dust there. She takes a minute to pause before swallowing. “You’re engaged,” Sara says, eyeing her ring with a small smile. “But why wait, Sawyer? If the world is about to end in a few days, don’t you want to end it being her wife?”

Sara doesn’t wait for a reply. Instead, she simply winks at Maggie and looks over to Alex and Kara hovering over the water. “You’re a lucky girl, Maggie. So’s she. Make the most of it. You never know what tomorrow brings.”

Maggie just stares after her fiancée, even long after Sara’s gone.

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**November 24th, 2018**

The morning is still dark when Alex wakes up to see Maggie’s head atop her chest, and feels those familiar nimble fingers tangled with her own. She looks down to her lover playing with her hair. A small smile creeps up on her face as she takes in a deep breath and holds Maggie closer. She nuzzles her fiancée’s temple, breathing her in fully.
“You’re awake,” she hums softly, “why?”

Maggie is quiet for a moment, before she turns her head. She places her free hand on Alex’s chest and pushes up slightly, letting her hair cascade around them like a protective veil. A soft breath leaves Alex’s lips as Maggie looks at her with a desperate glance.

“Mags?” Alex whispers, leaning up. “You okay?”

“Marry me,” Maggie says, and Alex frowns.

“I am, Mags, when this—”

“No,” Maggie says, swallowing as she frame’s Alex’s face with trembling fingers. “I don’t want to wait, Alex. Marry me. Today.”

Alex splutters, blushing. “Mags, we don’t have rings or—”

“I don’t need that,” Maggie quickly assures her. “I don’t even need a dress or a fancy party. I just need you. I need to be your wife, Danvers, and I can’t wait a single second more, okay? So, please, just marry me. I want you to be mine, my forever girl.”

Alex feels her throat clog with emotion as she takes in the sincerity behind her fiancée’s voice. She leans up again so Maggie is straddling her, one of her hands going to rest firmly at her hip. Maggie leans down and kisses her, full of passion and love.

“Marry me, Danvers. Now.”

* * *

“You want me to what now?”

“It’s not that hard,” Alex explains from where she’s gripping Maggie’s hand tightly, with a hint of nervousness. “We want you to officiate our wedding, Lena. I know you’re ordained, I read your file, remember? Look, I don’t know what will happen in the next few days, but Maggie and I… we need this. We want this. We need this. Please.”

Lena swallows thickly, looking between the two women. Before she can respond, there’s a whoosh from behind her. Lena barely has the time to react before Alex is tackled to the floor by a blonde blur.

“We’ll do it,” Kara says, excitement in her voice as she squeezes a prone Alex even tighter. “Lena will officiate and I’m your best woman. I called dibs when we were kids so there’s no take backs.”

Alex only chuckles and squeezes Kara tighter. “Yeah, kid. No take backs.” Kara damn-near squeals, and the sound illuminates a fire inside of Lena’s heart. After yesterday, Kara had been dejected.

If this wedding lifts her spirits—all of their spirits—so be it.

“Fine,” Lena says, fighting a smile. “I’ll do it.”

“I call being Maggie’s best man!” Winn chirps from where he’s sitting next to Eliza. Maggie eyes him, brow raised. Winn shrinks a little under her gaze and squeaks out, “well, only if she wants…”

“Ugh,” Maggie says with a smirk, “get over here, Schott.”
“Yes!” Winn exclaims as he bounds over and wraps Maggie in his own version of a bear hug. Maggie tries to look exasperated, but Lena can see the fondness and appreciation in her eyes as she squeezes him back. Over their shoulders, Lena looks to a teary-eyed Eliza.

“Well,” Lena says, clapping her hands together. “Let’s do this.”

* * *

“Now, I know this is all last minute, but I have something for you.”

“Mom,” Alex says, shaking her head as she takes in the suit bag in her mother’s hands. “What are you talking about?

“The day you called me telling me you were engaged to Maggie, I knew I needed to get you something,” Eliza muses, nodding. Her eyes mist as she unzips the bag to reveal a beautiful and crisp, tailored white suit against Alex’s front. “I know you weren’t a fan of dresses, and maybe in hindsight that makes sense now, but I wanted you to feel something that felt like you. So, I bought this for when the day came, in case you found yourself struggling.”

"Mom," Alex gasps as she looks over the dress. "I can't believe it."  

"Now, now, I have a condition," Eliza says, "When this is all over, you owe me a big and proper wedding, Alexandra.”

“Mom…,” Alex drifts off as she looks up to her mother’s loving gaze. “I…”

“I don’t want to hear it,” Eliza sniffs as she gently places the suit on the bed. “You deserve happiness, Alex. One way or another, you will find a way out of this. And when you do, you and Maggie will have an honest wedding. And I’ll be planning everything.”

Alex chuckles sadly, wiping away a stray tear. “Not everything.”

“Yeah, not everything.”

Alex and Eliza both look up to see Kara walking into the room, a beaming smile playing at her lips as she wraps her arms around them both. Alex sighs as she feels Kara’s soft lips in her hair. Alex winds her arms around her back.

“I’m planning it with Mom,” Kara announces, pulling back to give her another grin. “And you cannot argue, Al. I already asked Maggie and she said yes.” Alex rolls her eyes fondly, her heart warming as she thinks of her fiancée.

“I’m gonna regret this, aren’t I?”

“What?” Kara asks, grinning. “Giving me another older sister?” Alex chuckles, leaning over and tousling Kara’s hair.

“No,” Alex says, “giving you another culprit to scheme with.”

“Hey! That’s your future wife—my future sister—you’re talking about. I doubt Maggie would appreciate you saying that, Alex.”

“Cry me a river, Kara.”

“I can, and I will—”
“Girls,” Eliza sighs fondly, placing her hands on both of their shoulders. “I’m grateful to have both of you in my life.”

“Even if we squabble like toddlers?” Kara asks, blushing as Eliza draws her in for a warm. Her mother only chuckles and nods slowly.

“Especially when you squabble like toddlers,” Eliza affirms as she pulls back. “Because it reminds me of the love you share, the bond you have, and that no matter what, you are in this together. It’s all I could have ever asked for as a mother, and I am so proud. No matter what happens, all I want is for you to come home to me, safe and sound.”

Alex’s eyes mist as Eliza draws her in for a hug next. “And I am so proud of you, Alex, for being yourself, for falling in love, for doing all the things I know you’d never done before. You’ve spent your whole life looking out for others, but this is your moment, Alex. I’m so incredibly proud of you, my dear. And I love you both, so much.”

“We love you, too.” Kara says, kissing Eliza’s cheek. “Mom.”

“I don’t think I’ll ever get tired of that,” Eliza says, laughing weakly as tears slide down her cheeks when she looks to them both.

“My beautiful girls,” Eliza says, smiling as she places her hands on both of their shoulders proudly. “Thank you, for everything.”

“Alright,” Kara says, blinking back tears. “Enough of this now. It’s time for me to live my life-long dream—attend my sister’s wedding.” Alex is about to retort with something witty, but when she sees the pure joy and excitement in Kara’s face, she stops.

For once, Alex lets Kara have this moment.

"Now," Kara says as she pulls away, discretely wiping a happy tear. "I have an idea for your hair."

---

J’onn watches as Maggie anxiously fiddles with the straps of the white dress he’d managed to grab from his home. It was an old Martian dress, something sweet and simple, but most importantly, it wasn’t hers—it was his eldest daughter’s wedding dress. When the Martians had been killed off, the last thing he was able to bring was his daughter’s dress, a bleak reminder of her passing.

But now, the dress would signify a rebirth.

A new hope.

A new love.

And for that, J’onn couldn’t be happier.

“You don’t think I look ridiculous?” Maggie asks as she twirls in the mirror anxiously. “I mean, I feel ridiculous. What am I doing, J’onn? We should be preparing for war, and instead I’m playing dress-up while the world’s worst warmonger is only hours away.”

J’onn sighs, smiling as he steps up behind Maggie. While he missed his daughters, he had always considered Alex and Kara to be close surrogates, and by association, he’d even felt similarly about Lena and Maggie once they’d made their intentions known to the Danvers siblings. Over time, J’onn grew to love them as his own.
“You look beautiful,” J’onn whispers encouragingly, looking at her worried expression in the mirror. “And you deserve this moment, Maggie. You and Alex both. The world has taken much from you, and you have allowed it to do so for too many years. This time, take something from it, nurture it, and care for it. Love it, Maggie.”

Maggie gulps, swallowing thickly. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” J’onn hums again, nodding as he gently squeezes her shoulders. “Do not think about what is to come. Think about now.”

He watches Maggie’s shoulders droop slightly before she relaxes at the words. He smiles, kissing her lightly on the side of the head.

“Think about her,” J’onn says quietly. “And only her, Maggie.”

* * *

Lena isn’t really sure what she expected, but it’s not this.

Somehow, in the limited time they’d been given since the morning announcement, the whole house was semi-decorated in white. Some of the agents that were left from the initial rescue had cleaned up, and even the new people from the so-called Legends looked decent. It’s bizarre, but heartwarming all the same.

“Alright, everyone, let’s get cracking on this wedding!”

Lena looks up to see Winn walking down the aisle with a beaming grin on his face. All of the agents, the Legends, Lucy and James take their seats. Winn comes up to stand beside Lena, holding his hands in front of his waist as he bounces happily, no doubt waiting for Maggie and Alex to walk down the stairs towards them.

He swallows before he clicks the small remote in his hand.

Soft piano starts to fill the room, a gentle voice singing lyrics.

Knowing that I find it on my own.

‘Cause this life ain’t leading the way I can go.

I’m standing still with nothing in my way.

Letting me go so I can find myself again.

Lena looks up to see Kara walking down the aisle by herself in a pale pink dress, grinning and blushing like it’s her own wedding. Lena’s heart thumps wildly as her own mind wanders for a few seconds. She snaps out of it when Kara steps upwards to stand at her side, right opposite to Winn. Lena looks back to the aisle to see Maggie and J’onn, who are walking arm-in-arm as they come to stand at the make-shift alter (which was really Eliza’s dining table).

I need that home, I’m coming home, I’m coming home.

‘Cause it’s life that I’ve been living in my home.

Home, I’m coming home, I’m coming home.

‘Cause I’m tired of being here on my own.
And behind them, come Alex and Eliza walking down.

All of the sudden, every doubt Lena had about this rushed union flies out the window. She looks at the way Alex is staring at Maggie’s back like she’s seen the universe and all its’ secrets. The agent has changed her hair, now sporting a smart and sleek buzzcut. It's been re-dyed red, and even Lena thinks she looks amazing, especially in the gorgeous white suit and black bowtie she's donning. But Alex doesn't seem to care about her own looks.

Lena watches as Alex's eyes stay rooted on Maggie's back the entire time she walks with her mother.

And when Alex and Maggie stand before her, the world disappears.

I know if I can find my own way back.

There’s a life I always knew I never had.

I’m tired of fighting things I can’t change.

Letting me go so I can finally find my place.

“Wow,” Alex gasps, her vision blurry as she takes in Maggie in the dress. “You’re… I… wow… Maggie…”

Lena’s heart melts at the gush when Maggie flushes under her earnest and loving gaze.

“I could say the same thing about you,” Maggie chuckles airily, trying (and failing miserably) to wipe away at her own tears. "I'm loving the new hair-cut. I never thought you'd achieve full-gay status, but you graduated quickly."

"What can you say," Alex jokes as she blushes, "I'm a keener."

"And she has a great wing-woman," Kara stage-whispers, winking at Maggie and earning a teasing glare from her sister. Kara shrugs and beams. "What? I came up with the idea for the haircut, and it worked. Be happy, Alex!"

"I am," Alex says warmly, nodding to her sister. "Thanks, Kar."

In the background, the song finally fades into its' final verses.

I need that home, I’m coming home, I’m coming home.

‘Cause it’s life that I’ve been living in my home.

Home, I’m coming home, I’m coming home.

‘Cause I’m tired of being out here on my own.

Once the song comes to an end, a lull falls over the crowd. Alex and Maggie are still lost in each other and Lena has to force herself not cry at the perfect selection and execution. She hears sobbing from beside her, and she sees Kara and Winn both a happy wreck over the couple. Lena can’t even roll her eyes at them because she feels the same.

So, damn the end of the world.

She’ll give these two the best wedding she can.
“Friends, family, colleagues, we’ve gathered here—rather promptly—to share in the love of Alexandra Danvers and Margerita Sawyer. In the time they’ve been together, their love has been tested through adversity and loss. They have seen the best of times and the worst, and damn if that isn't marriage in a nutshell. And yet, despite all odds against them, they pulled through and found each other again. Because of this love, these two wonderful, powerful, beautiful women, have decided to take the oath which binds them together forever in matrimonial union.”

Alex hears Lena take a breath before turning to her. “I won’t go into the whole processional details, because I’m sure no one wants to hear that right now. I’ll skip straight to the vows. Alex?”

Alex nods, clearing her throat as she reaches down for Maggie’s hands and gently clasps them in her own. She stares into those beautiful brown eyes, seeing more than just a woman and a wife.

She sees her home.

“Maggie,” Alex says, her voice shaky with emotion. “When I first met you, you were obstinate, hard-headed, and a bit of narcissist. You were this NCPD cop who tried to take control of a federal agent’s crime scene—”

“Hey,” Maggie fondly interrupts. “You weren’t a princess, either. And it was my crime scene, dummy.”

Alex just ignores the teasing jab and continues. “But over the days, and then weeks, and then months that I got to know you, to work with you, I realized that all of the stuff you portray on the outside doesn’t even compare to what is on the inside. You are brave, kind, loyal, and compassionate. You are everything to me. You’re my home, Maggie.”

Alex stops for a second to gather her thoughts before she nods and continues, blinking back emotional tears as she squeezes Maggie’s hands a bit tighter than before. “I’ve spent my whole life figuring out how to be better, how to be stronger, how to protect… but you’re the first person who’s helped me figure out how to be me.”

Maggie sniffles and Alex smiles, taking their hands and lifting them to her lips, laying a soft kiss to those knuckles.

“I love you, Maggie Sawyer. And I will love you until I can’t love you anymore, and even when that day comes, I’ll still find a way to love you. You're right, we're both stubborn assholes, but I want to be a stubborn asshole with you. No matter what happens, as long as you’re with me, we’ll find a way. I love you, and I can’t wait to be your wife.”

Taking a deep breath Alex gives her wife-to-be a shaky smile.

"I'm yours, Mags, for as long as you'll have me."

* * *

“Well,” Maggie sniffles as Alex lowers their hands. “I don’t know how to top that, Danvers. You always were one for the dramatics.”

Alex chuckles, and so do their small gaggle of family, friends, and co-workers. Maggie removes one of her hands to lightly brush away at her cheeks, not-so-discretely getting rid of her tears. Maggie takes a deep breath, looking back at the love of her life.
“Alex Danvers,” Maggie says, “the day I met you, you were a pain in my ass. You still are now, except I actually like your ass.”

“Hey,” Alex teases back, but Maggie only smiles. “Play nice.”

“But somewhere between the red tape and the secret Superhuman sister,” Maggie says, eyeing Kara with a teasing wink, “I fell in love. I fell in love with your strength, your protection, your determination, your willpower, your brilliance… your everything. I fell in love, faster and harder than I have with anyone before.”

Maggie swallows, looking down for a moment before continuing to say, “actually, that’s a lie. I’ve never been in love before. Everyone I’d ever seen or loved before you pales, Alex. You taught me so much about myself, about who I am, who I can be. You taught me to face my problems head on, to defend myself, to love myself.”

Maggie chokes as she gives Alex a watery smile. “You’ve given my life back to me, Alex. You’ve given me purpose and hope. I was stupid to have ever thought that we’d never work.” Maggie smiles again, looking down as she shakes her head at their first interaction since Alex had come out, when she’d rejected her kiss.

“But I was right that night I came to your apartment after nearly dying,” Maggie says, glancing back up at Alex lovingly. “Life’s too short to wait for things to settle. We should kiss the girls that we want to kiss.” Alex chuckles airily, tears welling in her eyes as Maggie inches closer, her forehead grazing Alex’s chin.

Maggie shrugs as she whispers, “and we should marry the girls we want to marry.”

Alex’s breath hitches as Maggie looks up, full of love and pride.

“And I really,” Maggie whispers, “really, want to marry you, Alex.”

* * *

“Then without further ado, there are only two questions left.”

Kara looks up from her blurry vision to see her girlfriend looking to Maggie before asking, “Maggie Sawyer, do you take Alex to be your lawfully-wedded wife, to care for her, love her, and protect her, in sickness and in health, as long as you both shall live?”

Maggie chokes as she nods, “yes, yes I do.”

Kara feels her heart thudding outside of her chest when Lena smiles and turns to Alex next, asking, “and you Alex Danvers, do you take Maggie Sawyer to be your lawfully-wedded wife, to care for her, love her, and protect her, in sickness and health, as long as—”

“Yes,” Alex interrupts with an emotional laugh. “Yes, Hell yes.”

Maggie laughs at Alex's impatience, and even Kara can’t hold back the stretching grin as she watches the detective lean into her older sister, ready to be wed, to be bonded for life. Lena only sighs, but Kara can see that she’s happy for them both. She’s never seen this much of a megawatt smile on her sister's face before.

And Kara loves every ounce of it.

“Then by the power vested in me, by the state of California, I now pronounce you wives. Alex,
Maggie, you may—"

But, traditional to their personalities, neither Alex nor Maggie wait for Lena to give them permission to kiss. Kara hoots as she watches her sister wind her arms around Maggie’s waist and dip her into a passionate, loving, deep kiss. Alex hovers them both off the ground and everyone in the crowd wolf-whistles and cheers for the couple.

Kara claps the loudest out of all of them, and she can’t stop herself from leaping forward and drawing both Alex and Maggie into a crushing hug once Alex releases her wife from the searing kiss. Maggie chuckles into her shoulder.

"Ease up, Little Danvers. We're not all Supers, you know."

But Kara can hear the teasing in her voice as she hugs her a bit tighter, earning a quiet chuckle from Maggie.

Her new sister just hugs her back, burrowing her face further into her shoulder and rubbing her back. Kara soaks it all in, clutching onto the woman who is now her official second sister. Alex is chuckling something in her ear, but she tunes it out when she instead settles for focusing on the steady thrum of both of their heartbeats in her ear. Maggie kisses her cheek while Alex kisses her forehead, and despite everything, Kara feels like her life is complete.

The world may end tomorrow, the day after, or the day after that.

But right now, in this small moment of peace, Kara thinks, the world can wait.

No.

It will wait.
Chapter Summary

Darkseid offers a proposition.

It turns out, the world doesn’t wait long enough after all.

As soon as Alex pulls away from the kiss, Lena’s computer beeps.

“Administrator Luthor, unauthorized access detected to L-Corp Lab B21. Silent alarms have been activated and video feed is disabled.”

Alex brings Maggie back up to stand, her eyes misting as she looks into the love of her life’s gaze and realizes that this is it. Everything they’ve barely prepared for is finally coming to its' end. Maggie just cups her face and kisses her hard, willing to ignore the pandemonium around them to draw in one final moment of peace. Alex loses herself in the kiss, tuning out the sounds of panic and fear from their audience. She holds Maggie close, treasuring her kiss.

"I love you," Maggie whispers as she pulls back from the kiss. Alex's eyes mist as she nods.

"I love you too, Mags." 

Winn clears his throat nervously, drawing their attention. "I hate to cut this short, but what is that?"

Alex and Maggie turn their attention to the screen projected by the tablet to see a massive hulking figure standing in the middle of the L-Corp basement lab. Alex stiffens in Maggie's grasp as she makes out the unfamiliar breed of alien. A shiver courses through her as the head of the monster juts upwards and crimson eyes glare into the screen before the feed cuts off and is replaced with static. Alex looks over to Kara and Lena, who look terrified.

“It’s him,” J’onn says when Alex turns to him. "Darkseid."

Alex takes a deep breath and sighs, giving Maggie's hand a squeeze before turning to her family.

“Let’s go save the world, I guess.”

* * *

Kara pummels through the wall at L-Corp with Alex hot on her tail. The two of them, dressed in their new and improved suits, stand tall amongst the rubble as they peer into the ravaged basement lab. From behind them both, Lena and Maggie emerge, the latter with her gun drawn out and a protective, but wary, expression. Lena is holding out her tablet, but she has a gun in the back of her trousers just in case. She peers out from over Kara's shoulder.

Kara looks over to the lumbering mass facing the screen before them, and she gasps when she sees the black spear with its' golden shard tips laying on the table in front of the looming figure. The sheer power of the weapon, from even a substantial distance, is enough to make her queasy. Kara shakes off the feeling and swallows thickly.
Before she can open her mouth to speak, the being chuckles lowly.

“I was beginning to think you wouldn’t show, young Kryptonian.”

The massive, near-eight-foot figure turns and smirks at them both. Kara can see that he’s mostly made of a rock-like texture, with two red slits for eyes. He’s wearing dark blue, sleeveless armour embroidered with omega signs.

“Darkseid,” Kara growls, bunching her fists as her eyes glow white. “We finally meet.”

“The Last Daughter of Krypton,” Darkseid says mockingly as he steps forward, crossing his arms as he peers at her with interest. “How does it feel, young Kara Zor-El, to be the last surviving member of a dead people? A loner?”

Kara aches at the implication, but at Darkseid’s grin, she wills herself to be strong and not think about Kal right now.

“He fought well,” Darkseid says, looking at his fingers with a smirk before he makes a gesture to his forehead. “His head will make an excellent mantle for my ship. The Son of Krypton, a failed hero and a failed protector of Earth.”

“Don’t you dare talk about him,” Kara snarls viciously, her fists clenching as she tries to contain her anger. Her chest rumbles with the roar she barely holds back. “Don’t you dare come near him. He is my family.”

“He was your family,” Darkseid muses, before his eyes rake over to Alex. “As it would seem, little Zor-El, but it is not actually Kal I’m interested in anymore.” Kara looks to his gaze and shakes her head, stepping in front of Alex protectively. Her eyes blaze in warning, but Darkseid only chuckles at the attempted tactic of intimidation.

“I have seen you through the eyes of my disciples,” Darkseid says as he hovers above the ground and moves in their direction. Kara refuses to flinch as he stands over them, more menacing up close. “The hybrid. A daughter of Earth and a descendant of Rao. A mixed-breed born from the embers of the cosmos, thrust into a new prophecy.”

Kara feels Alex tense up behind her.

“The Champion,” Darkseid drawls as he grins and extends his arms, “here before me, in the flesh.”

“Why are you doing this?” Alex asks, nudging her way past Kara to stand in front of the monger. She hovers slightly to match his gaze, trying not to wilt under the darkness in his gaze. “Why are you coming after Earth? Why us?”

Darkseid only chuckles, shaking his head. “I am not here for Earth, Champion. This planet is weak, filled with spineless creatures far too caught up with their own greed to see their plight. Earth is bound for destruction, Champion, but I am merely its’ catalyst. I am not here because of your planet, Champion. I am here for you.”

Kara watches as Darkseid tilts his head downwards, his eyes flitting down to the glowing black orb in the centre of Alex’s armour. She hates the satisfaction in his beady gaze. "The stone," he beams, "how it glows with power."

"Get away from her," Kara snarls as she steps in front of her sister, blocking his gaze. "You won't touch her."
“Earth will face rapture,” Darkseid hums, ignoring her interruption. “I am your salvation, Champion.”

“You’re a murderer,” Alex spits back, her hands clenching into fists. Kara shivers as she feels the Black Kryptonite pulsate and thrum with power. “Turn back now because we will stop you. This is your last chance to leave.”

Darkseid is silent for a few moments before he chuckles lowly, shaking his head before he knocks it back and cackles vindictively. His eyes glow red, and Kara almost crumbles to her knees as the ground vibrates beneath them. She can hear Lena and Maggie gasp and struggle to grab onto something as Darkseid hovers above the ground.

“My chance?” He snarls, looking back at them as the floorboards start to creak and the lights flicker. “Champion, for all of your wit and strength, I truly expected more from you. After all, aren’t you the same force of nature who ripped a man’s head off after he completed a fair trial? Are you not the one who has murdered those who have committed atrocities? You dare to call on me?” Kara watches Alex flinch at the weight of his words, her shoulders slumping.

But Darkseid only grins further and it makes Kara sick.

“You are no better than me,” he says as he hovers a few feet away, back to where the spear is still on the table. “You claim to be a figure of justice, but you are willing to do exactly what I do. It is for that reason that I sought you out, Champion. You are the only one truly worthy of carrying my mantle, of ruling beside me. You know the weight of sacrifice. You have taken from them exactly as I have taken from your Justice League. You are worthy of my lead.”

“Fuck you,” Alex spits out, though Kara hears her voice waver. “I’d never do what you do. Taking innocent lives—”

“But what is innocence, anyways?” Darkseid drawls, looking back to the spear. He reaches out, holding it in his hand as he looks down at it. Kara feels her knees quake as it emits a strong pulse. Darkseid even shivers slightly at the raw power from the weapon. “Who defines innocence? What grants one the title of being innocent or evil?”

Kara looks to Alex, wishing she could see her sister's facial expression beneath the mask. Darkseid chuckles again.

“You humans designed this,” he says as he holds the spear up and eyes it carefully, though his hand trembles. “They designed it with the specific intent to end a life, her life, to be exact.” Darkseid points to Kara with the spear.

“Now,” he continues, shrugging smugly and setting it down by his side. “Now, I am not sure about you, Champion, but to create a weapon to destroy someone who is a hero to this planet, is this still considered to be innocent?”

Kara watches her sister's shoulders slump as Alex turns to look at her. Darkseid chuckles, gripping the spear tighter in his hands as he reaches into his pocket for a small device. Alex tenses and raises her fists, but Darkseid tsks.

“Because I have grown fond of you, Champion, I will offer you something I’ve offered no one before,” Darkseid says as he looks to her sister. “Join me, rule with me, and I shall spare this dismal planet of its’ fate. Join me, and I’ll leave Earth alone. Your family, your people, they will face their natural undoing, a death by their own hands. Join me.”
“No,” Kara snarls, her eyes blazing again. “She won’t do it.”

"You fool!" Darkseid roars as the room quakes with his anger. Kara throws her hands up as he hovers over her, wind blowing out from around him as he glares down at her. "You dare challenge me, Kryptonian? I will end you!"

"Touch her and I’ll rip your head from your shoulders where you stand," Alex snarls as she slides between them. Kara looks over to see the two eye-slits glowing a deep, black red. Darkseid cocks his head, the wind ceasing to blow.

"Consider it a mercy I even dare ask you, Champion." Darkseid's voice is a low growl as he glares back at Kara. "I will give you one chance. Your life for the lives of nearly nine billion. It is up to you to decide how this turns out."

“She’s not going anywhere with you,” Maggie chimes in from behind Kara, whipping her gun out and pointing it in his direction. “I’ll rip your heart out myself, you ugly-ass rock freak.” Darkseid sighs and shakes his head.

"Pathetic humans," he mutters before he nods to Alex once more. “Tomorrow morning at first light, I will lay siege to this planet,” Darkseid continues, ignoring Maggie's slew of insults as he keeps his stare glued to Alex. Kara gulps

Darkseid hovers backwards, smirking. "You have until then to make your decision, Champion."

Before anyone else can respond, Darkseid presses down on the button of his device, opening up a glowing orange sphere from behind him. Kara can barely make out metal wiring and piping before Darkseid steps through with the spear still tightly gripped in his hand. He looks at all of them with a knowing, calm expression before he nods.

And then, with a cackle, the portal closes up and all is quiet.

* * *

“There’s no guarantee that he will even stop if we agree.”

“We are not agreeing, so we aren’t thinking about that.”

“I mean… if there’s a chance to save all of Earth, for one person…”

“Don’t dare even finish that sentence, Olsen, or else I’ll get Kara to fly you to Mars and leave you there until you die.”

“Maggie, I don’t think—”

“Kara, no, I won’t let him tell us that Alex is—”

“Stop.”

Maggie looks up from where she’d been only seconds away from wringing her hands around James Olsen’s throat for suggesting that giving Alex up to that warmongering tyrant to be a good idea. But, when realizes who interrupted her, she’s even more furious.

“Alex,” she growls her wife’s name, “don’t you dare…”

“Maggie please,” Alex says, raising her palms in order to try and diffuses the situation, but Maggie only fumes more. “Just listen…”
“Darkseid possesses brainwashing techniques that would make mine look like child’s play,” J’onn cuts in suddenly, worried. “Alex, if he got a hold of you, he would use you as a weapon, nothing more. You would cease to exist as your own person, and Darkseid would use you to destroy Earth. You cannot entertain his offer, I beg of you.”

“I’m not,” Alex snaps as she looks at the both of them, fury dancing in her eyes. “I’m not giving myself up because I know what I am capable of doing if my powers are placed in the wrong hands. I wouldn’t do that. Not anymore.”

“Then what’s your plan, Danvers?” James mutters, crossing his arms as he glares at her in frustration. “He took our weapon, remember? Our only shot at defeating him? I don't get how we're supposed to finish this fight now.”

“He did take the spear,” Alex says, sighing as she takes a seat at the dinner table. “And we need to get it back because Lena says we can’t make another one, at least not in the time required to fight Darkseid.”

“Wait,” Kara says, hovering over to where Alex sits. “When he teleported, it looked like there was metal wiring and pipes—could he have teleported to his ship? Remember that he isn’t able to teleport back to Apokolips, so the weapon might still be within range. If we can get to his ship, maybe we can steal it back. It's a shot, Alex.”

Maggie watches as Alex opens her mouth to reply, but before she can, a thunderous roar splits across the room. The walls quake with the force of the vibrations, forcing everyone to look outside. Instantly, Maggie whips out her gun.

Everyone stumbles outside on shaky knees, looking up to the sky almost tearing itself apart. Maggie gasps and nearly drops her gun at the sight of a massive ship entering the stratosphere, flanked by smaller ships. The sound of the engines blare across the air, making Maggie flinch as the ship draws closer and closer towards the ground.

“Wait,” Alex says suddenly, looking down to her chest eagerly. “Kelex, if I get close enough, would I be able to get a scan of the ship’s layout, including the location of the Gold Kryptonite? I could do some low-key recon, right?”

There’s a pause before Kelex replies, “yes, this is possible.”

“Wait,” Sara chimes in from where she’d been lingering in the back with the rest of the Legends. “Before you go all out on your heroic scouting missions, we found something.” Maggie frowns as Sara pulls up a screen, showing a blurry image of a spear in a small room.

“What is this?” Maggie asks, frowning. “Is this…?”

“Darkseid’s ship?” Sara asks, smirking. “Yeah, it is.”

“But, how…?” Kara trails off, impressed as she looks to the feed with interest. “You’ve never seen the inside of it?”

“No,” Sara says, “but Gideon has. It took her awhile to hack it, but she got it eventually. This will save you some time, Supergirl. It looks like the weapon is being kept in a small storage compartment in the western corridor, near the galley. Gideon has relayed the coordinates to all of your personal devices. There's no need for the hero bullshit.”

“That’s great and all, but we still don’t have a plan on how to get the actual weapon,” Maggie says, combing through her hair in frustration as she looks over to Sara impatiently. “Unless Gideon can
magically teleport the device to us?”

Sara shakes her head. "She's great, but she's not that great."

“I think I have an idea,” Ava chirps from beside Sara. “But we’d only have one shot at making it work.”

Maggie rolls her eyes. “Well, we are a team known for rash, near-suicidal decisions—”

Alex grunts. “Maggie.”

“Sorry,” Maggie says, feeling slightly admonished. “I’m just nervous, okay? This isn’t exactly what I expected our honeymoon to be, Al. We’re not by-the-books, but I was kind of hoping for a trip to Mallorca or Mykonos.”

"Greece? Really?"

"What? It's cheap and easy."

“Guys,” Winn whimpers desperately, “can we focus, please?”

“Right—sorry,” Maggie says, blushing. “Go on, Director Sharpe.”

“Like I was saying,” Ava continues as she presses a few buttons on her own tablet. “I think that we can get the weapon without being noticed. We just need a suitable distraction to get in and out. It would be a silent operation.”

"I like this already," Alex says, and Maggie hums in agreement. Kara holds up her hand, looking at Ava warily.

“And what’s the distraction?” Kara asks, hovering as her gaze flits between the two Legends and the ship still making its’ way through the atmosphere and closer towards Earth’s surface. Ava looks to Sara, who avoids her glance.

“Well,” Ava says as she turns back to Kara, swallowing nervously. “Alex.”

“No,” Kara snarls, her fingers forming tight fists as she glares down at the Director. “Not a chance. If he takes Alex—”

But Alex cuts her off, holding up her hand. “I’ll do it.”

“Alex,” Maggie whispers, “stop this. He could take you—”

“He won’t,” Alex says as she turns to face her with a steadfast expression. “If he knows as much as I think he does, he’ll know that I’m his only leverage. And I can make it all disappear. With Clark and the Justice League bearing down on Apokolips, he’s weaker than he’s ever been. He trembled when he held the spear, Maggie. He’s weaker now.”

“Alex, stop, I won’t let you—"

“I won’t let him take me,” Alex says to her, reaching out to place her hands on her shoulders. “I can buy enough time for both you and Lena to get on the ship. The fewer people we have, the less likely we draw attention to ourselves.”

“Lena’s not going aboard the ship,” Kara growls protectively from the side. “You may be ready to die at a given moment, Alex, but I won’t let you subject everyone else to that same fate, especially
not another woman I love.”

The words are biting, and even Maggie flinches at the raw hurt in those blue eyes. She knows that it’s hard for herself to accept Alex’s self-sacrificial tendencies, but she can’t imagine what Kara’s feeling. The woman in question, however, steps forward with an exhausted expression. She places a hand on the small of Kara's back.

“Lena can speak for herself,” Lena mutters as she rubs at her forehead. Kara whirls on her, but Lena fixes her with a steely look. “You can’t get the spear because it will kill you, Kara. It leaves me and Maggie. Alex is right, darling.”

“No,” Kara snarls, tears burning in her eyes as she hovers in front of Lena. “I won’t lose you. I can’t lose you, Lena.”

“Ssh,” Lena whispers as she reaches up to take Kara’s face in her palms. “It’s going to be okay, Kara. We’ll get in and out quickly. Darkseid will be on the ground, leaving him vulnerable. If we get in undetected, there's little risk.”

“You can’t guarantee that,” Kara says, her voice cracking. “Please… Lena, I’ve lost so much. I can’t… I just…”

She hangs her head. "I can't do this. I can't keep losing people, Lee.”

"You won't," Lena says softly, "I'm a Luthor, darling. We're resourceful and we always find a way."

“You won’t be alone,” Sara pipes up from behind them. “Both Ava and I will come with Lena and Maggie. Kara doesn't need to fly you. Just because the party has to be small doesn’t mean it’s limited to two. We’ll use our teleporters to get onboard the ship. Besides, it would be suspicious if Alex didn’t show up with her running buddy, right?”

Maggie mulls it over and nods. "It sounds good. I won't turn down the back-up."

“How can I trust you?” Kara asks, arching her brow at Sara curiously. “How do I know that you’re not working for Darkseid, and that maybe this is all some sort of sick illusion? A trap?” Sara frowns at the heavy accusation.

“Maybe because, I don’t know, he killed my mother?”

“But your mother is still alive on your planet,” Kara says, moving to where Sara is standing. “You could be a spy—”

“Kara, that’s enough,” Alex mutters, rubbing her brow as she reaches out and pulls her little sister back into her. Kara initially hesitates, her eyes still glaring a hole into Sara’s unaffected gaze, but eventually she relents and curls in Alex’s open arms, nuzzling against the strong, corded muscles of her neck. Alex rubs soothing lines down her back.

"We're all tense," Alex says, looking between Kara, Sara, and Maggie. "Fighting amongst ourselves will do nothing."

"I agree," Maggie sighs as she looks to Sara. "But you're sure this could work, Lance?"

“My mother is dead on my planet,” Sara says quietly, drawing Kara’s attention back to her. Maggie holds a breath as she watches those usually sharp blue eyes soften. “On every universe I’ve been to, every version of Earth, she’s dead. That never changes, Kara. I have lived the pain of losing my
family just as you have, but I can't go back in time.”

Maggie feels her chest ache as Sara looks at the schematics of the ship on Gideon’s projection with a sad sigh. “Just like I can’t bring back the people you’ve lost, Kara. I can’t kill Darkseid or warp him into another dimension. But I can do this. Infiltration is my team’s speciality. We will get that weapon and come back, and then together, we will end this war once and for all. No more violence, no more losses, no more death. How does that sound, Kara?”

Kara sniffs in Alex’s arms before she nods.

“Yeah,” she croaks, “sounds good. And… I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Sara says, nodding. “End of the world and all. I know the stress can make us all… frazzled.”

“Okay, so the plan is what exactly?” Lena asks, confusion seeping into her voice. “Forgive me, but I’m a bit lost.”

“Alright,” Sara says as she holds the projection. “Let me explain.”

* * *

“Do you really think this will work?”

Lena looks up from where she’s typing in some final calculations into her computer to where Kara is leaning against her doorframe. She looks as about out-of-place one could be, dressed in her fuzzy pajamas and her eyes red-rimmed. Her bottom lip wobbles slightly.

“Yes,” Lena says as she sets her computer away and takes off her glasses. “I think that Sara’s plan, should there be no major complications, will work. And I think, no I know, we’ll be okay.”

“If something happens, I won’t be able to save you,” Kara whimpers slightly as she pads into the room, taking a hesitant seat on the corner of the unmade bed. “The spear, it will prevent me from flying. It doesn’t help that Darkseid has the ship hovering in the air. I wish it were on the ground, so that I could at least—”

“You still wouldn’t be able to help,” Lena reminds her gently, walking around the bed to sit next to her. “The power of the Gold Kryptonite would drain you in a matter of minutes, Kara. You wouldn’t even be able to hurt a fly, let alone barrel through the ship to save us.” Kara hangs her head defeatedly, shaking her head.

“I feel so useless,” Kara whispers, looking to her hands dejectedly. “I can’t do half of what I used to be able to do without your new suit. I’m… I’m half-baked, Lena. I’m not the same Supergirl that was able to run head-first into danger anymore.”

“That’s not true,” Lena tells her, reaching out to tip her girlfriend’s chin upwards. “Look at me, Kara. That S on your suit doesn’t stand for Super, remember? It stands for hope. For strength. That’s what Clark told you. It’s what Alex told you.”

“Alex,” Kara repeats her sister’s name in a soft whimper, tears welling in her eyes as she looks up to Lena with wide eyes. “I’m putting my sister in harm’s way.”

“It’s nothing she’s never done before,” Lena reminds her gently. “Your sister would take her life a million times over if it meant protecting you—just as you would for her. It’s your bond, Kara.”
“But what kind of bond is one forged in death?” Kara asks bitterly. “I’ve resigned her to this fate. Because of me, she’s unable to live the life she’s always dreamed of, Lena. She wanted to be a Mom, to have a family, to live a normal, happy, peaceful life.”

“And you think a life without you would be normal, happy, or peaceful?” Lena counters, tilting her head. Kara’s brow furrows.

“She would be better off without me.”

“Would she really?” Lena asks, her voice barely above a whisper. “Look me in the eye, Kara, and tell me that you think Alex would be happier without you in her life, powers and all.” When Kara can’t look up, Lena smiles half-heartedly. She wraps her arm around her girlfriend’s shoulder and draws her in for a tight hug. She pecks Kara’s hair and breathes in her familiar lavender scent.

“One day, both of you will have that life,” Lena assures her, mumbling the words into her cheek as she kisses her skin softly. “One day, all of this will be behind you, and the world will look to someone else to protect them. You both deserve that life, Kara.”

Kara lets it sink in before she nods and wraps her arms around Lena’s waist. Lena closes her eyes, sighing as she pulls the younger woman into her embrace with a stronger grip. She kisses Kara’s forehead, and then her cheeks, and then her lips once more.

“Now come on,” Lena murmurs, “we need to rest. Big day tomorrow.”

“I will,” Kara tells her, extricating herself from Lena’s grip with a small sniffle. “But first, I think I need to talk to Alex.”

Lena just nods. “Of course, Kara. Whatever you need, I’ll be here.”

“I love you,” Kara whispers as she looks down at her. “And thank you, Lena, for supporting me, even if I’ve not returned it as often.” Lena sighs, rising to her feet so she can kiss her gently.

“Love is not about payment,” Lena tells her, “it’s about reciprocation, and understanding, and hope. I love you, Kara, and you don’t owe me anything, okay? Except maybe a decent vacation.”

Kara chuckles sadly, looking down with a blush. “I don’t suppose you’d like to go back to Ireland, again? To relax this time?”


* * *

J’onn walks out onto the beach to where Alex is standing, staring at the water silently and alone.

"If you're here to talk me out of this—"

"No," J’onn says as he comes to stand beside the woman he proudly considers his daughter. "I'm not here to talk you out of it, Alex. I won't ask you to reconsider when you and I both know how delicate this situation is."

Alex nods, her eyes still glued to the horizon. J’onn swallows thickly, looking down as his eyes mist with tears.

"Alex," he says softly, "Darkseid is unlike any alien you have ever faced. He is more powerful than either of us."
Alex is quiet for a moment before she swallows. "Not me."

J'onn arches his brow. "Alex—"

"Kelex did research on Darkseid's vulnerabilities," Alex says, turning to face him now with a knowing expression. It's one which brings dread to sit unsettlingly at the pit of his throat. "The power of a full fusion with the Black Kryptonite would allow for me to end him without the spear, if necessary." J'onn's brows furrow at the suggestion.

"A full fusion?" He echoes in disbelief. "Alex that would—"

"I know," Alex says quietly, looking back to the water. "But tell me, J'onn, since the beginning, has my fate changed?" J'onn holds back tears when he hears the crack in his daughter's voice, the understanding and the pain overwhelming him as he watches her stiffen. Alex closes her eyes and takes in a deep breath, swallowing thickly.

"Kelex and I installed a fail-safe into my suit," Alex says, a small smile tugging at her lips. "If Darkseid tries to wipe me, the instant the connection between us is established, the fusion will be enabled. He will be vulnerable to any attack, not just from the spear. You and Kara would be able to take him down and end this war before it begins."

J'onn's heart shatters at the implications. "Alex…"

"Please," Alex begs, her voice strained as she looks over to him. "Don't make this more difficult, J'onn."

"I won't let it come to that," J'onn says firmly, "I won't let you make that decision, not while I draw breath."

Alex simply looks up to him and smiles, her eyes watery as she reaches out to grip his shoulder. "I never thanked you, you know." J'onn's heart aches as Alex smiles again, her lips trembling. "For saving me, for recruiting me to the DEO. You gave a me a purpose, J'onn, a life where I meant something. You gave me a father. You gave me hope."

"Alex," J'onn rasps, "don't—"

"Let me return the favour," Alex says, "let me save you, this time."

"Alex—"

"J'onn," Alex whispers, her voice cracking. "Please."

J'onn hears the unspoken words between them, and he hangs his head before he nods. Alex lets out a small relieved breath before she burrows into his chest. His arms come up around her shoulders and hold her closely, his lips finding her forehead as they both embrace under the pale dusk light. J'onn tries not to remember the last time he held his daughters like this, right before they, too, had been taken from them. He focuses on only Alex.

"I love you," he whispers into her buzzed hair, "and I am so proud of you, my child."

"I love you too, Dad." Alex's voice is a muffled snuffle against his shoulder. "I love you."

J'onn nods and squeezes her once more before she breaks away from his hold and meets his gaze with a watery, determined look. J'onn smiles proudly, his own eyes watery as he watches Alex snap a trembling salute before she turns and walks in the direction of the house. J'onn watches her go
until she opens the door and enters.

Once alone, he turns and looks to the sky and the emerging stars with a sigh.

"Watch over her," he whispers up to the sky, "protect her as you have protected me all these years."

His plea falls silent over the water, but J'onn closes his eyes and prays he was heard.

* * *

“Where’s Maggie?”

Alex looks up from where she’s nursing two fingers of her father’s secret fifty-year old scotch to see her mother walking into the living room, dressed in a fluffy gown and wearing a tired expression. Alex pulls out the seat next to her and nods to it. Her head is still ringing with the conversation she’d had with her pseudo-father only hours ago.

“Sleeping,” Alex says as she watches her mother take a seat. “As should you, Mom. Tomorrow will be… well…”

“J’onn told me about your plan,” Eliza says, swallowing thickly. “Alex, I told you that I didn’t want you to—”

“It’s okay,” Alex whispers, cutting her off with a wave of her hand. “I’ve got it figured out, Mom. Trust me. It’s fine.”

“You and Maggie just got married—”

“And I’m glad we did,” Alex finishes, looking up to her mother with a bittersweet smile as she lifts the glass to her lips. “Not marrying that woman would’ve been my greatest regret if I die. I love her so much and now she’s my wife.”

Eliza flinches. “Alex—”

“I’ve run through every single different possibility,” Alex says, cutting her off as she stares at the bottom of her glass. “No matter what outcome happens tomorrow, I’m not living through it. This is, and always has been, a suicide mission. I can't sugarcoat it, I can't hide from the truth. Lena and I haven’t figured out a way to separate the Black Kryptonite from my vital organs, and at this point, it might even be too late if she could. I… I’m… it's over, Mom.”

Alex stops talking when her throat closes, daggers slicing against her heart and chest at the realization. She hangs her head, closing her eyes as she murmurs, “no matter how this ends, I’m not coming out of this alive, Mom.”

“Yes, you are.”

Alex’s head whips up to see Kara walking into the kitchen, a determined look on her face as she takes a seat beside Alex. Eliza remains quiet as Kara reaches out, taking Alex’s palms in her own. Her eyes are glowing brightly with love and protection. The heat from her gaze would intimidate anyone else, but Alex finds herself revelling in it.

“You’re not dying tomorrow, Alex. I don’t care if I have to go to the underworld to get you back, I will.” Kara’s words are hard, but not cold. Alex’s heart clinches at the crack in her sister’s voice. Kara squeezes their hands tightly, anchoring them both. Her sister leans closer, their foreheads touching as Kara nods to her sister with determination.
“It’s you and me against the world,” Kara whispers fiercely, “that never changes, Alex.”

“No,” Alex murmurs as she sighs, smiling sadly. “It doesn’t.”

"Then we fight," Kara says as she squeezes her hands. "We don't give up. You don't give up."

"But—"

"No buts," Kara says as she reaches out and hugs her. "I lost my planet, my people, my cousin…”

Alex shudders as she feels Kara's chest hitch before a low rumble bursts from her throat.

"I'm not losing you, too."

"You can't control that," Alex sniffs, choking back a sad chuckle. "My brave girl…"

"Don't give me that, Alex. We're both getting out of this alive," Kara tells her determinedly, pulling back from the hug to give her a threatening glare. "I don't care if I have to go to another Earth to find the cure, but I will. You won't die."

"No, she won't." Alex turns at the sound of her mother's watery tone. "What's your saying again, girls?"

Alex hangs her head and chuckles sadly, a lone tear sliding down her cheek as Kara squeezes her again.

"Danvers Sisters, yes we can," Kara says, nudging her sister. Alex looks up and sighs before she nods, sniffing.

"If you can't do it," she says, smiling up at her mother and sister, "Danvers can."

* * *

**November 25th, 2018**

“Are you ready?”

Kara finishes strapping in the last few buckles of her suit before she turns to face Lena. The sky is still dark outside their windows, and from the sounds of pattering against the panes of glass and the droplets she can see, it’s begun to rain heavily. Kara turns her attention back to her girlfriend, mustering up a brave smile as she finishes her suit.

“As ready as I’ll ever be, I guess.”

“Remember the plan,” Lena says as she reaches up and adjusts her cape with nervous fingers. “Don’t act rashly, no matter what happens. Trust in us, Kara. We’ll get the job done; I promise. There’s no room for doubt, here.”

“I trust you,” Kara says, closing her eyes, “and I love you.”

“I love you, too. Now, kiss me, Kara.”

Kara doesn’t even wait before she wraps her arms around Lena’s shoulders and draws her in for a searing kiss. Lena gives as good as she gets as she tucks her hands in Kara’s cape, gripping tightly. Kara parts her mouth slightly, allowing Lena to deepen the kiss before she lifts them both off the ground, hovering. Lena smiles into her kiss.
“That will never get old,” Lena chuckles airily, shaking her head as she pulls away. Her hand covers the S. “I still can’t believe you thought you could hide it from me.” Kara shrugs and blushes, setting them both down.

“I never was good at keeping secrets,” she says meekly. Lena smiles and kiss her forehead.

"The glasses really were a poor choice," Lena says as she fiddles with Kara's cape. "Not discrete at all."

"It worked for Kal."

At the mention of her late-cousin, the mood turns somber. Kara sighs and looks down, trying to push down the hurt and grief beneath the mantle of her crest, but Lena's deft fingers on her jaw halt her from repression. She looks up to those beautiful emerald eyes and she sees the fierce love and protection in her lover's gaze. Lena nods at her.

Lena reaches up and gently fixes up her cape.

“Alright,” she sighs, “let’s finish this, Supergirl.”

"For Kal," Kara says, her voice steady as her jaw sets. "For Earth."

* * *

“You’re sure you’ll be able to keep her safe?”

“I mean, Lucy and James will be there. Vasquez, too.”

“That’s more assuring.”

“Gee, thanks. You know I thought I had a bit more credit, Alex.”

“Shut up, Winn. Now get over here, nerd.”

Maggie watches with a small smile as Winn practically throws himself into her wife’s arms, his face tucked into the exposed of her neck. His body fits awkwardly amongst the armour, but Alex doesn’t push him away. Instead, she holds him gently, protectively.

Winn eventually pulls himself away before he turns to face Eliza, who is staring at her daughter with a mixture of emotions. Maggie knows that Eliza must be feeling distraught, knowing she’ll be helpless behind the fortified walls of the DEO while her two daughters—the last of her family—face a massive, genocidal maniac.

“Mom,” Alex says as she looks to her mother. “Listen to everything these guys say, okay? Don’t be a hero. We need you back at base.”

“I’ll be fine,” Eliza chokes out as she reaches out to wrap Alex in her arms. “Please… just be careful out there. Come home, Alex.”

Maggie’s eyes glisten as Alex tenses in her mother’s grip, before she relaxes and nods, leaning down to peck her forehead gently.

“I’ll do my best, Mom.”

Maggie hears sniffling, and she turns to see Kara, dressed to the nines in her White Kryptonite suit, staring at the scene sadly. Maggie offers her a half-smile, one that Kara takes with a half-hearted
shrug, before she practically flies over to join the hug.

“My girls,” Eliza hums as both Danvers sisters tuck themselves against her. “You make me so proud, every single day. I love you.”

“We love you too,” Kara sniffs, hugging her closer. “And when we come back, please tell me you’ll make my favourite pie? Please?”

Eliza chuckles, a watery, heartbreaking sound, but she nods.

“For you?” Eliza whispers, pulling back to look at her. “Anything.”

Kara beams, and Alex cuffs her playfully before looking between both women. Maggie’s heart aches because she knows Alex feels despondent about the future, of whether she’ll live to see the end of this day (she will, and Maggie is resolute in this). But when she looks to Alex now, she sees a new fire in Alex’s brown eyes.

"You too," Eliza says as she looks to Lena and Maggie. "Come here for a hug, girls."

Maggie and Lena both hesitate a moment before Eliza walks over and wraps them both up in tight hugs. Eventually, after the group hug goes on for a bit longer than anticipated, Eliza eventually lets go with a sniffle and a slow nod.

“Take care of each other,” Eliza whispers, “and be safe, girls.”

“We will,” Alex tells her, voice hoarse. “I promise.”

“Good,” Eliza chokes out, wiping uselessly at her tears as she reluctantly pulls herself away from the two of them. “Now go out there and show that asshole just exactly which family he’s messing with. Kick his ass, girls.”

Maggie and Lena smile at the comment, and so do Alex and Kara.

“We will,” Kara says with a grin. “He won’t know what’s coming, Mom.”

Eliza just nods again before she gives them each one last hug. Alex and Kara both move to where Maggie is standing, watching as Eliza gets in the DEO-issued SUV with Lucy Lane at the helm.

The car speeds off down the Midvale roads, towards National City, without turning back.

“Alright,” Alex says, fixing the rest of them with a determined look. “Let’s go.”
“You’re absolutely sure about this?”

Lena looks up from where she’s strapping into her new suit—courtesy of Sara and the Legends—to where Kara is fretting anxiously. She glances at the nervous tremble in her girlfriends and sighs deeply. Lena smiles at her as she adjusts the last strap and steps towards her girlfriend. She holds out her hands, lightly cupping Kara’s face.

“Baby,” Lena murmurs, “I’ll be okay.”

Kara flinches, eyes watering as she quivers in Lena’s grasp. “What if—”

“Kara,” Lena says softly, leaning forward to kiss her. She cherishes the familiar taste of her love. “I love you, and I need you down on the ground with Alex and J’onn. We will be okay. If you worry about me, Alex will be in danger.”

“I hate this,” Kara mutters, her brows furrowing as she looks up to the stationary ship a few thousand feet above them, hovering between the clouds. “I hate having to choose between you. I can’t protect you up there, Lena. If I…”

Lena sighs, burrowing her head into Kara’s chest as those familiar, strong arms wrap around her shoulders and squeeze her gently. Kara’s body is still shaking, but is less nervous and more agitated now. She knows Kara can’t finish her thought because the idea of Lena being vulnerable, of being so far from her reach, is incredibly daunting.

And even to Lena, the thought is miserable.

“I’ve got Maggie and Sara and Ava,” Lena assures her as confidently as she can. “One woman is the best detective in this city, another is a trained assassin, and the last one is our version of a time lord. I couldn’t ask for better bodyguards. Besides, if you spend all the time worrying about me, less of your attention will be on Darkseid.”

“I guess,” Kara dejectedly mumbles, kicking at a pebble. “I still hate it, though.”

“Hate it or not, it’s happening. And if we don’t get ready, we’re not gonna make the drop. Ava says that Gideon has tracked the para-demons’ watch shifts. The room where the weapon is stored will be unguarded for only twenty minutes, so we won’t have much time. We only have one shot,
Kara, and we cannot afford to waste it on doubts,” Lena explains as she strokes Kara's cheek before leaning up to kiss her forehead. "We have to do it right, Kara."

“Right,” Kara coughs out awkwardly, hiding her tears as she steps back from their embrace. "Yeah, Lee, you're right." She reaches out and twirls a lock of her raven hair in her fingers, before she takes a deep breath and nods.

“Be safe,” Lena tells her, leaning forward to kiss her once more. “Remember what I said, Supergirl.”

Kara looks up, her brows furrowed. "What?"

Lena only smiles, kissing her one final time before she whispers, "you owe me a vacation after this."

* * *

“I’m not gonna lie, I can see why we were best friends.”

“Just wait ‘till I show you the weapon’s closet, Sawyer. The suit pales compared to the firepower I'm giving you.”

Maggie drools as Sara unveils an intricate array of guns and swords on display in the armoury box brought in. Her eyes are immediately focus in on the decked-out pump-action shotgun. She reaches down and feels the cool metal in her hands and has to hold back a groan. Maggie fingers over the intricate detailing on the side of the firearm.

“This baby?” Sara drawls out confidently, smirking as she nods to the gun in Maggie's hands. “It's got titanium 0.50 calibre explosive rounds, with a two-shot reload rate. Heat sinks are built in the side to prevent overheating, and the rounds can be switched to a vaporizing pulse when the bullets run out. Best catch? It’s lightweight and mobile.”

“I’m actually in love,” Maggie murmurs as she brandishes the weapon. The grip molds to her fingers like it was meant to be there. “And the pulse? How many shots can I take before it is empty?” When she looks up, Sara is beaming at her with a shit-eating grin. Maggie gasps in disbelief, shaking her head in awe as she looks back down.

“An infinite-ammo shotgun,” Maggie mutters, “I really am in love.”

“And to think we only got married a few hours ago.”

Maggie turns around to see Alex walking over to them, smiling warmly as she takes in the look of pure, unadulterated joy on Maggie’s face as she holds the gun in her hands. Maggie looks to her wife (her wife!), decked in her own armour and carrying her mask in her hand. Maggie swoons at the sight of her lover and smiles dreamily as Alex takes a good look at her own skin-tight suit with armour padding around her chest and torso.

"See something you like, Danvers?” Maggie asks, grinning goofily. Sara snickers and Maggie ignores the stage-whispered ‘that's so gay' from behind her. Alex also ignores Sara's teasing as she reaches out to tug Maggie into her arms. The detective doesn't resist as she's swept into a heated kiss. Her fingers slide into Alex's buzzed hair.

"Mm," Maggie murmurs, "I love you, Danvers, but this suit and this gun…"

"Ha," Alex chuckles. “And to think that you liked the Daxamite pistol I’d nicked a few months
ago.”

“Listen,” Maggie says, pulling back as she slings the shotgun over her shoulder and picks up her helmet, tucking it under her arm. “That gun will be mine one day, Danvers, but for right now, this baby will do. It's all mine.”

Alex reaches out and traces her hand over the firearm with warm smile. “Named it already?”

“I’m thinking Bertha,” Maggie says, grinning. “Suits her.”

“Oh course it does,” Alex says, smiling harder as Maggie leans into her space. Maggie sidles up next to her, nuzzling under her wife's jaw as Sara suits up in front of them. “You feeling okay? You’ve never teleported before, have you?”

“No,” Maggie says, glancing back to where she notices Ava walking over to Sara, dressed in her own light armour. Sara glances up and smiles as Ava reaches out and hands Sara her white leather belt. Maggie hums when she watches Ava nudging Sara with her hip playfully. “But I don’t think it could be that bad. I handled Kara’s flying.”

Alex snorts. “By handled you mean projectile vomiting on my sister, right?”

“That was one time,” Maggie frowns, turning to her wife. "I wasn't used to her flying style."

“That’s already more than enough times.”

“Alex,” Maggie sighs, looking down at her helmet. “I know you what you’re doing.”

“Oh?” Alex asks, arching her brow. “What’s that?”

“Deflecting.”

Alex pauses, gulping nervously. “I’m not deflecting, I’m just making… conversation.”

“You’re scared,” Maggie says, glancing back up to the nervous expression flitting in those familiar brown eyes. She reaches up to cup her cheek. “Alex, we will be okay. I’ve taken on para-demons before. I’m worried about you.”

“Darkseid won’t do anything to me,” Alex tells her firmly. “Besides, I have a backup plan in case he tries anything.”

Maggie frowns. “You didn’t mention a back-up plan before.”

“Because no one needs to know about it,” Alex counters, an air of mystery in her voice. The nonchalance in her tone, laced with the subtle nervousness makes Maggie's insides twist. “Seriously, Mags, I just need you to focus on getting and out of that ship. Once we have the weapon, we get it into that bastard’s chest and end this, once and for all.”

“I don’t know,” Maggie says, suspiciously eyeing her wife. “I just… I just hope you know what you’re doing, Danvers. I love you, and I just married you, so don’t go off pulling poetic bullshit, okay? You have to come back to me safe.”

“I will,” Alex says gently. “As long as you don’t be a hero and pull the same self-sacrificial shit.”

Maggie scoffs, waving her off. “I wouldn’t dare.”

“Right,” Alex chuckles sadly, “two peas in a pod, us.”
“The best damn peas you’d find,” Maggie agrees, reaching up to cup Alex’s cheek. “Come back to me alive, Danvers. We still got a whole lot of living to do, and I’m not doing any of it without you. You owe me a honeymoon, babe.”

“Ditto,” Alex mumbles as she leans down, capturing Maggie’s lips in her own. "I suppose Greece isn't that bad. I could make do over there if that's where your heart's set." Maggie smiles as she deepens their kiss. Alex hums and holds her close, drawing her into her chest. Their kiss is heated, but sensual and slow, full of love and passion and a million unsaid words. Maggie closes her eyes, losing herself in the sensation of Alex’s sweeping tongue.

But the moment is shattered by pale, pink light spilling over the mountain ranges.

Maggie feels those soft lips pull away, and her heart sinks as she realizes this is it.

“I love you,” she whispers as she opens her eyes. “Forever, Alex.”

Alex just nods, leaning her head down so their foreheads graze.

“To infinity and beyond, Sawyer.”

* * *

Sara stands, Ava at her side as she watches Maggie and Lena say their final goodbyes (for now, because she refuses this to be a one-way mission) to their respective partners. As she watches the women exchange words of comfort and love, she feels a familiar hand slip into her own, squeezing gently and distracting her from the image.

“We’ll get it this time,” Ava tells her quietly, encouragingly. "We have to, Sara."

Sara looks up at her, at the darkness in those eyes. A darkness that she’s familiar with from her own past attempts to change this outcome for other Earths. She feels that darkness, that loss. She knows how it's always ended.

But not this time.

This time, they could change how it all ends.

Sara sets her jaw determinedly and nods. “We will,” she tells her confidently. “And then we go home.”


She’d purposely sent the others to help out with the last-minute evacuation efforts and to fall back to the DEO in case something went terribly wrong. She knew what Eliza meant to this operation, and she won’t let the same mistake from before to be repeated. They’ve changed everything they’ve could from every possible timeline.

But God knows if it will be enough.

“Don’t you think we should tell them?” Ava asks with a hint of nervousness, and Sara follows her gaze to where Alex and Kara are pulling back from hugging their partners. “About the other Earths? The previous attempts to—”

“It wouldn’t do anything to help them,” Sara mumbles, taking a deep breath. “We need to focus on the changing this reality. The past doesn't do anything for them in the present. We've taken what
we've learned. Things are different.”

“Alright,” Maggie’s voice cuts in, and Sara sees her walking up with Lena. “We’re ready, Lance. Let’s do this.”

Sara blinks and nods, straightening up as she looks at the doppelgänger of her best friend back on her Earth. She sees the determination and grit in Maggie’s expression, and even though she’s seen this look before, in previous Earths, previous outcomes, she sees something different in her fierce gaze. It’s... very soothing. It's familiar.

“Come on then,” Sara says as she nods to Ava, “open the portal.”

* * *

Alex watches as the portal closes behind Maggie, Lena, Sara, and Ava. She’d seen the brief glimpse of the wiring and piping of Darkseid’s ship, but within seconds, it was gone as it’d come. It left her, J'onn, and Kara standing alone.

"They'll be okay," J'onn says, "they're strong, Alex."

Alex looks over to her pseudo-father with a frown, her nerves still twisting at her insides. Kara looks to be fairing no better judging by the slight white sheen to her eyes. She reaches down and squeezes her sister's hand, taking a deep breath as Kara looks to her worriedly. She nods at her and then at J'onn, before they look over to crater and rubble from their first fight. National City had been mostly evacuated, but Alex knows not everyone could be moved.

A bright blue cackle bursts to life in the centre of the crater, and Alex's heart sparks.

"There he is," Kara says softly, drawing Alex’s attention away from the spot where her wife had previously been standing. She looks up to see the familiar lumbering figure standing in the centre with his hands behind his back.

"This is it," J'onn says as he stiffens. "The final battle."

"No matter what happens, our only mission is to finish him," Alex says as she looks to her two companions. "He dies so the rest of us can live. There is no other way out from this. This is our last chance to save our home."

Kara nods, taking a steadying breath before she looks to Alex and nods. "I'm ready."

"I love you," Alex says as she looks at her, "and I'm so proud of you, Kara. The woman you've become..."

She chokes up when she thinks about their childhood together, of the years they spent attached at the hip after Kenny's death. She remembers the Sisters' Nights, the ice-cream after break-ups, the laughs, the game nights.

"I love you too," Kara whispers as she reaches out and tugs Alex into a hug. "This isn't the end, Alex."

There's a doubt inside of her, a festering thought which leeches through her like a parasite. And yet, in the comfort of Kara's arms, Alex feels nothing short of invincible. She holds her sister close to her, before she reaches over her shoulder to motion towards J'onn. There's a hesitance from the Martian before he reluctantly joins their hug.
"Family," J'onn says as he kisses both their heads. "El Marayah."

Kara nods and smiles as she leans back. "Stronger together."

The three of them stand, side-by-side, facing towards Darkseid's eerily still body in the distance. They wait a few moments, their hands all clasped together before Alex takes a step forward, a new strength ignited within her.

“Come on,” she says as she takes her helmet and slips it on. The illuminated display lights up.

"Kelex?" Alex asks, swallowing thickly. "You with me?"

**Until the end, Alex Danvers.**

Alex smiles under the helmet before she turns back to her sister and J'onn. Kara nods, placing on her own headpiece on, while J'onn transforms into his Martian armour. Alex bunches her fists before she turns towards Darkseid once more. Even thought he is at a far distance, she can make out the blank expression on his face. She swallows thickly.

"Come on," she repeats as she hovers in the air. "Let's go."

Alex flies through the air, J'onn and Kara right beside her as they approach the warmonger. The rubble and burning fires of what's left of National City surround them, and Alex has to push down the guilt and fear running through her in order to focus on Darkseid. She allows her veins to fill with the support radiating from J'onn and Kara.

At last, in what feels like minutes, they arrive.

As they hover down to stand in the middle of the crater, Darkseid doesn’t pass a glance at both Kara and J’onn. His gaze remains steadfast and true on only Alex, though his brow arches at their presence. He smirks and chuckles.

“You brought your friends, Champion. Afraid to face me yourself?"

Alex swallows thickly but doesn’t reply. Darkseid only hums, his lips curling into a small, almost-devious smirk as he crosses his arms and relaxes. She can feel the nervous, stirring energy of Kara beside her, and the fast heartbeat of J’onn on her other side. Darkseid steps forward, looking down to his fingers and flicking some dirt off of them.

“Do you know that I’ve conquered Earth before?” Darkseid asks, looking back up and pacing lightly in front of her. Alex’s heart clinches as Darkseid chuckles sadistically. “I know who you are, Alex Danvers. We’ve already met.”

Alex still doesn’t rise to the bait. She keeps herself as still as possible, not wanting to goad him further.

Darkseid sighs. "Don't be nervous, Alex. You can't stop fate."

Once again, Alex keeps her mouth shut as she keeps her gaze trained on the warmonger warily.

“I am assuming your time-travelling friends didn't tell you,” Darkseid rumbles as his grin spreads and he nods. “Ah, the Legends. A lively bunch. Always so enthusiastic, but never smart enough to learn their lesson. Humans and their insanity, their expectation of different results from the same actions, it's all so drearily primitive."
That makes Alex snap up and pay attention as she frowns. "How do you know of them?"

"Oh Champion," Darkseid hums in disappointment, "how naïve you can be…"

"Alex," Kara whispers as trembles, "Alex, what…"

Alex growls, ignoring her sister as dread sets in. "What are you talking about?"

Darkseid smiles at the recognition and understanding in her tone. "I think you know, don't you, Champion? I've faced you before in other Earths—Earths which have long-since perished—and you have always failed, Alex. Always."

"Not in this one you won't," J'onn snarls as he takes a step forward. "Your reign is over, Darkseid."

"Pitiful Martian," Darkseid glowers, glaring in his direction. "I still hear your family's screams in my ear."

J'onn's eyes flash as his lips pull back into a snarl. "You monster… how dare you?"

"Let me take a guess," Darkseid smirks, ignoring J'onn's jab as he looks up to his ship. "Right now, your detective friend is aboard my ship, retrieving the weapon from the storage facility with the time-jumpers? Is that right?"

Alex's gut churns.

"It's a trap," Kara whispers, her voice shaking as she realizes what he's saying. "Alex, it's a trap—"

"Allow me to tell you how this goes," Darkseid cuts in quickly, pausing in his pacing to look at them both with an expressionless face. "You think it is so easy, and in-and-out job, right? Let me tell you how it goes. Your friend will retrieve the weapon but will trip the alarm, which will activate the self-destruct mechanism I've wired in place."

Fury builds within her, and Alex can feel her eyes burning with tears as Darkseid continues with a nonchalant flick of his wrist. "Because of the nature of the weapon, your Kryptonian friend and the Martian won't be able to fly up and save them. They, and the so-called weapon, will be destroyed. Your plan, Champion, was over before it began."

Alex feels her chest deflate as Darkseid chuckles, shrugging as he smirks wider.

"I think you can guess what comes next, Ms. Danvers."

* * *

"There! I see it!"

Lena ducks around the corner, following Maggie's call as they duck down corridors towards the main room where the weapon is being kept. Sara and Ava take up the rear as they make their way to the door. Lena takes a peek through the glass chamber, frowning as she follows Lena's gaze. She lowers the gun and knocks at the glass.

"It's encased," Maggie tells them, "but I think that if I get my knife in the small wedges, I can pry it open—"

"No," Sara says suddenly, "we can't break into it."

Lena looks at her, confused. "How else do we get it back?"
Sara looks conflicted, and when Lena’s gaze sifts over to Ava’s, she can see the director looks just as harrowed as Sara does. Usually, Lena would chalk up the hesitance to nerves, but this is something different. She can sense more than just simple tension. She looks over to Maggie, who seems to be equally apprehensive over their hesitation.

Before she can question them, however, a cackle sounds in her earpiece.

“Maggie, Lena, it’s a trap,” Kara’s desperate voice cry over the radio. “If you take the weapon, you’ll trip the alarm.”

“Alarm?” Maggie asks, frowning as she looks over to the weapon in the box. “What are you talking about?”

“Darkseid knows our plan,” Kara says quickly, her voice high-pitched and shrill. “Please, you have to get out of there, now! It’s a trap. He knew you were coming into the ship. Forget the weapon and get out before he destroys it.”

“Hell no,” Lena growls as she paces in front of the spear, “without the weapon, he wins, Kara!”

“He’s already won,” Kara says defeatedly and Lena’s heart stutters. “He’s done this before, Lena. He’s conquered an Earth like ours before, and we did the same plan our doppelgängers did, and we failed. So, get out, Lena. Now.”

“What the Hell is she talking about?” Lena asks, bewildered, before she glares up at Sara and Ava, who are both looking away guiltily. Lena frowns as she looks to Sara. “You. How did you know not to break into the glass?”

When Sara doesn’t reply, Lena’s stomach flips harder. Maggie catches on, a growl forming in her throat. She juts the shotgun up, pointing it in Sara’s direction as she snarls at them. Lena watches as she cocks the shotgun warningly.

“Talk,” Maggie orders, her voice cutting and sharp. “Now, Lance.”

* * *

“Kara, calm down.”

Kara growls from where Darkseid is still standing, looking bored at her attempt to warn her girlfriend and friends aboard the ship. She can feel the heat blazing inside of her, and the power of the White Kryptonite feels overwhelming. The rage within her burns brighter than a thousand yellow suns. She wants to let it take over.

It would be so easy.

“Kara, calm down.”

Alex’s steady voice grounds her, and she feels the heat in her eyes before she even realizes its’ there. She takes a deep breath and looks to see something undecipherable in her sister’s gaze through her slitted mask. Kara swallows through the metallic taste in her mouth as she looks up at her older sister. Alex gives her a steady look, unmoving.

“Alex?”

But Alex doesn’t reply to her. Instead, she turns to Darkseid with a ramrod back.
“This time is different, Darkseid.”

“Oh?” Darkseid chuckles. “Enlighten me, Champion.”

“You didn’t have me on the other Earths,” Alex says, her voice growing more confident as she presses on. “Not like this, at least. I’m stronger than you. Why else would you have proposed a compromise in this timeline?”

Darkseid’s eyes narrow. “You should be cautious, Ms. Danvers.”

“I’m the Champion, remember? And unless the Kryptonian matrix lodged in my chest is a fake, I detect that no other universe had someone of my calibre,” Alex continues to say, taking a step forward. “My power is more than that of a regular Kryptonian like Clark or Kara. It makes sense. Why else would you be patient in conquering our Earth?”

Kara can feel Darkseid’s energy withering slightly as Alex hovers in front of him, only a few feet away from his face as she scowls. "You can't take this Earth, Darkseid, unless you have a weapon of calibre and strength to do so."

Darkseid’s face darkens and Kara watches in horror as Alex steps forward, her mask lifting to reveal her face.

“Admit it,” Alex says calmly, “you need me.”

“Alex,” Kara hisses as she hovers to her feet. “Stop this.”

But Alex only ignores her as she continues to glare at the warmonger with fire igniting her glare. “You need me to help you take out the rest of the world because you can’t do it alone. Something happened on Apokolips that has made you weaker, more vulnerable, and you need me as a weapon to destroy the universe. You don't want Earth.”

Kara watches as Alex stiffens and coldly finishes, "you want me."

Darkseid is silently for a few moments, before he smirks.

“Well,” he says, grinning as he claps his hands together. “I’m impressed, Champion.”

* * *

“You were never going to tell us we’ve been here before?!”

Sara winces at the ire in Maggie’s tone as the detective grips the gun tighter in her grasp. Her finger is hovering dangerously close to the trigger. She looks over at Ava, who looks equally distraught at the accusation. Cursing herself for not being honest earlier, Sara nods and flinches when Maggie cocks the gun and shoves it forward.

“How do I know you’re not working for him?” Maggie demands, her voice shrill. "How do I know it's not a lie?"

“It's not,” Sara blurts out, her hands raised in the air. “We're not working for him, I swear to you, we’re not. I didn’t want to tell you about the past Earths because I knew that you wouldn’t be able to get over the truth.”

“The truth?” Maggie spits. “And what’s the truth, Sara?”

“I... I...,” Sara swallows nervously. “I can’t tell you, Maggie.”
“You may not feel like talking but sure as Hell feel like shooting,” Maggie growls as she primes her finger over the trigger. “I don’t know if any of your ‘we were best friends’ shit was true, and right now, I’m getting the feeling that you are playing us. You tried to get me with the sob story and like the idiot I am, I fell for it, but not anymore.”

“We are friends,” Sara stresses, her voice cracking. “Maggie, please, you have to listen to me, the truth, it isn’t what you want to hear. We can’t change the past, we can only work in the present to change the future. What happened—"

“Just spit it out!” Maggie snarls. “You have ten seconds, Lance.”

"Maggie, please…"

"I'll shoot," Maggie growls as she swings the gun to face Ava. "I won't hesitate, Lance."

"Okay enough!" Sara snaps as she steps in front of Ava defensively. "It's not what you think."

"Really? I'd hope not because I'm not liking the sound of my own thoughts right now, Sara."

"Stop," Sara sighs as she waves her hands in front of her. "Maggie, please, stop."

"Tell me what happened," Maggie growls as she cocks the gun. "Tell me the truth, Sara."

Sara looks beside her to Ava, who only gives her a solemn shrug. Swallowing thickly, Sara turns to face Maggie with a mournful gaze. Beside her, Lena looks equally furious, but far less intimidating than her counterpart. Sara sighs.

"Fine," Sara says as she hangs her head, "this is the truth…"

* * *

Something is off.

Alex is so sure, but Darkseid’s nonchalant expression chips away at her and unsettles the demons in her mind.

Kelex, she asks in her mind, is he telling the truth?

There’s a pause before Kelex replies, there is a possibility he is telling the truth. The Legends are known to time-hop, and the existence of multi-verses is not disproven. The likelihood of the other Earths being destroyed is high.

“Do you really want to know what happened in those previous Earths?” Darkseid asks, leaning forward. “You don't have to ask that machine inside your head, Champion. I got a hold of you, and while you are correct, you’ve never been as you are now, this half-Kryptonian, meta-human, you were still just as important to me then as you are now.”

Alex’s blood runs cold when Darkseid’s gaze flits past her to Kara.

“As it turns out,” Darkseid chuckles, “you are an excellent pawn for the second-most powerful being alive.”

She follows his gaze to where Kara is hovering, her eyes white with anger and brimming heat, no doubt barely showing restraint. Alex hovers over to her sister, watching as those eyes grow whiter and hotter with each second.
"Kara," she says as she reaches up to press her hand into her sister's shoulder. "Kara, snap out of it."

“You once asked her, what she would do if her loved ones were ever killed," Darkseid says in a low voice, drawing Alex's attention back to her. She watches as Darkseid nods in her sister's direction. “You asked what she’d do.”

Kara’s eyes burn brighter, and Alex feels dread wash over her as the heat grows even more.

“Well,” Darkseid murmurs, glancing back to them both. “Care to find out, Alex?”

* * *

“After the ship explodes, I teleport us out of here just in time.” Maggie watches Sara explain rapidly. “We get back down to Earth, but Darkseid has found his match. He was never interested in Alex. While in previous universes, Black Kryptonite Alex never existed, it never stopped her from hitting up the frontlines with Kara. She was always there.”

"I don't get it," Maggie snaps as she shakes her head. "If she was human why would she risk it?"

Sara snorts in a mixture of desolation and admiration. "On every Earth, your wife is always a hero."

"Listen here," Maggie snarls, gripping the gun tighter, "I'll fucking end you—"

"Maggie, stop," Lena says softly, reaching out to place her palm on her tense forearm. "Let Sara speak, please."

Maggie turns to her friend. She wants nothing more than to take Sara's head off right now, but she can see the desperation in Lena's gaze. She reluctantly lowers the gun and nods to Sara to keep going. Ava steps up next.

"Kara never killed anyone," Ava says next, looking equally as nervous. "In every universe, that was always the case, no matter what. She was the pinnacle of hope for the human race. Saved lives, never took them. But then…"

Ava chokes up, looking away when she sees Maggie flinch.

"But then?" Maggie croaks. "Go on then, finish it!"

“Earth-48. Darkseid kills Alex,” Sara says, her voice cracking. “He murders her, in front of Kara, and Kara… she lost it, Maggie. She left her mind open and Darkseid got inside. It's how he destroyed the rest of the Earths. He exploited Kara’s love for Alex to use her. He turned Kara into a weapon of mass destruction, and in the last Earth we visited, we weren't able to destroy him.”

Maggie takes in the words, but realizes there's something they're not saying.

When she sees Sara avoiding Lena's gaze, she figures it out with a huffed breath.

"You killed her, didn't you?" Maggie gasps as she watches Lena flinch. "You killed Kara."

"She wasn't the Kara you know," Ava explains with a darkened expression. "The Kara we all know and love, she changed under his power. He killed Kara’s spirit and replaced it with something so monstrous and vile… Maggie, you have to understand, Darkseid coming to this Earth was predestined. He sent the world-killers here because he realized Kara's greatest power wasn't from within herself, but from Alex. Alex's death sparked her rage."

Maggie pieces it together and she stumbles backwards when she realizes what Ava implies.
"The logic makes sense," Sara says with a pitiful shrug. "Don't take the being themselves—take what makes them strong and turn it into something stronger. Kara was never the target, never his Champion. It was always Alex."

"As long as he had Alex," Ava adds in, her voice low and hard. "As long as she dies—he wins."

“What about your Earth?” Lena asks, trying to push the image of a feral, revenge-driven Kara out of her head. “You told us that you knew us from your Earth. You knew Alex. How do we know you’re telling the truth about this?”

“Because the Alex on that Earth wasn’t killed by Darkseid,” Ava says, her voice quiet and solemn. “She died of something which was not a real, tangible enemy, but still provided a vicious battle. Our Supergirl didn’t turn on us.”

"Not a real enemy?" Lena asks, confused. But Maggie doesn't need them to figure it out as she looks to Ava.

“Cancer,” Maggie whispers, her gun lowering. “That’s how she died, didn’t she? It’s the only thing that wouldn’t make Kara insane. She would know there was nothing she could physically do to save her, so she didn't turn.”

"Was she there?" Lena asks, her voice trembling. "Was she there when you killed the other Kara?"

Ava and Sara exchange a glance before Sara nods.

"Kara was the one who did it."

Lena’s eyes tear up when she watches Sara swallow. “Alex’s death manifested into her true strength, It’s the only reason Darkseid wasn’t able to conquer our Earth. Kara used Alex’s loss to possess a new power, and she stopped his invasion. We knew he wouldn't stop at our Earth. He knew he would come back, and since Alex was gone…”

"He came here," Maggie finishes as she runs a hand through her hair. "Shit…"

“The key to losing Earth is in Alex,” Ava finishes, trying and failing to keep the tears from rolling down her cheeks. “She’s everything to Kara, and when she’d seen Alex die, coupled with the explosion of the ship, she lost control—she lost everything, Lena. Even our Kara, the one from our universe, couldn't save her. She killed her to buy us time.”

"Where is she now?" Maggie asks, her gaze hardening. "Why didn't you bring her with us?"

"Truth is, we don't know where she is," Sara explains, her eyes darting to her feet. "Losing Alex and then killing the evil version of herself took a toll. She'd never taken a life before. I don't think she could live with what she did."

"She went off the grid," Ava adds on with a sigh. "We tried to get in touch with her for this mission, but she didn't reply to our messages. I… I think seeing the destruction the other Kara caused made her fear for her own powers."

"She didn't want to become the monster Darkseid created," Sara finishes, "so she hid herself away."

Maggie sighs and shakes her head in disbelief. "Great, well if this isn't a giant cluster-fuck."

She's about to turn away and give up when Lena’s voice startles her from her muddled thoughts.
“No.”

Maggie frowns and brow arches in confusion at her friend. “No?”

“We are not losing Earth today,” Lena says as she looks towards the glass pane, to where the weapon is being stored. “Today, we change the tides of history, for your Kara and all of the Earths’ lost. Now come on, I have a new plan.”

* * *

J’onn watches helplessly as Alex hovers in front of Kara, gripping her sister’s shoulders and shouting her name to try and reel her in. He knows the dangers of the White Kryptonite, of how easily Kara could lose control and make decisions she’d never forget. He knows even more, however, the leash Darkseid could hold if he controlled her mind.

J’onn knows the only thing preventing him from doing so is the inhibitors placed within their suits. But even those inhibitors have a limit, and right now, J’onn can sense the boundaries are waning.

“Kara,” Alex growls her sister’s name, “snap out of it, dammit!”

“It’s no use,” Darkseid drawls lazily, examining his fingers. “She can only imagine one thing.”

Alex whips around, glaring at him as her eyes burn a bright black. “Get out of her head.”

Darkseid chuckles as he crosses his arms and drawls, "I'm not inside it. Kara's mind is taken by her own fears."

“You won’t kill me,” Alex snarls, reeling as she turns and hovers in front of him. J’onn watches as she pulls her hands into fists. A blade extends from one of her arms. “I won’t let you take me down. I’m not fragile. I can take it.”

“Alex,” J’onn says as he lifts up from his position when her tone changes, “don’t be tempted.”

“You need me,” Alex hisses again as she waves the blade out to his neck, “and I know for a fact, that I can end this, right here, right now.” J’onn freezes at the implications, and even Darkseid’s eyes narrow in suspicion.

“You wouldn’t,” he threatens, though he seems unsure. "I call your bluff, Ms. Danvers."

Alex only leans in closer, the orb in the centre of her chest beginning to thrum and glow dangerously fast. J’onn’s heart sinks when he hears the reply leave her lips, stoic and steadfast… true. He doesn’t have to read her mind.

He knows exactly what she's thinking, and he's powerless to stop her as Alex nods and smirks coldly.

“Try me, you bastard.”

* * *

“I cannot stress enough at how bad this idea is.”

“We’ve got Gideon, haven’t we?”

“Yes, but we also don’t have an army of para-demons!”
“Lena,” Maggie interrupts Lena and Sara’s bickering as she makes out a small pack of para-demons up ahead. “We’ve got trouble. If they spot us, the whole ship will be alerted and we’re going to be cornered. You’re sure this’ll work?”

"Positive," Lena replies as she finishes typing something out on her tablet. "I need you two to do what you do best."

"Leave it up to us to be the jocks," Sara mutters as she brandishes her sword. "Why can’t I be a tech genius?"

"Enough bickering," Lena growls, "now come here and let me finish the plan."

The four of them cower behind the wall, out of their sight. Maggie turns back to see Lena typing away madly at the portable tablet Sara had snuck in. “You finally gonna tell us how this is going to go down, Luthor? Time is ticking.”

“I just need access to the main frame,” Lena says as she looks up mid-type, “once I am able to get into the central control unit, I’ll be able to remotely disable the ship’s defenses and enter the network. We then open up a portal to the storage room, grab the weapon, and then teleport to the ground after I set the ship on a self-destruct course.”

“This is a suicide mission,” Sara mutters, “there’s no knowing if it will work! You have no idea if we can even hack this network without being detected. The security system, it doesn't give us much time to work, Lena—”

“And doing the previous plan would be better?” Lena seethes back. “Do you know the definition of insanity, Captain Lance? It’s the act of repeating the same action and expecting a different response. You said it yourself: this Earth is different. This Alex is different. We have a chance. We have to change this outcome. We only have one shot.”

“I’m with Luthor,” Maggie says as she takes a deep breath and re-checks her gun. “If you take the left half, I’ll take the right. Ava, you get Lena past us and into the command centre and then lock it down while you work. See if you can bring the ship down and lock as many para-demons inside. Meanwhile, Sara and I will be perimeter defense.”

“Again,” Sara mutters, “this a suicide mission.”

Maggie only grins, cocking her gun. “They’re the best kind, Lance.”

It takes a moment, but eventually Sara sighs, reaching behind her for her sword before rolling her shoulders.

“I bet you can’t get as high a count as me, Sawyer.”

“Why don’t we find out?” Maggie asks, peeking around the corner. “You two ready?”

She cocks her gun, looking back to Ava and Lena. Both women nod determinedly, their gazes set on the door ahead.

“Aright,” she says, taking a final deep breath. “Let’s do this.”

Maggie bolts forward from cover, letting out a ferocious roar to boost her adrenalin. She hears Sara let out a similar cry, only hers is shriller and more high-pitched. It almost makes Maggie’s ears bleed, but she pushes the thought aside and focuses on the para-demons now turned in their direction, snarling and growling as they spot them.
Maggie quickly shoots down a row of them. "That’s four, Lance!"

She hears swords cleaving through the air, followed by the sound of metal and flesh colliding. She barely glances over to see Sara’s white uniform now soaked in a weird black fluid. Maggie watches her grin and smirks. "I got six!"

Maggie keeps shooting down the demons, running her boot into any of them that come to close before slamming the butt of her gun into their heads. She and Sara clear a path to the door, before encircling Ava and Lena as they get started on hacking the lock. Lena attaches her tablet to the door and runs a hacking program while Ava shoots over her shoulder. Sara and Maggie tackle the sides, taking out as many as they can while Lena's program continues.

"First to twenty has to buy the first round?" Sara pants from where she pulls her sword out from a downed demon, her eyes wild and lit with adrenalin. Maggie fires off a pulse shot into a row of demons, grinning as they explode.

She takes a breath, her own face no doubt covered in black, too.

Maggie only looks to Sara and grins.

"Looks like we got a deal," Maggie chuckles before she looks to Lena. "Luthor, you almost in?"

"Give me two minutes," Lena says as she types rapidly. "Almost there."

Maggie continues shooting and kicking, feeling the adrenalin coursing through her veins. Sara works to fight next to her, slicing her sword through as many para-demons as she can. Behind her, Ava shoots at the oncoming demons trying to get at Lena. The sounds of the para-demons screeching and growling nearly deafens her, but Maggie pushes on as Lena works to get the door unlocked. Maggie looks to see her frantically swiping at the tablet.

Before she can order for her to hurry up, the alarms start blaring on the ship.

"Lena?!" Maggie demands, her voice cracking. "Please tell me that isn't what I think it is."

Lena looks up at her, fear striking her eyes as she keeps typing at the tablet.

"You got this, Luthor," Sara says as she strikes down another demon. "Remember the plan."

Lena shakes her head. "The ship will self-destruct in one minute, but the lock will take one minute."

"Then we just need to buy you another minute," Maggie grunts, nodding to her friend. "Keep working."

Lena splutters, "I don't know if I can, bypassing this ship's security will take time—"

"We'll give you time," Sara says as she looks to Maggie. "We'll hold them off."

Maggie nods back and stiffens with determination. "We got this, Luthor. Do your work and leave the muscle to us."

"I… I don't know," Lena says as she scrambles with the tablet. "This code is layered."

"Gideon can help," Ava says as she shoots an oncoming demon before kneeling and whipping out her own device. "Gideon, reroute the security system and override the mainframe while Lena hacks the door."

Maggie watches as the device hums to life and a new set of code appears on the screen.
of the tablet. Ava squeezes Lena's shoulders.

"You can do this," Ava says as she nods at the Luthor. "You're our only hope now, Lena."

Lena looks up to Maggie with a horror-stricken look. "Maggie, I…"

"Hold on," Maggie says, nodding at her friend before turning to face the demons. The alarms keep blaring in her ears, and she wants nothing more than to bury the sound. She squares up, ignoring the creaking in the walls.

And then, the loudspeaker cackles overhead, blaring out a daunting message.


"Oh fuck," Ava mutters as she looks to the tablet. "Gideon?"

No response comes from the machine and Maggie looks to where the code has stopped writing. Ava crouches beside the tablet and swears under her breath before looking up at both Sara and Maggie in complete shock and fear.

"Gideon's not responding," Ava splutters nervously, "his ship has countermeasures and has shut her out."

"Meaning?" Sara snaps, looking to where Lena is staring at the tablet. "Ava?!"

Ava gulps, following Sara's gaze to where Lena looks up at them defeatedly. "Only manual entry will work."

"So what?" Maggie asks, gasping as she looks over at Lena. "You crack it, right?"

Lena looks to the tablet. "I… I don't know… the security…"

*Nineteen, eighteen, seventeen…*

"Lena," Maggie growls as looks to her dazed friends. "You can do this. You're a genius, you can do this."

Lena looks back to the lock before sucking in a breath and shaking her head. "I can't—"

*Fifteen, fourteen, thirteen…*

"Listen," Maggie says as she grabs at Lena's shoulders while Sara and Ava attack the next round of screaming para-demons. "Look at me, Luthor. You're the smartest person on this planet. One of those PhDs have to work for this."

Lena looks up at her, frazzled, but Maggie nods again and looks at the lock. "Don't do it for us. Do it for Kara."

Lena turns to lock and swallows, gritting her teeth determinedly.

"You can do this," Maggie says as she swings her gun back into her arms and faces the demons. "Go, Luthor."

"I can do this," Lena mutters in the background while the countdown still blares out. "I can do this…"
Maggie returns her attention to the oncoming slew of para-demons. She shoots her way through the horde. Sara sidles up against her back and protects her six, while Ava has taken to protecting a frantically-typing Lena.

Eleven, ten, nine…

"Lena!" Sara shouts over the screech of a para-demon. "No time like the present!"

"I'm working on it!" Lena yells from behind them, followed by more clicks and swipes. "Come on, come on…"

Seven, six, four…

"Lena!" Maggie shouts, her voice cracking as she turns around and looks to her friend. "Hurry!"

Three, two, one…

* * *

Alex stares into Darkseid’s eyes, her gaze steady and clear.

“What is your great plan, Champion?” Darkseid drawls, cocking his head lazily. “Self-sacrifice? You tried that once. Didn’t work. In fact, I can count the universes on my hand in which it didn't work. You cannot beat me, Alex.”

Alex keeps her stare on him, buying herself some final seconds.

Kelex, we are going with the backup plan.

Instantly, Kelex pulses through her, obviously displeased with her request. I would advise against that action, Alex. The likelihood of survival after the procedure—

I know, she communicates mentally, just… trust me.

But before she can ask Kelex to complete the plan, Darkseid’s brows furrow. Something on his belt lights up, and he looks down to see the device on his hip flashing. He grins at the device before he looks back up at the ship. Alex follows his gaze, heart sinking. She sees the flashing numbers on his belt, and she knows the ship’s alarm tripped.

Alex glances at Kara, who's still lost in her white-hot state of rage, and then to a defeated-looking J’onn.

“Well,” Darkseid chuckles as he gestures to the device. "Looks like time is up, Alex. Don't be a fool. Surrender."

Finally, she cranes her neck upwards to the ship, to where Maggie and the others are trapped.

They're too late.

"You can still save them," Darkseid drawls, grinning maniacally. "Tell me Champion, is your planet worth all this?"

Kelex, she murmurs in her head as she watches the numbers continue to flash on the belt, the back-up plan.

Alex, a complete fusion would result in—
"Alex," J'onn says warningly as she looks to Darkseid. "Don't do it, Alex."

Kelex, Alex thinks as she looks to Darkseid, please.

"Join me," Darkseid growls as he hovers forward, "or you will watch them burn."

Alex closes her eyes and sucks in a deep breath. J'onn protests from behind her, but she tunes him out.

Now, Kelex.

Chapter End Notes

YAAAA THE BATTLE IS ON! Now it's an action-packed ride until the end.
Chapter Summary

The Battle for Earth (Part 1).

Chapter Notes

We're in the endgame now boyssss.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“We’re in!”

Lena almost collapses in relief when the sirens come to a halt and the ship stops rumbling. She takes a second to breathe before she jostles open the door and shoulders her way into the main room. In behind her follows Ava, who takes out a few approaching para-demons on her left flank before slamming the door shut behind them to prevent any more from coming through. Lena looks up at her as the taller blonde nods determinedly and taps at her radio.

"Lance, Sawyer. Guard these doors."

"Roger that," Sara's voice comes over the communicator. "Hurry it up in there, ladies. We don't have much time."

Before Lena can reply, Ava fires off four more shots. Lena turns to see the blown-apart bodies of the para-demons which were creeping up on her six. She gives the other woman a nod of gratitude before she moves towards the main computer at the helm of the ship. Ava comes up beside her, latching the tablet containing Gideon on the drive.

"Is she back?" Lena asks as she looks to the other woman. Ava types on the laptop before a light flashes.

"I am here," Gideon replies curtly, "I apologize for the delay. The firewall was hard to breach."

"But you have breached it?"

"Correct."

"Good," Lena sighs before she types into the computer's main frame. "Let's get started."

"What is your order, Ms. Luthor?"

Lena hooks up a wire into the main computer and connects it to the tablet. “Run scramble codes and get me into his system. I want to reprogram the mainframe and disable the security around the Gold Kyrptonite spear.”

“Initiating code scrambling,” the automated voice replies, “estimated time of completion: three
“Maggie,” Lena says into her earpiece. “We need three minutes.”

“Copy that loud and clear,” Maggie replies quickly, grunting. The sound of gunfire cuts in the background and Lena winces. “We got your back, Luthor. Just… try to speed it up if you can.” Lena nods, even though she knows Maggie can’t see the motion. She looks over ship’s various computers and sits down behind one, cracking her knuckles.

“What are you doing?” Ava asks, frowning at her. “The hack—”

“Will take it’s time,” Lena finishes as she starts scrambling through various databases. “We can use Darkseid’s database to our advantage. There could be something in here which will help us find a way to defeat him that might not require the weapon, just in case it is destroyed. We don’t have much time to waste, Ava.”

The taller woman looks skeptical for a moment before she reluctantly nods and sits down, setting to work on sifting through the ship’s database. Lena turns her attention back to the computer, only to notice a small, blinking device.

"Hang on," Lena mutters to herself as she reaches for the device. "I know what this is."

Pulling out her own personal device, she quickly types in a few numbers and letters before entering a complex code. There is a bit of a lag before static rumbles over the device. Lena swallows and waits as the connection establishes.

And then, after tense seconds, a familiar, pixilated face lights up.

"Lena?"

"Bruce," Lena sighs with relief as she clutches the communicator closer. "You're okay."

"How... how did you get in touch with us?"

In the background, there is fire and smoke, and Lena can see two flying beings slamming into the ground repeatedly with their fists and boots. Turning her attention back to Bruce, she maneuvers the device to show him the ship.

"We got inside and he had a spare communicator. This way we can stay in touch. Progress?"

Bruce coughs as more dust and smoke plume upwards. "We're almost at the planet's core."

"ETA?"

"Uncertain at this point. Lena, I have to go, para-demons—"

Before he can reply, the line cuts out again. Lena growls and clutches the device tighter.

"Shit," she mutters as she pockets the small tablet before turning her attention back to the computer. She can hear the intensified gunfire from outside, but she tries to pay it no attention as she scrolls through Darkseid’s files.

And then, she finally comes across something game-changing.

***
The sound of J'onn screaming out for Alex snaps Kara from her daze.

She comes back into herself, the white-hot ebbs of Kryptonite still licking at her bones. Shaking her head to clear the fog of rage, Kara centres herself on the present, looking up to see her sister hovering in front of Darkseid. Two black pools of energy are surrounding her clenched fists, and her eyes and chest are glowing the same colour.

Something isn't right.

"Kara!" J'onn pleads as he looks to her desperately. "Help her!"

"There's no use," Darkseid smirks as he glares into Alex. "The Champion will be mine."

"Never," Kara snarls as she leaps forward and grabs at her sister. "Alex, snap out of it—the ship is fine!"

"Nonsense, the ship—"

Darkseid cuts himself off as the timer on his belt stops beeping. Kara looks to see him glare up at his ship before growl in disbelief and anger. The rumbling sound seems to break Alex from her stupor as she blinks away the black.

"Kara?" Alex asks, her voice wobbly. "You're back?"

"I'm here," Kara stoically replies, nodding as she glares back at Darkseid. "We're both here."

The realization sets in about the same time it does for both J’onn and Alex, who both turn to look at her before glancing back at where Darkseid is hovering. Kara smirks at the temporary look of displeasure and annoyance in Darkseid's gaze, but the happy moment falters when his expression quickly morphs into mild amusement.

“Looks like there’s been a change of plans,” Darkseid chuckles. “Unexpected, but it should be no hinderance.”

Kara watches him bunch his knees, preparing to leap upwards.

“IT will,” Kara says, clenching her fist, “allow me to show you.”

Just as Darkseid makes it mid-leap, Kara rockets forward in a supersonic boom, colliding with his chest before she drives her fist upwards in a jaw-breaking uppercut. She roars as she follows it up with a resounding punch to his gut. The man tumbles backwards into abandoned buildings, bringing up a cloud of dust around them.

Before he can get up, Alex blasts past her in her own supersonic boom, grabbing at Darkseid’s arm. She plants her feet into the ground and swings his arm—and his entire body—over her shoulder like a windmill, before spinning around and driving her boot into his chest, sending him clattering miles backwards. Kara watches in amazement as J’onn hurdles past them next, smashing into Darkseid’s body with his fists extended and pressed into his chest.

Kara is about to grin, to proclaim an easy victory, when she hears a deep rumble, followed by an ear-splitting and high-pitched noise. Before she can react, she watches as two lasers criss-cross towards her in an alarming speed.

She's fast, but she's not fast enough to evade them.
Kara feels the impact of the hit deep inside her bones as she’s thrown backwards, sending her careening into a series of pillars. She tumbles over herself, her cape getting caught up as she rolls in the air. Kara’s vaulted to the ground, her body aching with the force of the hit as she rolls onto her back. She coughs, her eyes closing.

“Kara, no!”

Kara gasps at the sound of the voice. Alex.

“Even with the White Kryptonite you are weak,” Darkseid's voice rumbles as Kara tries to open her eyes. "Pathetic."

"Get away from her, you bastard!"

Her eyes flash open to see Alex fighting with Darkseid, her fists landing punch after punch into his chest. Kara stumbles to her knees, horrified as she watches Darkseid let out a ferocious growl before swatting her entire frame away with a devastating backhand. Alex’s body smashes into the adjacent building, leaving nothing but rubble and dust in her wake. Darkseid’s eyes flash, and Kara is helpless to watch as those lasers leave his cold, steady gaze.

"Don't even think about it!"

Before the lasers can beam from his gaze, Darkseid is knocked aside by a green blur. His body is thrown a few feet away. While he orients himself, J’onn flies over to her with a concerned look on his face as he approaches.

“Kara,” he says her name urgently, "you have to get up!"

He reaches out to her, his hand extended.

“Alex needs you,” J’onn growls. “And we need Supergirl.”

* * *

"How far now?"

Clark looks up to where Barry, Bruce, and Kate are standing by the mobile computer they’d brought down into the pit. He looks back down to the increasingly warm mantle of the planet. Using his supervision, he can see there are only a few more layers until they reach the core of the planet. Gulping, Clark wipes some dust from his brow.

"We're almost there!” He shouts back up to Bruce. "How is Diana on the other end?"

Barry speeds away and returns in a flash before replying, "Arthur says they're almost there, too."

"Good," Clark says as he smiles sadly up at his friend. "Once we're close, we'll open the portal for you, Barry."

"Like Hell you will!" Barry says, his voice cracking. "We all come back or we don't. I'm not leaving you."

"Barry," Clark says as he flies up to stand on the ledge with the speedster. "They need you."

"They need you too," Barry protests as he wrings his hands together. "Or did you forget who the Justice League is?"
"Why don't we talk about the heroics of self-sacrifice after this is over?" Kate grumbles as she types something into the computer. Clark is about to open his mouth to reply when Kate raises her hand and silences him, her face paling.

"Forget about heroics," she says, her voice hoarse. "We've got a bigger problem."

"What is it?" Bruce asks as he leans over and reading what's on the screen. "Wait… is that…?"

Clark looks at them, puzzled. "What's going on? What's wrong?"

Bruce points at the screen before he pulls out the communicator with a mournful expression.

"We need to talk to Kara."

* * *

“They keep on coming,” Sara pants as she slices through another para-demon and kicks the one behind it. “We can’t keep this up, Maggie. Tell Luthor to hurry up.” Maggie nods, pressing on her earpiece to relay the message.

“Luthor, what’s your ETA?”

“Twenty seconds,” Lena’s reply comes quickly. “I’ve found something that might be able to help us defeat Darkseid if we can’t use the weapon, as well as a communicator to get in touch with the League back on Apokolips. I spoke to Bruce. They’re almost at the core of the planet, so Darkseid should be vulnerable soon. We’re almost done here.”

“Great,” Maggie says as she shoots para-demon. “Get the Hell out of there so we can move onto phase two, okay?”

“Got it,” Lena says, “almost there, Maggie. Just hold on.”

Maggie is about to reply when she feels a sharp sting on her thigh. She stifles a scream as she looks down to see one of the para-demons latched onto her leg, its’ teeth embedded in her suit. Maggie tries to wriggle free but it only latches on harder and wrangles its' head back and forth. Maggie is slammed into the ground as it bites down again.

“Fuck off!” Maggie shouts as she hammers the butt of her gun into its’ head over and over again until all that’s left is mush. The grip on her thigh eases, but her leg gives out almost instantly. Fire lances up and down the limb.

“Lance,” Maggie croaks as she slumps against the wall. “Lance, help!”

Her eyes widen as she watches a para-demon come charging towards her. She tries to reach for her gun in time, but it leaps before she can move. Maggie closes her eyes and braces for impact. She throws her hands up to protect her.

But the impact never comes.

Instead, Maggie hears the familiar gurgling noise of metal meeting flesh. She lowers her hands and opens her eyes to see a blade protruding through the throat of the para-demon, causing it to collapse in front of her, still spluttering for breath before the light fades in its’ beady eyes. Maggie sighs in relief, relaxing. She feels the steady stream of blood pouring from her injured leg, but right now, the adrenalin prevents severe pain from setting in.
“I think that brings me to fifty,” Sara pants as she kicks at the dead body before kneeling in front of Maggie. She looks to her leg and hides her grimace as she decides to lighten the mood with a question. “Am I winning?”

Maggie winces, feeling more pain lance up her leg. “You wish.”

Sara ignores the jab and looks to her leg. “Can you stand?”

“Of course,” Maggie hisses as she tries to stumble to her feet but loses her balance. In an instant, Sara’s arm is around her shoulders, gripping her firmly to keep her upright. Maggie scowls as she feels her leg not respond.

“It’s likely broken,” Sara says at the awkward angle from which the limb is hanging. “It could be infected, too…”

“You really are great at reassuring people, aren’t you?” Maggie mutters, feeling her stomach churn as her body suddenly feels hot. She tries to put some weight on the leg, but it burns instantly. Sara holds her up more securely.

“Fuck,” Maggie snarls as she blinks back tears, “I can’t stand.”

“I’ll make a splint,” Sara says as she helps her back to the ground. “Just give me a second to get something together.”

As Sara leaves her, the lights in the ship suddenly flicker, and there’s a small hum which courses through the wiring. Maggie looks up to watch the ship come back to life, before there’s a hiss from behind her. She turns to see the command door prop open suddenly, and from it, out come Lena and Ava, weapons drawn and ready for a fight.

“Sorry we couldn't leave any for your, but we took care of it,” Maggie huffs, her voice scratchy. “I think we killed off half the ship between the two of us.” Lena sees her and lowers her weapon, bounding over to her side worriedly.

“Maggie,” Lena whispers as she kneels beside her friend, “your leg…”

“I’m fine,” Maggie says between pained groans and uneven huffs. “I swear, I just need a second to catch my breath then I’ll be ready to go. Captain Blondie went to make me a splint, so I’ll be good as new soon. Don’t worry, kid.”

Lena ignores her, holding out the tablet before running a scan. Her mouth twists in a grimace as she looks to the screen. “You’ve basically sheared your tibia, and there’s some sort of residue from the bite that’s now in your bloodstream… some kind of infection. We need to get you to a medical bay for treatment immediately.”

“Fat chance of that happening,” Maggie growls. “We stick to the plan. Get the weapon, get out, crash the ship.”

“I’ve got the schematics,” Lena says as she flips the screen. “We need to go the medical bay, but not just for you.”

Maggie frowns at that. “Are you hurt? Ava?”

“No,” Lena says, a small, hopeful smile pulling at her lips. Maggie looks at her, thinking she’s hallucinating if Lena Luthor is excited at the prospect of visiting an alien medical bay. It’s not surprising, however, but still a bit weird.
“Then what?” Maggie asks hoarsely. “What did you find, Luthor?”

Lena flips through the screen before showing her the tablet.

“I think I’ve found a way to save Alex.”

* * *

Alex ducks as a piece of building is thrown her way before she fires back heat vision in Darkseid's direction. She feeds off the power of the Black Kryptonite coursing through her as she zips through the air and punches Darkseid in the chest before spinning and hammering her leg into his neck. She watches in jubilation as he crashes away.

"You are wasting your potential," Darkseid glowers as he rises from the dust. "Your power is beyond this!"

"What good is having a power if it isn't used for good?" Alex snarls back as Darkseid shoots forward. She evades him, grabbing his outstretched arm as she pivots before flinging him into a waiting Kara, who punches him in the jaw.

As he hits the ground with a rumbling quake, the man only chuckles and pauses as he stand on one knee. He looks up to both Danvers siblings with a knowing smirk before gesturing at the debris and rubble around them.

"Do you call this good?" Darkseid asks, arching his brow. "This death, this destruction? For what?"

Alex stays quiet as Darkseid hovers up to face them, his brows furrowing. "Why save them, Champion?"

"This is my home," Alex says as she clenches her fists. "These are my people."

"Your people," Darkseid scoffs with a sarcastic chuckle. "Your people, the same people who killed six million innocents in a war for power and greed? Your people, who detained and hunted aliens under the guise of protection? Your people, who let each other starve and kill to preserve profit? These are the people you are saving?"

Alex twitches as she feels her eyes well up with tears at his words. Darkseid shakes his head.

"Your people, Alex, are the reason why I am here. This planet is sick and I am here to heal it."

"You want to commit genocide," Alex snarls as she hovers forward. "You're the one who's sick."

Darkseid eyes her for a moment before his lips form a tight line. "Very well, I see you've made your choice."

Before Alex can react, Darkseid shoots forward and slams into Kara's sending her tumbling back into the ground with a resounding crash. Anger flows through her veins as she blasts forwards and hooks her arms under his waist and flings him backwards. Before she can land another punch, Darkseid slams his fist forward into her chest. The impact sends her flying backwards and crashing through buildings and pillars until she finally hits the ground.

* * *

After watching Alex get tossed aside like a rag doll, Kara decides enough is enough.
She fires a stream of heat vision into Darkseid's back, drawing his attention back to her. She flies up from the ground and smashes both her fists into his chest, before she turns around to grab at his neck and twist. She uproots the man and throws him down, creating another large crater at the impact. She finishes by flying down feet-first, slamming her boots into his chest to throw him deeper into the Earth. She hovers backwards, her eyes glowing.

"Foolish Kryptonian," Darkseid spits as he hovers back upwards. "No wonder your species will soon be extinct."

Before Kara can react, he punches her into jaw, sending her flying backwards. Just as she reorients herself and wipes the blood from her lip, she hears that same high-pitched whirring noise. She looks down to see his eyes burning.

Quickly turning, Kara zips through the air at a fast pace, dodging the heat-seeking lasers as they crash into the building next to her. Chunks of rock and wires fly out and smash into her body, but Kara brushes them off as she jolts upwards, towards the sky. She flips mid-air, her eyes blazing with the force of the White Kryptonite heat vision.

She sends her own stream of the potent heat at Darkseid once more, this time meeting his own laser vision head-on. She hears the iconic clap of a supersonic boom and senses Alex’s flying body careening into Darkseid. She breaks her heat vision to chase after the two of them, watching as her sister wraps her arms around Darkseid’s neck before throwing him downwards, pummelling him into the ground with a loud boom before ramming her blade in his side.

Kara reaches down and grabs at a massive chunk of concrete, heaving it over her head before throwing it down. Alex ducks out of the way, leaving Darkseid vulnerable to the force of the hit. She watches as he grunts, taking the slab of rock to the chest. Kara follows it, moving so her feet are faced forward, before stamping down on the concrete, digging the monger deeper into the ground. She feels her muscles burning and aching, but she stays strong.

“Enough of this!” Darkseid roars, punching and sending Kara backwards. “I will take this planet, with or without you.”

Kara smashes into another pillar, sending her clattering away. She stumbles back to her knees, her chest heaving. Her uniform is now ripped and dusted, smattered with blood and revealing ugly bruises forming underneath. The regeneration is quick, but not quick enough to repair the damage done to her body. She looks up to him angrily.

“Not on my watch,” Kara snarls, leaping forward before snapping into a supersonic speed, barreling into his chest once more. She throws him up into the air, before turning her head to her sister with a confident stare at her sister.

“Alex, now!”

Kara ducks out of the way as she sees the raw black streams of Alex’s own heat vision slam into Darkseid’s chest, sending him further into the air. When the stream cuts off, both Kara and Alex watch as a blur of green and black comes from above. J’onn’s hands clasp down on Darkseid’s shoulders before throwing him back down.

The three of them watch as the dust settles around Darkseid’s prone figure. Kara’s chest is heaving from exertion, and when she glances at both J’onn and Alex, she can see neither of them fare better. Alex's armour is ripped in places, revealing patches of mottled skin and bleeding wounds. J'onn looks paler than usual, and his cape is tattered. Both of them look exhausted, and Kara feels the same. She looks back down to where Darkseid smirks, unaffected.
“You fight for these humans,” Darkseid spits as he pries off a slab of concrete from his frame like it is nothing more than a piece of dust. He sits upwards and chuckles, his throat bobbing. “You care for them as if they are your own, and yet you are still an alien to them. You have saved this planet more times than it can count, for what?”

Kara stiffens as Darkseid hovers to his feet, seemingly undamaged by the barrage they’d inflicted in the past hour. He reaches into his belt for a small device. He grins and clicks at it quickly. "Let's see what you can do with this."

Kara watches as portals open up behind him, and a slew of para-demons come spilling out, screaming and hissing. Darkseid grins at her before looking back up at the ship. He bounds upwards, splitting through the air with a booming cackle of sped, leaving them in the flood of new enemies. Kara looks to Alex and J’onn worriedly.

“Go!” J’onn snaps, grabbing at a para-demon. “We’ve got this.”

Kara glances at Alex, who just nods. “Go get ‘em, Supergirl.”

That’s all the encouragement she needs before she shoots after Darkseid.

* * *

“This way,” Sara says as she leads the women down the corridor before pausing. “Fuck, there’s more of those things just around the bend.” Sara glances at Maggie, who is sweating harder now. Sara looks at the wound and grimaces.

“Fuck,” Sara swears as she looks around the corner to the plethora of demons before turning back to Ava and Lena. She hands Maggie’s slumped, quivering frame to the Luthor gently. “You got her, Lena?” Lena nods, taking Maggie from where her arm had been slung over Sara’s shoulder. Sara looks to Ava next, nodding at her with a sly grin.

“You’re up, Director.”

Ava only smirks. “About damned time we got to dance, Lance.”

Sara blushed slightly as she charges forward, brandishing her swords. She hears Ava behind her as she runs her blade through two demons at once, before roundhouse-kicking the one beside her. Ava joins her, kicking and punching at the demons trying to flank her. They fight around each other like they’re nothing but extensions of each other. Thick and thin, Ava has always been her partner. And when Sara looks to her now, she beams with pride.

In all the Earth's they've failed to save, Sara has never felt this renewed sense of hope. She looks to Ava as she's beheading a para-demon, to where Lena is shooting down oncoming demons while shielding Maggie's body, and she knows this team is different. All those other Earth's never had this same level of camaraderie and support.

As Sara cleaves a para-demon in two, only one thought runs through her head.

Maybe this is the outcome where they win, after all.

* * *

"There are so many of these fuckers!"

J'onn looks up to where Alex has three para-demons sliced through her sword. He turns his
attention back to his own small squadron before quickly making do of them. When he has a moment to breathe, he looks up to see Kara and Darkseid battling it out in the air. He can see the younger woman struggling, and J'onn feels his heart break.

He turns his attention back to where Alex is snarling and ripping apart as many of the demons as she can. He looks at the tattered state of her armour, to the sluggishly bleeding wounds and the pulsating black stone. He knows both his girls only have a limited amount of power, and this battle with Darkseid's cannon fodder is draining it.

J'onn looks back to the clustered portals in the distance as he makes out more demons approaching. He watches them as they fly towards him, hissing and spitting with their jaws agape. His heart twists again as he places his hands on a small device on his belt. He looks down to it, holding it within his palms before he looks back to Alex.

For a moment, Alex isn't Alex. For a moment, he sees K'hym. He sees her daughter fighting with the strength of a thousand yellow suns. He hears her voice, sees her smile, sees the glint in her eyes she'd get when she's happy. He looks upwards and he sees T'ania. He can feel her gentle grip, her fierce protectiveness, her love and dedication. The battlefield fades away and suddenly J'onn isn't on Earth, but he's back on Mars, watching his world collapse again.

He sees his wife, standing with his children, standing in front of him amidst the burning and destruction.

"M'ry'iah," he whispers her name as he reaches out, "my love…"

"J'onn," M'ry'iah says, and J'onn tears up at the gentle sound of her voice. "Oh how I've missed you, my dear."

J'onn tries to move forward, but he feels himself paralyzed in the moment, stuck in his own hallucination.

"J'onn," M'ry'iah says again, this time harder than before. "J'onn, please…"

"What is it?" J'onn asks as he watches her face transform into an expression of sadness. "M'ry'iah!"

"J'onn!" M'ry'iah exclaims as the world starts to burn around them. "J'onn!"

"No," J'onn growls as he tries to fight against the paralysis, "I'm coming, I'm not leaving you!"

"J'onn… J'onn…"

"M'ry'iah! K'hym! T'ania!" J'onn screams as he watches their bodies burn. "I can still save you, wait!"

Before their bodies fully turn to ash, M'ry'iah offers a sad, bittersweet smile and a nod.

"You can't save us," she says as the world begins to rattle and shake, "but you can still save them."

J'onn watches his planet burn, his people die, and it's a pain three-hundred years old but still fresh as the present. He screams as his family turns to ash, their voices only a whisper as a bright light encompasses Mars' horizon.

And then, the only thing he hears is soft plea.

"Come home, J'onn, it's time for you to come home…"
"J'onn!"

J'onn snaps his eyes open to see Alex hovering in front of him, bloodied and bruised. He blinks down the tears as Alex surveys him for any injuries. He looks up at her eyes, soulful and so wise beyond her years. He looks to her, and he sees the woman he nurtured and protected, to the one he trained and raised, and he feels an immense pride.

"Come on, old man. We're not out of this fight yet," Alex chuckles dryly as she sees him coming back into focus. "You got anymore juice left in that tank? I think we're gonna have to make our last stand here."

J'onn looks over her shoulder to where more para-demons are fast approaching, with even more following them about of the portals in almost an infinite stream. Alex shakes his shoulder again before she hovers backwards.

"Stay with me," she says before turning to face the demons. "Stand by me, J'onn. As you've always done."

When Alex turns her back, J'onn feels tears slide down his cheeks as he looks back to the device in his hands.

"I'm here," he murmurs softly as he looks back up, "I'll always be here, my child."

M'yri'ah was right. He couldn't save his blood family, his planet, his home.

But he can still save this family, this planet, and this home.

"My love," he whispers as he clutches the device to his chest with a bittersweet smile. "I'm coming home."

* * *

Alex throws off a para-demon clambering up her shoulder and blasts it with her heat vision before flying towards two more. She throws them into the buildings, before drawing out her blade from her arm and slicing at the two which attempt to flank her side. The onslaught is never-ending, but Alex will gladly throw these beasts aside if it buys Kara time to get Darkseid away from his ship. She looks up to see her sister still sparring with the warmonger.

She glances up to see Kara grab at Darkseid’s leg and yank downwards, tearing him away from his path mid-air. The force of the pull has him flying towards the sea, and she watches as Kara follows him, her fists in his chest as she flies him towards the water. Her eyes are searing white, blazing heat into his collar as he rockets backwards.

“Alex, behind you!”

Alex whips her head around to see a para-demon hurdling in her direction. She juts up her elbow into its’ jaw before twisting harshly. She follows the movement with an upward slice of her blade, cleaving the nasty lizard-robot hybrid into two parts. She looks past the carnage to where J’onn is struggling with three para-demons jawing at him. Alex rushes over and grabs at two, easily flinging them off and throwing them into rubble and dust.

“There’s too many,” J’onn pants. Alex can see the cuts and bites under the torn bits of his uniform and winces. She quickly slices her blade into a para-demon trying to grab at his cape. J’onn gasps.

“Alex… I can get rid of them…” He trails off, looking over to where Kara and Darkseid are duelling above the ocean, a battle of good and evil.
“Fighting these demons will only hinder your chances at saving this planet. Earth must come first,” J’onn whispers sadly. “You can save them, Alex.” She retreats her mask, giving her bloodied and sweaty face some fresh air. She looks to the Martian, flinching at the damage he’s taken so far. His green skin is paler now, and he looks exhausted.

Alex grunts as she realizes what he’s implying. “Like Hell if you think I’m leaving you, old man.”

“Alex,” J’onn says as more para-demons pour out of the portals. “The flow is infinite, and Kara can’t defeat him alone. She needs you. I watched my entire planet die—my entire family die—I won’t let you endure the same thing. Let me take this, Alex. Please.” She looks down to see a blinking device in his palms. Her heart lurches into her throat as she realizes what J’onn wants to do. She feels tears well in her eyes as she shakes her head in disbelief.

“No,” Alex growls, her voice cracking. “I’ve lost one father, J’onn, and I’m damned sure not losing another one.”

“Oh Alex,” J’onn sighs as he reaches up and cups her cheeks with trembling hands. “You have made me so proud. You are every bit my daughter, even if we do not share flesh and blood. Your father would be so, so proud.”

“J’onn—”

"Look for me in the stars," he tells her as he rests their foreheads together. "My child, my heart, my family."

Alex feels her stomach twist as she tries to fight the dread coursing through her. "J’onn, please, no —"

He shakes his head, a small smile pulling at his cracked lips as he turns his gaze towards Kara, who’s now plummeting down into the ocean with Darkseid’s feet planted in her chest. Alex’s heart races as she watches her sister get thrown beneath the choppy, violent waves. Darkseid disappears with her, no doubt pulling her deeper.

“Go,” J’onn rasps as he gently pats her cheek before kissing her forehead, “protect each other, Alex.”

“J’onn,” Alex pleads, tears sliding down as she looks at the acceptance and defeat in his eyes. “I can’t… I…”

“I've lived a full life,” J’onn says, smiling as he nods in acceptance. “Now, it’s time for you to live yours.”

Before Alex can reply, she feels herself being shoved away.

“I love you,” J’onn says as he backs away, smiling proudly at her. “I will always love you. Do not be afraid, child. I will be with you, if not in person, but in spirit. We will never be apart, I promise. Now get your sister and save the world.”

Alex watches in horror as J’onn rushes towards the cluster of portals on the other end of the city. When she realizes J’onn’s plan, a scream tears through her throat, but it’s too late and she can’t act in time. He turns to look at her with an expression of sadness and acceptance as his fingers close around the blinking button on the device.

“Goodbye Alex,” J’onn says, peaceful and protective as always. “May we meet again, my child.”
“J’onn!” Alex screams as J’onn flies into the portals, attracting the para-demons after him. Alex flies after him, her hand outstretched as she tries to catch up with him. “No! Stop, don’t… don’t do this! J’onn, please! Don't leave me!”

J’onn gathers the para-demons around him in a crowd, away from her and from Kara’s descent into the ocean. They claw at him, bite and scratch and pull at him. She watches as his flesh tears and blood soaks his skin, running down his frame in rivulets. He shows no pain, no agony, as they try to rip him limb-from-limb. Alex cries out in horror.

"Dad…," she croaks out as she watches J’onn smile at her from afar. "I love you."

J’onn looks at her calmly, nodding once and smiling again, before closing his eyes.

Alex’s heart stops when he presses the button. Seconds later, the world explodes in a flash of white and green.

But all Alex sees is black.

* * *

“How was that?” Maggie asks as she feels the ship vibrate suddenly. Lena looks up from where she’s removing the alien device on her leg which fixed the break with a frown. She looks over to where Sara has rushed to the window, and her heart sinks at the fearful look in the smaller blonde’s expression as she turns to face them.

“Something exploded,” Sara says, confused. “I can’t see Kara or Darkseid.”

Lena pauses, her hands trembling. Kara can’t be dead.

If she were dead, she would have been notified on her tablet.

No, Lena refuses to believe her girlfriend is dead.

“Is Alex there?” Maggie’s voice cuts her out of her panicked state. Lena curses herself for being selfish and only thinking about Kara, but she can’t help it. She looks over to Maggie, hurting at the apprehension and uncertainty in the other woman’s brown eyes. She watches Maggie hobble over to the edge of the window and peer out the glass.

“I see a dark figure hurdling towards the water,” Sara says as she looks back out the window on the other end of the medical bay. “It might be Alex. It looks like Kara might have been submerged under the ocean with Darkseid. Alex is going after both of them, I think.” Lena sets her jaw determinedly, forcing herself to believe Kara is still alive.

“We need to hurry,” Lena growls as moves Maggie back to one of the tables. She leans down and finishes strapping the new brace around Maggie’s leg before patting the detective's hip. “Ava, any word on those samples?”

“They’ve just finished sterilization,” Ava says, putting the vials into a white suitcase. Lena can feel the tension of the unknown explosion spreading through the room, but she buries her fears. Ava looks between her and Maggie.

“We’ll grab the weapon and then head out,” the director says, "we need to get it back to our ground team."

Lena nods, putting aside her worry for Alex, Kara, and J’onn aside to focus on the present.
“Let’s move.”

* * *

Cold.

That’s the only sensation Kara feels as she feels her body sinking further and further into the suffocating darkness. While she can survive under water just fine fine, something about having an eight-foot, five-ton alien pressing down on her chest was somewhat of a difficulty she’d not anticipated. Darkseid’s eyes are red, primed with his lasers.

Kara doesn’t understand why he doesn’t just fire.

She would be dead within one shot.

It doesn’t make sense.

But then as she sinks deeper and deeper, she hears a thunderous boom, one that rattles her to her core. Even Darkseid eases up on the pressure, and their sinking rate slows slightly. Kara’s eyes widen when she realizes that the boom can only signify two things.

One, Alex or J’onn (or both) are dead.

Two, the ship has finally exploded, and Lena is dead.

Kara doesn’t want to think about whether it could be a combination.

Perhaps this is how it was always meant to end, she thinks as she feels her body grow weaker as she gives into the pressure. She closes her eyes and thinks of Lena and Alex, of Eliza and J’onn, of Maggie and Sara and Ava, of Winn—of her family that she’d built. She thinks of the memories she made on a planet which adopted her like its’ own.

Earth was never her world.

But it was her home.

And now, that home, is about to be destroyed.

Kara closes her eyes, preparing for the imminent destruction and searing pain when she hears a familiar voice.

_You are the water, Kara, and remember, water is a source of life._

Kara’s eyes blink open sluggishly at the sound of Alex’s voice muddled in her head. Perhaps she truly was dying, and the final hallucinations she had were of her sister. It’s a calming thought, one that brings her peace and comfort.

But then it happens again.

_When you have a home, you don’t give up on it._

_You love it, you nurture it, you care for it._

_If this is your home, you have to fight for it._

Fight, Kara.
Fight back.

Fight. Back.

Kara’s eyes flash open, and she sees a faint blur behind Darkseid’s shoulder rushing towards them. By now, she knows this armor well. She’s not hallucinating, she realizes as the White Kryptonite courses in through her veins, renewing her energy and replenishing her spirit. She feels her body singing with new motivation to push on.

She is the last Daughter of Krypton, yes.

But she is also a daughter of Earth.

It’s time to fight back.

Kara feels her eyes heat up as she blares a stream of heat vision into Darkseid’s unsuspecting gaze. Her hands wrap around his wrists at her throat and she twists, flipping them so she’s no longer sinking. She watches as the figure that had been behind him suddenly cuts through the water and grabs at Darkseid’s shoulder, yanking hard on it.

Kara releases her heat vision to look up at Alex’s elbow around Darkseid’s throat, capturing him in a tight choke hold. The two of them lock gazes, and even though Alex’s wearing a mask, she knows what her sister is thinking. Kara nods, setting her jaw determinedly as she firms up her grip on the warmonger with renewed strength.

She thrusts upwards, Alex right at her side.

* * *

Maggie hobbles after Lena as the four women make their way to the storage room where the weapon is held. They fight through the last gaggle of para-demons stationed around the door before barrelling through. Lena leaves Maggie’s side and smashes her armour-clad elbow into the glass, before reaching inside to retrieve the spear.

“I got it!” Lena exclaims as she brandishes the spear in her hand. Maggie turns to see her holding the weapon and nods, sighing in relief. She turns to Sara and Ava and nods, pointing to the teleporter device in the latter’s hand.

“Alright time-people, get us the fuck off the ship.”

“Oh,” Sara says worriedly, “there’s a problem.”

Maggie growls, rolling her eyes. “Of course there is. What is it now?”

“The self-destruct mechanism for the ship can’t be enabled remotely,” Sara says, glancing back up at the two women. “One of us has to stay behind and enable it. Some of Apokolips’ energy is on this ship, so destroying it would weaken him significantly.” Maggie sighs as she looks to Lena, Ava, and Sara with a resigned glance.

“So this really was a suicide mission,” she sighs, rubbing her brow. “Great.”

“No,” Lena says, looking to the screen. “Kara and J’onn might not be able to help us, but Alex might.”

“We don’t even know if Alex is alive,” Sara says, ignoring Maggie’s scathing look. “We can’t
bank on that, Lena. One of us stays.” Maggie whirls on the captain, anger brewing in her veins as she clenches her fist. Sara flinches slightly.

“Are you volunteering?” She guffaws. “Because if so—”

“Enough,” Lena growls. “How long does the self-destruct take?”

“A minute,” Sara replies, “maybe less.”

Maggie bites her lip, pushing down her anger as she runs a plan through her head. She looks over at Lena, and then at the spear and the briefcase in Ava’s grip. She knows there is only one real solution to their conundrum. Sighing, she rubs her brow and looks down at her busted leg before she fixes them all with a determined glance.

“Then this is what we do,” Maggie says as she points to the weapon in Lena’s hands. “You two teleport that thing to the ground. I’ll stay up here and initiate the self-destruct and pray for a rescue.”

“See, that’s the problem,” Ava croaks weakly. “The portal we were planning on using to jump? It broke in the fight.”

Maggie’s face falls. “So, we’re stuck up here?”

Ava sighs, hanging her head. “Until we find a new way off, yes.”

Before anyone can reply, however, there is a cackle on the small device Lena had stolen from the command centre. Maggie watches as Lena presses a button, and the screen illuminates to a picture of Clark, bloodied and sweaty, but still alive, staring back at them. Maggie hates the desperate and fearful look in the pixilated image of his eyes.

“Lena?!” Clark asks. “Thank God you responded.”

“We’re here,” Lena says. “What’s going on, Clark?”

“Diana and I are almost done breaking through to the core of Apokolips,” Clark explains in a hurry, out of breath and panting as he struggles to get the word out in time. “You need to get the weapon ready as soon as you can. The planet will be destroyed soon.” Lena sighs, and Maggie curses as she looks at devastation on Sara and Ava’s face.

“Is Kara there?” Clark asks, his voice cutting in and out. “I need to tell her… there isn’t much time left… I—”

Before he can finish, the video cuts off, leaving only silence.

“Shit,” Maggie says as she glances at the weapon and then back at the other women. A new idea clicks in her head and she nods. “We have a minute if we self-destruct, right? And it can be toggled from anywhere, correct?”

Sara nods. “Based on Gideon’s reports, yes.”

Maggie sighs, rubbing her forehead. “Then, I think I have a plan.”

* * *

As soon as they break the surface, Alex swings Darkseid around and throws him into the shoreline. His body tumbles and twists, struggling with the force of the vault. Alex lets the Black Kryptonite
run through her as her eyes blaze two streams of heat into his already crumpled form. She feels a second pair next to her, and she knows Kara is doing the same to try and weaken him. The mixture of Black and White Kryptonite is scalding but devastating.

But before she can press further, a voice cackles in her ear.

“Danvers, for fuck’s sake, are you there?”

Immediately, Alex halts her heat vision and she stiffens. “Mags?”

There’s some static on the line as Alex looks up at the still-intact ship in the air. “Thank God,” she hears Maggie sigh in relief. “I was beginning to think you’d forgotten about us up here.” Alex’s eyes bug out.

“You’re still on the ship?!”

Maggie chuckles dryly. “Yeah, that’s the thing. We need an evac. Our portal’s broken.”

“The weapon,” Alex says, looking at Kara laying blow after blow onto Darkseid’s prone frame. “You have it, Maggie?”

“Yes, but it’ll kill Kara or J’onn if they try to get us.”

Alex flinches, hanging her head as the memories of only moments ago rush through her. “J’onn’s gone…”

There’s a small pause before she hears Maggie swear. “Fuck, I’m sorry, Danvers. But we need your help right now. Lena has run her calculations and we just got word from Clark. He and Diana are almost through to the planet’s core. That means after the ship explodes, you’ll have your window to use the spear on Darkseid and end this, Danvers.”

“I don’t know if I can carry all of you,” Alex says, panicking. “I can probably only take one of you at a time but the self-destruct will time-out.” There’s a sniffle, and she can hear Maggie shaking her head. Dread fills her suddenly.

“Maggie—”

Maggie hisses. “I’m hurt, Danvers. My leg got fucked in the fight and I can’t walk well. You need to come and get Lena out of here. Sara, Ava, and I can find our own way out of this mess. The priority is the weapon, Alex. Got it?”

“Alex!”

Alex looks over to where Kara is pinned down by Darkseid, his hand at her throat. She tries to move forward, but Kara shakes her head. Her panicked blue eyes flicker to the ship and then to her, and she barely gets a whisper out.

“Save her,” Kara gasps hoarsely, “please, Alex.”

Alex looks between the ship and her sister, hating the way she knows which option she must pick. Darkseid chuckles as he looks up at her with a hardened expression. He grins menacingly, wiping a speck of blood off his lip slowly.

“What will it be, Champion?” He asks in a low drawl, tugging on Kara’s hair. “Their lives, or hers?”
Chapter End Notes

Please leave ur comments I want to hear how you like/dislike this mess of a battle I've literally been so excited to post since I first finished this fic!!

Also they will grieve j'onn don't worry lots of angst still to come.
3 Days Earlier…

The wind whistles as snow falls onto the mountain-side.

Boots crunch through the deep snow amidst the silence, a bow in one hand and an a quiver in the other. Snowflakes flutter and fall upon pale skin, breath turning to mist as the trek through the mountain continues. The walk continues, light-footed and slow as she finally approaches a set of trees. A pack on her shoulders, filled with the necessities for the hunt. She walks, humming a low tune under her breath. Halting, she peers through the branches.

A deer.

A lone deer.

Feeding on the exposed roots and grass, unaware of the threat looming in the distance.

A slow breath, a readjustment, and then an arrow is pulled from the quiver and notched in the coil of the bow.

Eyes turn upwards, focused, mind clear and drawn to the prey.

The arrow pulled back, the bow taut and ready, as a final breath is drawn.

The deer turns its' head upwards, and she can see the life in its' eyes.

A second to pause, to reflect, to mourn…

And then she fires and it falls to the ground, eyes staring up to the sky, lifeless.

Dead.

I love you, kid...

I love you...

I...
She takes a moment to lower her bow, blinking back tears as she watches the blood drip onto the pristine-white snow. A theme of purity and evil, ever occurring in her life. She grips the bow tighter, swallowing down the memories which plague her mind. She hears the screams in the whistling wind, the cries in the pattering snow.

There is only one voice she hears over and over again, and it only ever says one thing.

* * *

“Alex,” Kara chokes out between gasps as Darkseid’s grip on her neck grows tighter. She struggles against him as black spots dance in her eyes. She scrabbles at his meaty hands. “You have to save them. I… I can take him…”

“The clock is ticking,” Darkseid chuckles darkly, grinning at Alex from over Kara’s shoulders. Kara wheezes and tries to breathe, but the grip is tight enough for her to hear her bones creaking. “Make your decision soon, Champion.”

Channeling as much energy as she can into her veins, Kara grips onto one of the leather bindings of his gauntlet and lets out a roar as she flips him over, throwing him to the ground. She reaches down, placing her own hand at his collar before whipping him up and tossing him like a javelin to the other end of the beach. She whips her head back, staring at Alex desperately. Behind her, she can sense Darkseid clambering back to his feet with a displeased grunt.

“Go,” Kara growls as she breathes in more of the power of the White Kryptonite, “please, Alex.”

“I…,” Alex chokes out, “Kara.”

“Go,” Kara says again, nodding her head. “I can do this, Alex.”

A hand grabs at her shoulder, but she digs her elbow into his chest. She can see her sister is still hesitant, but she nods again. Twisting in Darkseid’s grip, Kara lets her vision fill with heat before she sends a scalding blast in the man’s direction. Darkseid is shot backwards violently, but Kara sears into him again, holding him back and putting some space between the two of them. She can feel Alex still waiting behind her, and her heart can’t take it.

“Alex,” Kara growls as she whirls around, “save them. That weapon is our only chance.”

Alex looks to her, tears in her eyes. It’s only then that Kara takes in the scratches and torn bits of her armour. There are a few wounds that she can see are sluggishly bleeding, but nothing seems to be too urgent. She reaches out and tugs Alex into her arms. The steel feels cold on her skin, and she can barely breathe. But she will take the closeness.

“I love you,” Kara whispers, closing her eyes. “I love you—”

“I’ll be back for you,” Alex tells her resolutely, her arms finally reaching up to squeeze her back harder. “I love you too, Kara. This is not the end. Hold him off for me while I grab our reinforcements. Stay strong, little sister.”

Before either of them can say anything else, a resounding boom breaks their embrace. The two separate and look up to see Darkseid’s ship igniting in flames and burning rubble. Kara’s body tenses as she looks up, her heart racing as she struggles to focus on the sounds around her. She closes her eyes, trying to hear Lena’s heartbeat in the chaos.

“I told you,” Darkseid’s voice rumbles behind them. Kara’s eyes flash open as the man chuckles darkly, grinning.
“They’re all going to die,” Darkseid says coldly, “because of you.”

“Not if I don’t get there first,” Alex growls, bunching her fists before glancing at Kara. “Buy me time, Kar.”

Kara nods, watching as Alex leaps up and bounds into space towards the burning ship, leaving just her and Darkseid on Earth. She turns to face the warmonger, cracking her knuckles as she stares him down coldly. He only chuckles.


Kara’s eyes blaze as he steps forward, cracking his neck.

“Because,” he says bitingly, “your cousin did.”

* * *

3 Days Earlier…

Kill me, she hears, before I kill anyone else.

Shaking her head, she walks towards her kill, notching her bow on her back as she treks through the thick snow. She takes a knife from her belt and kneels by the deer, whispering a quiet prayer under her breath as she plunges the knife into the great beast's still heart. She halts a moment, warm blood spilling over her gloved-hands.

"You hesitated again."

She doesn't turn around at the familiar deep voice, her eyes glued on the deer in front of her.

When she doesn't reply, the voice speaks again. "You cut your hair. I didn't know you could do that."

Again, she remains silent. The voice, however, is unrelenting.

"You can't avoid it forever," the voice says, closer than before. "You know what you have to do."

She turns, her eyes blank as she looks to the man, underdressed in his light jacket and vulnerable skin.

"I don't do that anymore," she says as she turns back to the deer, removing her knife and cleaning it on her fur pelt. She reaches into her pack for a small package. She opens it up and unfolds a thick pelt, laying it beside her kill.

"They need your help."

"I said I don't do it anymore," she says again, her voice low as she turns to face the deer. She lays it easily on the long and heavy pelt before she takes the two drawstrings and heaves them older her shoulder. She stands, facing the man as he waits patiently for her to change her mind. But she won't change her mind. She needs him to understand.

He doesn't flinch as she moves past him, dragging the deer across the snow.

"How long will you resign yourself to isolation?" He asks as she moves past him. He stops her for a moment, his hand gentle as his fingers trace the faint red of the scar adorning her left brow and cheek. "This is no way to live."
"I'm not isolated," she says, unemotional and stoic as she shoves him off and trudges through the mountain. The snow falls harder now, making the visibility limited as she continues through the trees. "The deer is not for me, but for the village. The hunt is scarce due to the cold. I'm strong. I do what I can to help out the community."

"A handful of people isn't enough to make a community."

"It is for them," she says, pausing as she stares into the snowy horizon. "It was for me."

A sigh comes from the man, but he does not attempt to cajole her again. Instead when she turns her head a moment later, he only gives her a resigned, mournful look. She looks down to the deer before glancing back up at him.

"Is there anything you wish to say?" She asks, her voice low; it's a warning. He sighs, looking down to his feet.

"Your mother says hello."

She flinches, turning back around to face the blinding snow.

"She's not my mother."

"You may not think so."

She grits her teeth and turns around, fixing him with an angered look. She grips the strings tighter.

"Why did you come here, J'onn?"

J'onn sighs as he folds his hands behind his back. He looks back up at her, his eyes wet with unshed tears.

"I made a promise to your—"

"No," she interrupts as she shakes her head, "I don't want that. I want to know why you're here."

J'onn pauses, his lips pursed before he sighs, looking away. The snow continues to fall harder, and she can barely see him in the blinding, pelting cold. The smell of old blood and flesh wafts to mix with the clean smell of snow. The two of them stay, standing only metres apart with their gazes locked. She waits, impatient, until he finally looks up.

"He must be stopped, K—"

"Don't," she says softly, holding up her hand. "Don't say my name. Please."

J'onn pauses, lips pursing, before he nods and starts again.

"He must be stopped," he says as he gives her an imploring look. "They need your help."

She looks away, the screams in her head crashing louder as memories flood her veins in a sharp flood of ice.


Acceptance.

"I'm sorry," she says, eyes misting as she lowers her gaze. "But I can't, J'onn. That's not who I am
J’onn swallows thickly, tears sliding down his cheeks as he gives her one last remorseful nod.

"Very well," he says as he hovers above the ground. "I will leave you be."

She nods, watching as he flies upwards slowly, before he pauses once more to give her a sad smile.

"We all miss you," he says softly, "I hope you come home soon."

She scoffs, looking down at her dead deer, at its' vacant gaze—a gaze with which she is too-familiar.

"I lost my home years ago."

* * *

“How long ‘til this entire thing blows?”

Sara glances up from where she’s fighting off a straggling para-demon to where Ava and Maggie are handling their own enemies. Both women, despite their height difference, are standing back to back as they trade blows with para-demons snapping their jaws. Maggie blows a plasma round into one of the demons before leaning against the wall of the ship, huffing in distress. Sara grits her teeth and leaps forward, slicing through an approaching demon before it has a chance to attack Ava's exposed flank. The director flashes her a weak, appreciative smile before turning back.

“Timer says about thirty seconds,” Ava replies as she kicks at the chest at a charging para-demon. She turns to look at Sara. “We need to move. The pods are close. All we need is to go around the corner and we’ll be right there.”

Looking towards the corner at the end of the hall, Sara sighs with relief and nods. “Come on,” she orders quickly, reaching out for Maggie and slinging one of her arms over her shoulder, dragging her to her feet. “Let’s go, ladies.”

Smoke and fire surround them as they make their way around the corner. The sound of more squealing para-demons chases them down the halls. It takes everything in Sara's power to not turn around at the shrill noises. Behind her, she can hear as Ava fends off the last of the demons, allowing Sara to shepherd an injured Maggie down the hall and towards the loading bay. She knows her friend is in pain, but they don’t have time to waste.

Maggie, to her credit, limps through the pain steadily.

"Almost there," Maggie chokes out, hissing as she limps harder. "You owe me a drink, Lance."

"Ha," Sara chuckles weakly as she drives her knee through a demon. "Last I checked, my count was highest."

"As if," Maggie rasps as she reaches into Sara's belt and drives a dagger through another demon. "Call it a tie?"

Sara looks to the other woman, who's smirking at her through glassy eyes. She nods, smiling sadly.

"Yeah," she replies, "that works for me."

“Here!” Ava shouts as she rushes past them and approaches an intact escape pod. “Sara, Maggie, come on. We gotta get out of here, now! Load Gideon on the platform and make your way over to
me. This place is gonna blow soon.”

The bay quakes and shudders, the metal creaking under the pressure as the system falls apart. Sara adjusts Maggie over her shoulder before she finally jostles her to the side to avoid the demon Ava shoots. Maggie hisses as she’s lowered down so Sara can work on prying the door open. “You sure you can fly this thing? Isn’t it alien tech?”

“Gideon will do most of the work,” Sara says as she pulls open the door before grabbing at Maggie and almost dragging her into the pod. She settles the older woman in one of the seats near the back before she straps herself into the pilot’s chair. She can hear Ava finishing off the stragglers behind them, and as much as she is concerned for her friend, she knows she has to stay focused. "I’m my ship’s pilot, so I’d like to think that I know what I’m doing.”

"Bold of you to assume you know what you're doing."

"Improvisation is a strong suit," Sara mutters as she flips various switches and gauges. "What I’d give to be Luthor?"

Maggie chuckles as she looks around the ship. "Rich, dark, and sexy?"

"More like intelligent," Sara says as a screen lights up. "What I’d give to have one of those PhD's right now."

Just as Maggie goes to reply, Sara hears Ava tired chuckle sound from behind her. She turns her head to watch as the director limps into the pod with a strangled huff. Blood runs down her forehead in rivulets, and Sara winces when she sees her unfocused eyes. A massive cut starts from her forehead down to her jaw, not too deep, but still worrying. The far-away look in the woman's eyes is more than enough to worry Sara, however. She winces.

Great. A concussion.

“I got Gideon,” Ava rasps as she practically slides into the seat. She slaps the device onto the ship, watching as all the codes translate into their readable English. “It’ll take me a few seconds to upload her into the mainframe.”

Sara grits her teeth as she hears more of those screaming para-demons. “We don’t have a few seconds.”

Ava ignores the jab, working sluggishly as she struggles to get Gideon installed on the mainframe. Sara can see the dazed look in her eyes, and she knows that Ava’s tech abilities are non-existent at this point. She hears more crashes and booms from behind her, and she can see the loading bay begin to disintegrate into fire and smoke.

Well, it wouldn’t be a suicide mission without the haste.

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front of her to grip at it. “There we go, baby. Nice 'n easy.”

Maggie grunts nervously. “We’re all gonna die, aren’t we?”

“There’s a strong possibility,” Sara says as she flips switches and presses buttons. "Now, let's blow this joint."

"Please Lord,” she hears Maggie mutter, "let us not burst into a fiery and painful death."

Sara chuckles as she feels the pod start to hover as the rest of the ship continues to self-destruct. She maneuvers the small pod around the falling debris, her eyes set on the entrance of the loading bay. Gulping, Sara notices the door of the loading bay. When she looks to Maggie, she can see a similar fear laden on her paling face.

The door is closed.

"This thing has bound to have a gun," Maggie says nervously as she looks to the switches. "Right?"

Sara is about to respond when Gideon's automated voice replies, "allow me."

Before anyone can interrupt, the machine whirs to life and two metal shafts pull upwards. Sara feels the entire pod vibrate as two red blasts of light pool at the tips of the poles, before a high-pitched beam shoots out and destroys the doors in a matter of seconds. Sara looks to Maggie, who is wiping at the sweat on her brow in relief.

"Get us out of her," she says, swallowing thickly. "In one piece, Lance."

Sara sighs and returns her attention to the ship. "Gideon, you in control of the ship?"

"Negative," Gideon replies. "The code is going to take too long to scramble. Manual control is necessary."

"Great," Sara says as she puts her hands back on the controls. She glances over to where Ava has now given up on merging Gideon with the machine’s network. A pang settles in her heart as she takes in the sheen of sweat on her brow, and the flare of pain in her eyes. Despite it all, Ava gives her a reassuring nod and a lopsided grin.

"Well," Sara says as she pushes the pod forward. "Here goes nothing."

* * *

3 Days Earlier…

"You're back!"

She snaps her head up to see a young boy bounding towards her with a happy grin. She smiles, though she knows it hardly meets her eyes. She settles the deer down on the tarp before she kneels, catching him as he leaps upwards.

"Batsa," she greets him as warmly as the cold will allow. "You shouldn't be outside, it's far too cold for you."

Batsa squirms in her embrace, giggling as she tickles his side. "Mama said you'd be coming home with deer."

"Did she now?" She asks, peering at the boy curiously. Before he can reply, a deep female voice
"At least this time you didn't get its' guts all over you."

She stands, facing the tall, dark-haired woman as she approaches. She wipes a small blade on her coat as she places a hand on her son's back. She eyes the woman carefully, looking back at the cleanly-killed deer on the fur tarp.

The woman hums, though her gaze is guarded. "You're getting better, Keira."

In another lifetime, the name would make her cringe. It would reminder of a life she once lived, one where she wears clothes entirely different to the ones she currently dons. It reminds her of simpler, and yet more violent life.

A life lived in secrecy and lies.

A life lived in sacrifice and loss.

I love you, kid...

I love you...

I...

"Thank you," she says as she looks back to the woman, shaking off the cold voices in her head. "Kopisha."

"Mama," Basta says as he tugs on his mother's fur coat. "Can I show Keira my new bow?"

"You crafted a new bow?" She asks as she looks to the boy, eager for a distraction. "I would love to see it—"

"Later," Kopisha says, gently patting the boy in the direction of the small village behind them. "Go now, play with your cousins. I must help skin and prepare the deer for the village. You can show her your bow later, boy."

Basta looks reluctant, but the imploring look from his mother sends him running in the direction of the children in the far distance. Kopisha waits until he is out of ear-shot before she turns back, eying her with suspicion.

"Come with me," Kopisha says, a smirk playing at her lips. "I will show you how to skin your beast properly."

* * *

Alex soars upwards, trying to focus on simply getting to the ship. Debris is starting to fall from the sky as the ship tears itself open. She doesn’t think about how she’d left Kara alone with the warmonger. She doesn’t think about how Maggie had said only one of them could be brought back. She doesn’t think about J’onn’s gruesome death.

Alex just focuses on her one task.

Save Lena. Get the weapon. Stop the war.

If she dares think about anything else, it'll all be for nought.
With a ferocious roar, Alex juts her fists forwards and smashes into the bottom of the already sinking ship, using her X-Ray vision to find the area closest to Lena’s vitals. She zooms through exploding tanks and dodges flying shrapnel. The heat licks at her damaged armour, but she pushes through, determined to get to her sister’s girlfriend. Para-demons try to block her path, but she makes work of them without enduring more damage.

“Alex!”

Alex’s head whips around at the familiar lilt of Lena’s voice.

Her eyes widen as she looks to the woman, half-leaned up against the wall of the ship, the spear clutched in her hand while the other is wrapped around her stomach precariously. Lena’s face is pale and from a quick scan, Alex can see that she’s bruised up, but otherwise okay. She flies over and focuses her energy on the younger Luthor.

“Lena,” Alex says her name breathlessly, flying over to sling the arm cradled around her waist around her shoulder. Her knees tremble lightly as she finds herself closer to the weapon than she’s ever been before.

A wave of nausea passes over her, but she fights it down.

“It… affects you…?” Lena pants with a gasp, her eyes wide with concern. “But you’re…”

“Half-Kryptonian now,” Alex finishes as she grits her teeth. Is this what Kara felt like whenever she was faced with Kryptonite? “I’m reading over my suit’s signals. I’m still good to fly you. It’ll be rough, so hang on tight, okay?”

“Okay.” Lena rasps, choking as smoke starts to fill the small chamber. “Listen, Alex, you have to know: Maggie, Sara, and Ava went to the docking port. I think… I think they were trying to steal one of the escape pods but I don’t…”

“Come on,” Alex says as she draws Lena into her arms, setting her face determinedly. She ignores the status of her fiancée. She looks to the weapon and grits her teeth as another dizzying wave falls over her. “We need you on the ground as soon as we can. I’ll come back for them and get them out, I swear.” Lena nods, too tired to fight back.

Alex finds a hole in the ship and leaps through, Lena still carried bridal-style in her arms as she flies them towards the ground. She can feel the shards of debris and sheet metal collapsing around them, and while she knows her armour can take the shrapnel, Lena’s body cannot. Curling the smaller woman into her frame, Alex adjusts her hold on Lena as she flies through the air. The tip of the spear digs against her side, and she has to bite her lip to prevent herself from screaming out at the burning pain. She ducks and weaves, trying to avoid the flaming metal, but a massive piece clips her side, sending her hurdling downwards. Lena shouts in fear, clutching tighter to Alex’s neck.

"Hold on!" Alex screams as she readjusts Lena again. "Just hang on…"

Finally, Alex manages to right herself, pulling Lena to rest her head in the crook of her head. As she’s almost near the ground, a piece of metal clips Lena’s arm, sending the spear clattering from her arms. The younger Luthor snarls as her suit rips and a nasty gash is revealed. Alex growls as she adjusts her grip on the younger woman, watching helplessly as the spear falls into the rubble of a ruined building. She manages to get Lena down on the ground safely, but just as she’s about to look for the spear, she hears another catastrophic boom.
Alex looks up to see the ship finally breaking apart, but when she zooms in closer, she sees a small piece zig-zagging through the sky. She quickly uses her X-Ray vision to detect a small escape pod with three familiar heartbeats. Alex’s heart sinks as she watches a piece of Darkseid’s ship collide with the pod, sending it crashing.

“Go,” she hears Lena shout from behind her, “I’ll find the spear!”

She turns to see Lena already stumbling away, blood running down her arm as she runs in the direction of the faint, golden light glowing in the distance. Alex sucks in a deep breath, praying her sister's girlfriend stays safe.

"Kelex," she says as she looks back to the plummeting aircraft. "Get me a lock on that pod."

* * *

3 Days Earlier…

"Your friend came back today," Kopisha says, her voice tight. "But I'm assuming he found you."

"He's not my friend," she replies as she tugs the drags the skinned deer into the small hut. "Not anymore, at least."

Before she can move past Kopisha, the taller woman places a sturdy hand on her shoulder. She looks up to Kopisha's stern expression. "I of all people know the burden of loss, my friend."

"You don't know anything," she hisses back, feeling her eyes burn hot with rage. "No one does."

"Really?" Kopisha asks, her voice steady as she arches her brow. "You are a God pretending to be a mortal."

"Enough—"

"I was sent here by Artemis and Hera to protect this sacred land," Kopisha growls, cutting her off before she can say anything else. "I have the power to shift mountains, and I instead am a simple farmer in a small Earthen village."

"You chose that life," she snarls back, "I didn't choose any of this!"

"And yet here you are," Kopisha says without a flinch. "At yet another impasse."

She stays silent, gritting her teeth as she looks away. She can feel Kopisha's stern glare burning into her head. She wants to tune out the screaming, the pain, the memories, the blood which permanently stains her hands.

But she can't.

"You can either cross this bridge or burn it," Kopisha says. "It is your choice, and only your choice."

* * *

“You and I could rule the world!” Darkseid booms as he throws a piece of building at Kara. “You belittle yourself, Kryptonian, for these pathetic humans. You have the might of God, and yet you parade around here like you are a mortal. You are capable of so much more than their guiles. Join me. I’ll show you how much you are worth.”
“Never,” Kara spits out as she dodges the attack before zooming forward and punching at Darkseid. “This is not my planet, but I will protect these people because I love them. I fight for the lives lost on Krypton, for my family!”

“Love?! Family?!” Darkseid spits out, grappling at Kara’s shoulders before tossing her to the ground with a frustrated huff. “What do you know of love and family, young Zor-El? You are the last child of Krypton. Insignificant. Dust.”

Kara winces at that. Darkseid only chuckles at her response.

“That’s right,” he says, floating as Kara collapses on the ground. “I tore your cousin apart. I ripped his head from his shoulders, just as your so-called sister did to my uncle.” Kara flinches, tears welling in her eyes at the images.

“But don’t worry,” Darkseid says, shrugging. “I was never close with my Uncle. In fact, I’m rather happy he’s gone. He was a nuisance, really. But deep down, don’t you feel the same about Kal?” Kara growls, heaving upwards and smashing her shoulders into the alien’s chest, sending them both flying back into a tower.

“Don’t you dare talk about him!” Kara seethes, her eyes burning as she lets her heat vision blaze a trail across his chest. Darkseid hardly reacts, instead choosing to reach for her again. His meaty hands claw at her shoulders, lifting her up and clenching her. Kara writhes under his grip, feeling her chest nearly break underneath his strength.

“Kal was weak,” Darkseid spits. “Growing up on Earth made him weak. You, Kara Zor-El, are the strongest Kryptonian to ever exist. You were meant to be the Champion of Krypton, but instead you reduced yourself to an invalid vigilante. You should be worshipped, not ridiculed. You are above these spineless humans. You must see it.”

“No!” Kara snarls as she wriggles free and kicks him in the chest, followed by a brutal uppercut as he darts backwards. Darkseid growls again, more furious than before as he flies forward. Kara prepares herself for contact.

She tries her best to evade him, but a hand claws at her cape and she feels her neck strain as she’s violently snapped backwards. She feels her stomach snap up into her throat as Darkseid spins her around a few times, the centrifugal force making her dizzy before he flings her hard across the destroyed remains of National City. She tumbles and falls, skidding through pavement and concrete until she comes to a grinding halt into one destroyed building. Before she can get up once again, Darkseid flies forward and punches her in the gut, sending her clattering backwards.

She can’t get a grip on her powers as she flies through the air, crashing through more debris. Black spots dance in her eyes as air gets more difficult to suck in. She feels her back collide against concrete and steel as she’s thrown backwards, through walls and glass for what feels like hours. She can’t get rid of the pain, only accept it.

Finally, after what seems like an eternity, she comes crashing to the ground.

* * *

2 Days Earlier…

"Hey, kid. It's me. I know it's been awhile. Almost a year or two, if my math is correct. Which it hardly ever is, but that's besides the point. You must be wondering why I'm contacting you, especially considering the strict no-contact rule you imposed before you disappeared, but you left
this line open in case of emergencies. I wouldn't ever call you unless it was an emergency, and this isn't beside the case. Darkseid is back, but we might be able to stop him—"

She quickly powers off the small device. The lamp beside her flickers and wanes, the wax slowly burning out.

Her hand on her lap slowly clenches into a fist as she closes her eyes.

*I'm sorry, there was nothing more that we could do.*

She grits her teeth and tries to ward off the sting of memories, but they keep flooding in.

*You won't have long to say goodbye, she's in a lot of pain.*

"Stop it," she growls as she stands, her chair kicking backwards as she paces the small space of the hut. "Stop it."

*I love you, kid.*

*I love you.*

*I love..."

"Please," she sobs as she folds onto her knees. "Please, stop."

Thankfully, silence responds back. The only noise filling the void in her chest is the whistling of the wind rattling against the wooden door. She stands, blinking back tears as she looks up to the faint etch-marks in the ceiling. She kneels on the floor, the weight of her past bearing down on her and threatening to push her into the Earth.

She doesn't know how long she stays there, kneeling on the cold floor, until a soft hand touches her shoulder.

* * *

“*You’re a pilot, right?*” Maggie shouts to Sara as she watches their pod do a barrel roll. She controls the nausea rising in her stomach as she grips onto her armrests for dear life. “*What do all of these fucking flashing lights mean?*”

“*Not good things,*” Sara replies in a clipped tone, struggling to get a hold of the crumbling machinery. “*I think we lost our engine—our only engine. Brace for impact!*” Maggie gulps as she looks to where Ava is trying to troubleshoot the problem, but as the ground closes in on them from the small window, she knows it’s useless.

Just as the pod is a hundred feet from the ground and Maggie contemplates life after death, there’s a thud and the nose violently tips up, the pod correcting itself. In a daze, Maggie looks out the window to see a familiar black blur on the wing, holding up the shattered wing. There’s fire all around, but Maggie beams when she realizes who it is.

“*Danvers,*” Maggie breathes out, “*you bastard, I love you.*”

Alex gives her a nod from the window before she’s gone again. Maggie focuses on the screen in front of her, watching as the pod is roughly guided to the ground. She feels her leg sear in pain as the vessel crashes into the rubble with a few bumps, before coming to a tumbling halt. Sara and
Ava gather themselves before stumbling to their feet, coming up to her and helping her out of the chair. Ava is a bit wobbly on her knees, but she manages.

There’s a screech of metal being torn, before the smell of cold air wafts over them. Maggie blinks upwards to see Alex, her helmet half destroyed and pieces of the armour on her side and legs missing, standing at the top of the ruined escape pod. Her arms reach down, grasping for Maggie. Sara and Ava pass her upwards and she feels Alex.

Maggie thanks whatever deity is responsible for saving her life a million times over as she allows herself to be gently cradled in Alex’s strong arms. She hides her face into the exposed part of Alex’s neck, taking in the scent of burnt metal, smoke, and sweat. Blood coats the side of her head from where its’ exposed. Judging by the warmth that is dripping upon her armour, she assumes Alex has either re-injured her bullet wound, or has acquired a new one.

“There we go, that’s my girl. Nice and easy,” Alex whispers hoarsely as she sets her on the ground, placing her gently against upturned rock. “I’m so happy you’re okay, Mags. I thought… when the ship exploded… I just… I thought…”

“Ssh,” Maggie says, her voice cracking as she cups Alex’s half-armoured, half-skin cheeks in her hands. She draws her in and presses their sweaty, blood-crusted foreheads together. “I knew you’d come, Alex. I knew you’d save us.”

“I always will,” Alex says back, her own metal-lined hands cupping her own face. "I love you, Mags." Maggie nods against her, so desperately wanting to just forget about the destruction around them and to be with Alex.

“Guys,” Sara’s worried voice interrupts them, and Alex looks over to see her hovering around a pale Ava, who’s barely sitting upright against a slab of concrete. There’s blood caked in her hair and Maggie watches as Alex’s eyes (or rather, the visible eye) narrow. Fresh blood is still flowing down her jaw and dripping onto her suit.

Maggie doesn't need an M.D. to know something is definitely not right.

“She’s hemorrhaging,” Alex says softly, looking up to Sara with a solemn expression. “She needs immediate medical attention, Sara. There’s nothing we can do for her here. Not even a simple triage will help her. I’m… I’m sorry.”

“Mm,” Ava mumbles, eyes lolling. “I’m tired.”

“Hey,” Sara whispers softly, and Maggie watches sadly as she reaches down to tug Ava’s limp hand to her own. “You’re gonna be okay. Everything will be okay. We’re a team, remember, and we stick together. I’m not losing you.”

“Ssh,” Ava slurs, reaching up to swat at Sara’s face, but her hands barely leave her sides. “Don’t worry. ‘Be okay.”

Maggie watches a tears film in Sara’s eyes and her heart shatters, remembering a similar pain from only days ago. “Yeah,” the captain whispers, leaning forward to peck Ava’s forehead. “You are gonna be just fine, Aves.”

“The DEO is about a five-minute drive from here,” Alex supplies, glancing around their surroundings before pointing to an abandoned car. “Mom will be there with a team of doctors and supplies. She’ll be able to help Ava get better.” Sara looks torn, as she looks past Alex’s should to the onslaught of red and white beams firing in the distance.
"What about Darkseid?" Sara asks, gulping as they look over to Kara battling the monster. "He's too strong."

"We'll figure it out," Alex says, as reassuringly as she can. Maggie nods, reaching for the gun slung around her middle. She stumbles to her feet unsteadily, much to the behest of both Sara and Alex.

"I'm fine in long-range," she mutters, giving Alex a look to let her know she's not budging on the matter. "We may have lost most of our team, but it doesn't mean that we can't still finish this. I'm with you until the end, Danvers."

Maggie can see the hesitation in Alex’s eyes, but before her wife can argue, a bloodcurdling scream pierces the air, followed by a thunderous boom. Both Maggie and Alex turn at watch as a blur of white is sent hurling through stacks upon stacks of buildings. Maggie feels her heart drop as she realizes just exactly what that blur was.

"Kara!" Alex cries out, leaping up as her eyes turn a flaming black. "No!"

"Go," Maggie says, pushing her. "I'll find higher ground." Alex looks at her, obviously torn, but eventually relents.

"Stay safe," Alex growls, clutching her tight. "Promise me, Maggie."

"I will," Maggie says, nodding resolutely. "Go get 'em, Alex."

* * *

2 Days Ago…

"Listening to the call will do nothing to ail you, Kara."

She doesn't turn at the sound of her name, a name which she has not heard in almost two years. She lets the tears slide down her cheeks and drip into the floor as the boards creak with the shifting of weight from behind her. Another hand curls over her shoulder, a head tucking itself into her neck and soft lips pressing gentle kisses there.

"I can't," Kara whispers as she hangs her head. "I'm not that person anymore, Kopisha."

"A leopard can't change its' spots," Kopisha says softly, chuckling. "You can't change who you are, Kara."

"And who am I?" Kara asks, turning to face the taller woman. "I'm not your lover, not Basta's mother—"

"I ask nothing of you," Kopisha soothes as she cups her face lovingly. "Neither does my son."

"Then what?" Kara pleads, her voice cracking. "What have I got left to give?"

Kopisha's head turns, her gaze locked on a slightly ajar piece of wood sticking out from the floorboards. Kara shivers as she feels the cold air bristle through her hair. Kopisha's hands run down her shoulders, massaging her sides.

"The only thing you can," Kopisha whispers, kissing her ear. "Hope, Kara."

Kara follows her gaze, her stomach flipping at the implication of Kopisha's words.
"I am a daughter of the Gods," Kopisha hums, "but you, my dear, you are one."

"No," Kara says as she shakes her head, pushing Kopisha off. "I won't do it. I can't go back. What I did—"

"That wasn't you—"

"It was a version of me," Kara snarls as she whirls on the woman. "That's more than enough, Kopisha."

Kopisha's neutral face turns into one of displeasure and anger as she rises to her feet. "Kara—"

"I don't need you to remind me of my guilt," Kara snaps as she turns. "It lives with me, every day."

"And what do you do about it?!" Kopisha demands in a low voice. "You sit here, hiding away, stewing in it?"

"I'm not a danger to anyone out here," Kara croaks, fresh tears welling in her eyes. "I can't hurt anyone here."

Kopisha's mouth snaps shut when Kara bursts into a sob. She balls her fists into her eyes, falling back to her knees on the hard floor. She hears her approaching footsteps, and then Kopisha's strong hand grasps her shoulder.

This time, the flood of memories are surprisingly less heavy. Instead of pain and guilt, she feels love. It feels like her mind is being probed, and while she could never have her mind be read by J'onn, she imagines this is how it feels.

She sees herself, young and innocent. Hair-tousles, tickles, play-wrestling, cuddles…

Laughter, joy, warm hands on her sides, comforting and strong.

I love you, kid…

I love you…

I...

And then it plunges back into darkness, an unyielding

"Kara."

She blinks, gasping as she sees the world around her disappeared into darkness, bare for the light in front of her.

But not just any light.

The light of a spirit.

"Alex?"

* * *

Alex hears the dull thudding of Kara’s heartbeat amongst the rubble and darts forward until she makes out the crumpled form of her baby sister laying in the rubble, eyes closed and body limp.
“Kara,” Alex breathes out as she stumbles to the ground before lifting one of the rocks trapping her sister and tossing it aside. “Kara? Oh, thank God.” Alex lets out a sigh of relief as those baby blue eyes sluggishly blink up at her, defeated and tired. Alex swallows thickly at the pain in Kara’s facial expression.

“A-Alex,” Kara stammers, “I… I…”

“We’re almost done. I know you’re tired and you’re hurting, but we can do this. You just gotta hang in there a little bit longer, kid. You and me, okay?” Alex assures her, helping her to her feet. She lets Kara lean some of her weight on her shoulder before Kara finds her footing again. The two sisters look up to see Darkseid slowly floating his way over, looking undamaged and unaffected by the battle. Alex grits her teeth, holding Kara closer to her body.

“Champion,” Darkseid drawls, “when will it be enough for you?”

Alex adjusts Kara around her shoulders, ignoring the fire burning a path up and down her side as she glares in Darkseid’s direction. The man throws his hands up, gesturing to the burning rubble that was once National City’s heart. Alex takes in the destruction, her heart aching as she realizes that this war has taken so much.

“You can make it all stop,” Darkseid says as he comes to stand in front of them. “All you have to do is join me, and together we will rule the universe. Spare this Earth and take the rest in eternity.”

Alex shakes her head, growling.

She can feel Kara starting to regain her strength as her sister stands her ground. The two of them stand, side-by-side, their fists clenched tightly as they look up at the warmonger, glaring coldly. Alex lets the Kryptonite power her.

The smirk falls off Darkseid’s lips, his brows narrowing.

“So be it,” he growls, “but know, this only ends one way.”

Alex grits her teeth. “And what’s that?”

Darkseid’s lip curls upwards.

“Either you die, or I do.”

---

2 Days Ago…

"Kara," Alex's spirit hums mournfully as it glances over her. "What are you doing, sweet girl?"

Kara shakes her head, tears spilling down her cheeks as she reaches out for the ghost of her sister, her fingers wading through nothing but dim light. Alex looks to her with a sad smile and Kara reels her hand backwards.

"I can't do this without you," Kara whispers, her voice cracking. "I'm a mess without you, Alex."

"Have you forgotten all I've taught you?" Alex asks, a hint of laughter on her breath. "Oh, Kara…"

"The whole reason I became her was because of you," Kara says back, more tears streaming down her face. "You were my family, Alex. When my world was destroyed, I thought it was the most painful thing, but losing you…"
"Kara," Alex says as she floats down to kneel in front of her. "I've never left your side."

Shaking her head again, Kara bitterly chokes out, "Alex, you're not real."

Alex chuckles. "And since when does reality matter?"

"Because a reality without you is not a reality!" Kara snarls back as she looks to her knees. "It's not my reality…"

"Then change it, Kara."

Kara's head snaps up as she looks to her sister with an astonished look. "What the Hell are you talking about?"

Alex peers at her, the blue light of her spirit brightening as the darkness around them erupts into dim smattering of stars. Kara makes out the different galaxies and constellations as the cosmos alights besides them. Different planetary systems pass them by, and Kara watches with wide eyes as she feels herself looking into the universe.

And then, into different Earths.

"The concept of another universe is not unknown to you," Alex explains wisely. "You know from the Legends and Darkseid's rule that there are other Earths, other versions of yourself, of me, of us. One is calling out for your help."

"You don't get it," Kara growls as she looks to her sister as Earth-38 comes into view. "None of them are my Alex."

"No," Alex says, her voice small and lonely. "But if you had the chance to erase this pain, would you?"

Kara looks up to her sister, watching as her gaze looks far-away and lost in thought. She considers what her sister is implying before she looks back to the manifestation of Earth-38. She can see the darkness shrouding National City and the western coast of North America. She can feel the pain of loss burning in her chest, hotter than Earth's sun.

"You were never Supergirl to me, you know."

Kara blinks up at her sister, her heart caught in her throat at the love in her blue-lit eyes. "Alex?"

Alex smiles. "You were always Kara Danvers, my sister, my best friend, and my soulmate."

The two of them turn back to Earth-38, watching as the planet continues to darken under Darkseid's siege.

"In every universe," Alex says softly, looking back to her with love, "that's who you'll always be to me."

*I love you, kid…*

*I love you…*

*I…*

"Alex," Kara whispers, looking to her sister as tears film in her eyes. Alex looks back at her, patient and stoic.
For a moment, her breath stutters in her throat, but she eventually regains her stature.

"I love you," Kara says as she reaches out, her hand passing through light. "I'm sorry I never said it back that day."

Alex smiles mournfully, shaking her head. "I knew, Kara. You never had to tell me for me to know."

Kara gazes upon her sister for a few more moments, trying to memorize her features, the sound of her voice, the similarities in her shadow form as in her real form. She draws back on the memory of the two of them at their house in Midvale, when they would lay in the grassy knoll a few metres from their house, gazing at the infinite stars. She clutches onto the memory, letting the soothing sensation of dew-licked grass, fresh air, and her sister's warmth flood through her like an elixir of healing. She feels her bones relax as the weight upon them slowly eases.

"Kara?"

The sensation of weight pulls on her hand, and Kara looks beside her to see the light of her sister's hand resting atop her own. The feeling is jarring, enough to rattle her bones and make her heart stop in shock. She looks up.

"Yeah?" Kara croaks weakly, her voice taut with emotion. Alex smiles sadly, nodding to her with acceptance.

"Don't be afraid," Alex whispers as the stars and darkness start to fade. Alex's spirit dims and Kara cries out.

"No, Alex, don't leave—"

"Don't be afraid," Alex says again as she fades from Kara's view. "Death is not the end, Kara."

* * *

Lena scrambles through the rubble, struggling to find the spear. She can hear the sounds of chaos and destruction around her, and she knows that she has to needs to get to the weapon immediately. She coughs through the dust, holding an elbow over her mouth as she limps through the rubble, searching through debris with the visor Sara had given her. She pauses for a moment, lightheaded and dizzy as she slumps against the wall. The blood on her arm is running down her side in rivulets. She quickly unlatches her belt and ties it around her arm tightly to stem the flow. She looks outside to see a white blur fighting and flying against the massive, lumbering shape of the Darkseid.

"Come on," Lena hisses, stumbling from the wall. "Just a few more steps. Once you have the weapon, this can end."

She keeps Kara in the back of her head as she continues further into the ruined building, finally spotting the spear a few feet from her. A tired grin breaks out on her face when she sees it. She crawls forward on shaky knees, catching the gold glinting in the pale light as she continues forwards, slowly but steadily. She hears the fighting intensifying.

"Come on," she says to herself, "almost there…"

Just as she’s about to reach out for the weapon, a sharp explosion rockets through the upper tiers of the already volatile building, and Lena gasps as the ground begins to quake. Rubble and bits of concrete begin to fall, plummeting dangerously close towards her. She wobbles on her feet,
struggling to find support in the concrete.

Unwilling to lose the weapon again, Lena reaches out and swipes the spear into her hand. She holds it close to her chest as she stumbles to her feet, bobbing and weaving under the onslaught of falling debris. She can see a crack in the wall ahead, and Lena grits her teeth as she darts towards it on shaky knees. She sprints harder than ever before.

“Come on,” she screams to herself, “get out of here, Lena!”

She’s a few feet from the exit when the ground beneath shifts. Lena’s eyes widen and she gasps, trying to outrun the crumbling earth, but she can’t. She finds herself falling through the cracks, screaming out in agony and shock.

When she lands, it’s not on concrete, but in freezing water.

Lena gasps, her fingers letting go of the spear as she ducks under to avoid the falling rubble. She screams, little air bubbles leaving her lips as she watches the small crack that she’d fallen through suddenly fill with rubble. She pounds on the stone, panicking as her lungs run out of air. She looks back down to see the spear sinking deeper and deeper underwater until it’s gone. The air is leaving just as quickly, and Lena knows she has only moments left.

It was over.

They lost.

Lena closes her eyes, thinks of Kara, and finally accepts her fate.

* * *

2 Days Ago…

Kara’s eyes open to the now-familiar barren walls of her small hut.

The light from the lamp is dim now, barely held alight with the small amount of wax remaining in the jar. The sensation of weight on her shoulder lifts, and she hears the floorboards creak as Kopisha takes a few steps back.

"Kara?" Kopisha asks. "What did you see?"

Ignoring her, Kara rises to her feet. She walks in the direction of the desk, her hand reaching out to touch the device. She grazes the smooth metal, ignoring Kopisha’s approaching steps as she presses her finger down on the button.

_Darkseid is back, but we might be able to stop him. This Earth we’re going to, it's different, Kara. Darkseid doesn't have a weapon of your previous-self’s calibre. When J'onn called me, he sounded different. He sounded… hopeful._

Kara walks past Kopisha, letting the message play out as she makes her way to the jutting floorboards. She kneels lifting the small fur pelt which covers the dusted wooden planks. She reaches for a small handle and pulls.

_I know losing Alex was hard. I know killing that version of you was just as hard, but that was only one battle._

Kara blinks away the cloud of dust as she pulls open the hatch and peers down.
We have to win the war, Kara. Else, this never stops and he'll keep killing until there's nothing left.

She reaches down, pulling at the small leather-lined package. She unravels the strings slowly.

You lost your Alex. And I'm sorry, Kara. I am.

Kara looks to the familiar blue leather, the striking symbol of her house glinting in the pale light. She runs her hand over the dusted material, feeling the grooves and letting the memories of the last time she wore it burn into her mind. She doesn't fight it this time, as she feels the pain and destruction of taking a life, of taking her own life, once again.

I can't bring her back. No one can. But Kara?

She reaches past the suit to let her fingers tangle in the comfort of the cape, of the only piece left of her planet.

She hears Sara's voice as she stands, suit in hand. She turns and faces Kopisha, straightening under the awe and shock in her gaze. Something flickers behind the taller woman, and Kara's breath catches at the familiar blue light.

Alex's spirit stares back at her, a proud smile adorning her face.

You might not be able to save your Earth's Alex.

"Kara?" Kopisha asks, swallowing thickly. "Are you…?"

Kara looks down to the suit in her hands before she looks back up at her friend with a strong nod.

"I'm going to Earth-38," she says as she steps forward as the message ends and Sara's voice cuts out. She holds the suit in one of her hands, before she reaches down and clears the dust off the golden symbol with her other.

Then, Kara looks back up to Kopisha, her eyes lit with determination.

I love you, kid...

I love you...

I...

Kara takes a deep breath and fixates on Alex’s spirit behind the taller woman.

"I'm going to save Alex."

* * *

“Either you die, or I do.”

Kara hates the shiver which runs through her body when she hears the words filter through the air. Before she has a chance to react, however, Darkseid darts forward, swinging his fist into Alex’s chest, sending her clattering backwards into an upturned building. Her sister tumbles through debris before colliding into another pillar.

Kara snarls, using a supersonic boom to smash into Darkseid’s back. She grabs at the lapels of his armour and tosses him to the side before searing him in the chest with her heat vision. She finishes her attack by kicking him down into the Earth with a loud thud. The ground beneath him quakes
and splits as Kara hammers down again.

Just as Darkseid is about to get up, a black blur rushes past her and Kara watches as Alex uppercuts the man in the jaw, sending him flying a few more feet backwards. He tumbles and rolls until he comes to a complete halt.

The sky darkens overhead, thunder rumbling out ominously as rain starts to pelt down.

Fitting, Kara thinks, that this is how it ends.

She looks to Alex, shocked to see that her helmet is now completely destroyed. Her sister’s hair is matted with blood, and one of her eyes is half swollen shut. Her lip is busted, and she seems to have a deep cut from her jaw to her cheek on the left side. Alex looks over at her, clearly exhausted and seriously injured, but not yet defeated.

Darkseid growls, leaning up. His eyes burn red, ready to fire.

“Alex!” Kara screams out as she sees his vision aimed to her. “Look out!”

Alex turns her head back, but she can’t move in time. Kara tries to leap forward, but the lasers have already left his eyes. Kara feels her heart plummet into her stomach as she watches the lasers move faster than the speed of light.

She’s going to be too late.

She’s going to lose Alex.

She’s going to lose her world.

But fate has another plan for her, it seems.

Before Darkseid's omega beams can impact Alex’s vulnerable frame, something jumps in front of her sister and suddenly, two bright blue beams are directed towards the searing red lines. The clash of the two colours blind Kara temporarily, until the light fades, and the dust clouds up around the mysterious figure in front of her sister.

“What?” Darkseid snarls in fury, smashing his fist against a pillar in his rage. "What are you doing here?"

Kara looks to see the dust settling, and she gasps when she realizes who is standing in front of Alex.

The woman looks up, an exact replica of herself, bare for the short-cut hair and the jagged scar running from her left brow to her cheek. The suit is modified, too, but Kara knows that symbol like she knows the back of her hand.

"Darkseid," the woman says, a cold tone encompassing her voice. "We have unfinished business."

Darkseid's lips flatten into an angered line, his eyes blazing red.

"So it seems, Supergirl."

Chapter End Notes
Tell me what you think! :D I really want to hear how you're liking/not liking it -- the comments really mean a lot and I thank everyone who’s commented thus far!
Chapter Notes

THIS IS IT BOYS THIS IS THE END OF THE BATTLE. IT'S A DOOZY AND IT'S LONG AND IT'S EMOTIONAL BUT JUST HOLD ON BECAUSE I PROMISE A HAPPY ENDING.

this is very much in the style of *that scene* from bvs because the extended edition of that movie is literally the best DC movie (haters gonna hate, you do you) and I couldn't help but give it that classic feel (also to that one awesome commenter who noted this style kudos to you I'm glad you picked up on it!!!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"This ends today, you bastard."

Before Darkseid can reply to her duplicate, Kara watches as alternate Supergirl bounds forward, delivering a solid punch to his chest which sends him flying backwards. Her armour, thick and steel-plated is slightly different to the one Winn had put together when she first started her own gig as the hero. When Kara takes in the neon-blue lighting around the edges of the crest of the House of El, she notices how electricity seems to cackle from Supergirl's fingers.

She can already tell, this Supergirl is vastly different to herself.

But then, she realizes why the armour is so familiar.

Supergirl girl turns to her, her blue, heat-vision lit eyes dimming back to their regular blue. The rain continues to pelt against them, lightening cackling in the overcast to highlight the angry, faded scar on her counterpart's face.

"You're…," Kara trails off, her mouth agape in shock still. "You're…"

"I called in a favour," a voice sounds from behind her, and Kara turns to see Sara, redressed in her white canary uniform, standing behind her with her two swords. She passes Supergirl a strong nod. "Glad you came, Supergirl."

Kara turns her attention back to… well… her.

"Your armour," Kara splutters to her clone, "it's… the armour for the high guard of Krypton. How did you…?"

Kara—well, Supergirl, she demises, only nods towards her own get-up, a small smirk on her face.
"I like your tiara," she quips, ignoring her remark. "It's a nice touch. The white's nice too, actually."

Before Kara can angrily quip out that it’s not a tiara, Supergirl’s attention turns itself to Alex, who is staring at her clone in shock and awe. It’s then that Kara watches as Supergirl’s face falls and her eyes glisten with tears as she looks to her sister. Whatever reply Kara had on her tongue soon disappears as she looks to the sheer hurt in her eyes. She knows this look, she remembers it from the feeling of watching Alex bleed out on their kitchen table.

Only, her Alex survived.

“Alex,” Supergirl gasps breathily, the confident gaze she’d had long lost in the sight of her sibling, “you’re…”

Kara watches Alex gulp and nod unsteadily, and Supergirl swallows down a cry. Kara’s heart shatters when the other-her can’t even finish the statement. The raw emotion in her voice tells her everything that she needs to know. She looks to Supergirl’s quivering fingers, and she wants to cry. She looks back to Sara, who shrugs at her sadly.

But the bittersweet moment is ruined by a loud roar.

All of them turn around to see Darkseid charging back towards them, his fist drawn backwards. The first to break from their collective stupor, Alex darks up this time, snarling as she flies up and meets him head-on, grabbing at his fist before twisting his body and throwing him over her shoulder into another abandoned building. She hovers in the air, her fists still clenched tightly. Black wisps pulsate from her fingers and her eyes glow the deep, menacing onyx.

“That’s new…,” Supergirl mutters in disbelief. “Whoa.”

Alex doesn't respond as she darts forward her fists extended as she drives into Darkseid's chest with a loud shout. The ground shakes as his body is thrown deeper into the ground. Kara hovers upwards, ready to aid her sister. She looks over to Supergirl, watching with a pained expression as her clone looks on in a mixture of awe and confusion.

“Enough gawking, Girl of Steel,” Sara says, jumping down from beside her to walk over to her clone with a smirk as she brandishes her swords. “Don’t let Danvers have all the fun. Let’s get him and end this shit, once and for all.”

The mention of Darkseid and his prior atrocities seems to snap her from her daze. Kara watches Supergirl’s eyes narrow as Darkseid rises from the rubble again, batting Alex away like a fly. He punches her in the side, looking more furious than ever before as he turns back to face them. Kara watches as her clone flies up to hover beside a now-recovered Alex, her eyes burning a bright blue. Sara leaps down the ledge beneath them, gripping her swords.

Kara comes to hover beside them, flanking her sister's other side, staring down Darkseid as he glowers at them.

"You will not stop me," Darkseid growls, his eyes blazing. "I possess the power of the entire universe in my hands."

"You may have that," Supergirl growls, her eyes burning bright blue and her fingertips cackling with raw energy. "But there is one thing you do not have, one thing that makes us more powerful than you'll ever be." Darkseid frowns.

"And what is that, Supergirl?" He sneers, glaring at her as he hovers up from the ground.
But Supergirl isn't the one to answer.

Instead, Alex flies forward, her eyes turning black as her entire body hums with the power of Black Kryptonite.

And then, she answers with only one word:

"Hope."

Kara feels the White Kryptonite pulse with power, and she knows that while it isn't sentient, she feels the connection to the word. Before Darkseid can reply, she watches in awe and pride as Supergirl makes the first move, leaping forward and jumping into a supersonic leap as she hammers her body into Darkseid's front with a ferocious snarl. Kara follows the attack next, grabbing the man from where he floats mid-air to drag him upwards before throwing him back down. When he hits the ground, Sara digs her two swords into his calf before swiping to the side, knocking him backwards. Alex finishes the attack by sweeping downwards, locking her fists into his chest.

The ground quakes as Darkseid is thrown deeper into the rubble, before Alex twists her body and throws him back upwards again. Supergirl darts forward and grabs at his shoulders before swinging his body around in Kara's direction. She juts her fist out, slamming it into the man's chest and sending him to the ground with a loud thud.

Sara attacks next, parkouring over some over-turned rubble before stabbing her swords into his shoulder as Alex and Supergirl make their way down to him, landing punch-after-punch to his face. Kara goes to join them when Darkseid growls and swats Sara to the side, before grabbing both Alex and Supergirl in his hands and tossing them aside like rag-dolls. His eyes find hers, blazing as a searing light fills them. Kara grits her teeth and holds steady.

Not this time.

Just as Darkseid fires the laser vision, Kara darts away, going supersonic. The red follows her, nipping at her heels. She zigzags before turning around to fall in line behind Darkseid. She grabs at his shoulders and twists her body just in time for the lasers to connect with his back, jolting him forward. Kara reaches down and locks her arms around his head before twisting, throwing him up into the air. She follows the move by jutting her fist into his chest.

Darkseid soars backwards, colliding into more buildings violently. She feels Supergirl and Alex zoom past her, ready to inflict more damage. She watches them work for a moment before she follows suit, Sara hot on her heels. Kara allows the power of the White Kryptonite to consume her as she slams forward, ready to inflict a world of pain.

Only this time, Darkseid is prepared for her.

With a grunt, he fires off his omega beams. Kara watches in horror as they sear through Alex, then Supergirl, and then finally Sara. The three women are sent tumbling backwards, leaving Darkseid free to run directly at her. Kara puts her fists up, ready to prevent the attack, but Darkseid's hands grab either side of her head before he leaps into the air. He bounds upwards, his tight grip unrelenting until the break past each level of the stratosphere.

Kara can feel the oxygen in her lungs starting to wane as she claws at his meaty hands. He hoists her upwards until they're right at the edge of space itself. The brilliant blue hue of Earth casts them in a shadow as Darkseid chuckles.
"You are desperate," he says, his eyes staring into her own. "Do you really want to know the truth, Kara Zor-El?"

Kara chokes as she feels her lungs burn under the lack of oxygen. Darkseid smirks, shaking his head.

"Very well," he hisses, his fingers pressing into her temples, "allow me to show you."

The next thing Kara feels is a bright, intense flash of pain.

* * *

"I can almost see the centre!"

Clark looks up from where he'd punched a hole in the centre of Apokolips, sweating despite his invulnerabilities. He can see Bruce perched a few metres above the ground, typing frantically into his laptop. Clark wipes his brow.

"Bruce!" He yells up at his friend. "Did you manage to talk to Kara?"

Bruce continues typing before he shouts back, "the signal is weak, but Barry's boosting it right now."

"We're only ten or so minutes out," Clark replies, turning his gaze back to the core. "They need to make their move."

"Understood," Bruce says gruffly, typing again. "I think I'm patched through. Hang on, Clark."

* * *

"Fuck…," Alex mutters as she rubs at her head, staggering after the concussive blast. "He took Kara."

"Alex," Supergirl says, turning over a rock which had pinned her leg. "You're okay?"

Alex nods, spitting out a wad of blood as she makes her way to her feet. She looks up, her super-vision barely allowing her to see two floating bodies hovering the thin line of the Earth's atmosphere before space. She looks to Supergirl, noticing the differences in this version of her sister. Her heart aches at the emptiness in those blue eyes, the dim sense of duty, the lack of expression. She can see pain and loss and an infinite road of self-deprecation.

"I'm fine," she assures her sister's clone. "We need to save Kara."

Coughing, Alex winds an arm around her waist as she looks back to the sky. "I can't survive that high up."

"I've got this," Supergirl says, her eyes flashing back to that bright blue. "You need to get that weapon."

"How did you know—"

"Sara briefed me," Supergirl interrupts, her voice now slightly modulated. The tone is downright terrifying, and Alex shudders at the intensity of this Supergirl's gaze. Before she can ask anything else, the woman shoots upwards alarmingly fast, going supersonic within seconds. Alex shakes her head and blinks away the dust in her eyes.
"Losing you took a toll on her," Sara explains as she walks over. "Coming here, seeing you… it can't be easy."

Alex nods, swallowing thickly at the implication of Earth-1's version of her as dead. "This Kara… she didn't…"

"She didn't," Sara says, looking away. "The other Kara, however… she was Darkseid's greatest weapon."

Alex digests the information with a bitter gulp. Sara looks back up to the sky, taking a deep breath.

"You can't let him kill you and live," Sara says, her words guarded. Alex notices the specific choice of words, and she knows immediately what she is implying. She looks to the captain and sees the slight sheen of tears in her gaze.

"You're time travellers," Alex says, frowning. "Does that mean…?"

Sara keeps her composure, but she can't help but let one tear slide down her cheek as she nods subtly.

Alex feels the pit in her stomach grow exponentially at what the other woman non-verbally communicates.

"Right then," Alex says, coughing to break the tense silence. "Let's find that spear, shall we?"

* * *

Fire.

Krypton is burning, and Kara is helpless.

She stands, watching as the people around her scream and cry out, as the flesh melts and sloughs from their standing bodies. Innocent people, young children, infants, elderly—none are spared as the fire ravages the planet. Tears flood her eyes as she breathes through the smoke, completely invulnerable to the heat and the inferno.

She sees her mother and father, staring at her with a look of disappointment, of defeat…

Of fear.

It's then, she sees the smoke parting behind them to reveal two glowing red eyes.

Kara can't move or speak as she watches Darkseid glide through the smoke, his face emotionless as he drifts past her burning parents. Kara is about to scream, about to attack the monster, but then she feels her heart stop as something moves from behind him. Kara's eyes widen and the air is swiftly taken from her lungs at the sight.

Two glowing red eyes, a blue suit, a red cape…

The crest of El, the golden cover crusted in blood and soot.

"You think this a hallucination," Darkseid says coolly as Kara stares at the other version of her. "A dream, perhaps."

Kara watches as the other-her's fists start to glow a dark red. She looks up to Darkseid, who simply chuckles.
"This is no dream," he hisses as he looks to the bone and flesh stuck to her parents. Kara sobs, shaking her head.

He looks to her, a smirk on his lips as he leans in closer.

"This is a memory."

* * *

"Fucking shit," Maggie growls as she leans against an upturned pillar. "I need a year off from this mess."

After catching her breath for a few seconds, Maggie stumbles over a rocky ledge before she finds a suitable vantage point. She leans down and grabs at her gun, swinging it forward before she lines up the scope and peers through it. She makes out three blurs in the distance, fighting amongst buildings. Upon closer look, Maggie is concerned.

But then a fourth one appears, and Maggie is now confused.

She sets the scope’s zoom deeper, and gasps at what she sees.

“Fuck me,” Maggie mutters as she cocks her gun. “This day just keeps getting better and better, doesn’t it? Two Supergirls? As if this battle couldn't get anymore interesting. Damn. Well, I hope the extra firepower helps.”

But then it hits her, when she sees Sara fighting on the ground.

This is her Supergirl.

This is the Supergirl who lost her sister, the Kryptonian that had used her loss to defeat the warmonger when he had attempted to take Earth-1 in the past. Maggie doesn’t have the time or energy to question how or why Sara got her Supergirl to end up here, but for now, she’s grateful that Alex and Kara are getting help and relief. She knows Sara sent a message out to the woman to try and help, but she had assumed, given everything, Supergirl was too hurt.

Just as Maggie gets ready to load her gun, something cackles next to her. She looks down to see the tele-communicator Lena had stolen from Darkseid’s ship bursting to life, broadcasting a grainy face. Maggie looks down, shocked to see a familiar, ashen face in the hologram. She rests a second, leaning against a crumbled wall.

"Bruce?" Maggie asks, snatching the communicator in her hands. She glances back to the intense fighting, watching as two figures stream up into the air. “Are you alright? Clark called earlier, but the connection was poor and—"

"Detective Sawyer," Bruce rasps into the microphone. “There's no time. Clark and Diana are three minutes from destroying the core of the planet. There's something you must know, that Kara and you all must know..."

“Okay,” Maggie says carefully, looking up to where the two Supers and Alex are fighting Darkseid with Sara. “The thing is, Lena has the weapon, not me. I'm heading in her direction. What do we need to know, Bruce?”

"Detective Sawyer, be warned," Bruce says, his voice getting distorted as the connection continues to fade. “The destruction of Apokolips provides you with a dilemma. There is only a small window after the destruction of Apokolips where Darkseid will be pervious to a lethal attack. If you wait
“Bruce,” Maggie pants as she taps at the screen. “I’m losing you.”

“**Kill him,**” Bruce replies, his voice hoarse. Maggie can see tears in his eyes, and she understands the gravity of the situation. “The only way this ends is with his death. You don’t have much time... get the weapon... and kill him...”

Maggie opens her mouth to reply, but the screen goes blank.

“**Shit,**” Maggie growls as she throws the communicator aside. She feels her stomach flip with nerves as she hears a boom rattle through the air. She looks out to see a single figure soaring upwards, through the thunderous clouds and into the sky. Looking away, she puts her hand up to her ear and presses down. “Lena, you read me? Hello?”

Static.

Maggie frowns, pressing again. “Luthor, you there?”

When nothing replies back, Maggie grows concerned. She pulls up a small tablet and quickly searches through for Lena’s vitals. The screen flashes red, and Maggie’s gut churns when she sees that the reading is showing the scans on Lena’s body. The data analysis reveals water in her lungs and her heart rate is dangerously slowing. When she hastily scans for the location of her friend, she nearly gasps in relief when she realizes she’s not too far.

Maggie sets her jaw determinedly. “Hang in there, Luthor, I’m coming.”

* * *

"**No,**” Kara gasps, "no... no Krypton exploded... the planet—"

"Tell me," Darkseid interrupts, looking to where the planet continues to burn hotter and hotter. "Is that what your pod was programmed to say, what your mother said to you? Is that the excuse they gave when they sent you away?"

Kara's mouth slams shut in disbelief, the shock hitting her full force. Darkseid smirks again.

"Oh Kara, how naïve you are, how unassuming; Krypton did not die because of an issue with solar radiation or planetary combustion. It was no natural accident, it was a wave, one of the first waves, in the tale of our universe." Darkseid's voice is a lazy drawl as he flickers to the devastating scene around them. "All your life, the truth of your existence, the truth of your extinction, was always foretold. This was always the inevitable, a prophecy fulfilled."

"I..." Kara stutters as she shakes her head and looks to the other version of her. "I didn't..."

"Krypton-100," Darkseid says as she hovers behind the other Kara, placing a hand on her shoulder. "Rao blessed Zor-El and Alura In-Ze with a child, a baby girl. A girl, who's powers were blessed by Rao himself. A masterpiece."

He looks to Kara again, smiling. "A saviour, born into the hands of a dying planet."

"There was a prophecy," Darkseid continues as he looks back to Kara. "The concept of a re-birth. Wars raged, people died, planets died. Galaxies were destroyed in the name of love, in the name of religion, in the name of providence."
Kara's eyes continue to shed tears as Darkseid takes a breath. "The same day this Kara was born, I was forged from the fires of Apokolips, sent with only one purpose by the Gods: overturn the mistake of the life they gave, to begin again. You see, Kara, none of this was ever purposeless. Every single action, every single moment, was all planned."

Darkseid removes his hand from Supergirl, and the two of them watch as she hovers away. Kara swallows back bile as the other version of her lets out an ungodly roar, before unleashing Hell with her heat vision upon the citizens of Krypton. Kara tries to move, tries to stop herself, but she's paralyzed, watching the end of her planet, her people...

"Kara Zor-El was sent in a pod to escape the destruction of her planet," Darkseid continues as they watch the other version of her continue to destroy Krypton. "There was no Kal-El, no Krypton to preserve. You were sent into space, into the place where death turns to life, with only one purpose: to side with me, a messiah of the Gods. A weapon."

"No," Kara chokes out, tears streaming down her cheeks. "No, this isn't right…"

"Everything you know," Darkseid drawls, turning back to her. "Everything you are, Kara, is a lie."

"No!" Kara shouts as she watches Supergirl aim her heat vision directly into the ground, into the heart of the planet. She tries to reach out again, but she watches instead, in horror, as Krypton begins to quake. "No, no! This isn't true!"

"Look closely," Darkseid says, pointing to the sky. "Is that familiar?"

Kara feels her heart fall to the pit of her stomach as she makes out two faint specs in the distance, hurtling away from the inevitable explosion of the planet. She looks back to her parents, now reduced to skeletons, and she cries.

"There are many versions of this story," Darkseid says softly, "in Kryptonian culture, it is the death of Rao and the destruction of the universe. In Hindu culture, it is the transition from Kalyug to Satiyug. Ragnorak, for the Norse. The end of foretold time by the Mayans. For the Christians, it is Judgement Day. But together, it is the same truth."

Kara sobs, her chest aching as Krypton finally explodes, bathing her in an inferno of pain.

In the distance, she can hear Darkseid laughing maniacally.

"You cannot stop this," he growls through the boom of the planet's destruction. "You cannot undo the truth."

*S * *

Sara watches Alex trudge through the destroyed remnants of National City, her heart sinking with guilt. She knows Alex knows the truth, but the lack of acknowledgement leaves her feeling sick. She wants to turn it all around.

"Don't."

Sara snaps her head up at the sound of Alex's voice. She looks to see Alex staring at her with a knowing look.

Swallowing thickly, Sara instead asks another question. "Would you change anything if you knew?"
Alex chuckles, shaking her head as she kicks at a small rock.

"Never."

The sight of her, standing in the rain, the pellets of water running down her hair, her armour, her chin is a solemn sight. But, for some reason, when Alex looks back up at her, her brown eyes lit with a poignant sense of hope, Sara can't help but be drawn into the alluring power radiated by the other woman. Sara swallows the pit in her throat.

"Kara's lucky," Sara says softly, drawing Alex's gaze back on her. "To have you as a sister."

Alex's lips curl upwards slightly, and Sara smiles at the subtle puff of pride in her gaze.

"If anyone is lucky, it's me. Kara…," Alex trails off, her smile growing wider. "Kara is everything to me."

Sara blinks back tears as she remembers Laurel, she remembers her sister and her best friend. She remembers how she would be swept into those crushing hugs, into hair tousles, and goofy grins sent her way. She remembers the warmth, the strength of her older sister, the confidence and the safety, the assurance and the comfort. Sara looks to Alex's empathetic smile, and she sees how every older sister must have the same essence built into all of them.

"All of this," Alex says, sighing as she motions around her. "None of it would be worth it without her."

"She's your soulmate," Sara says with a smile, "I get it, Alex."

"No," Alex says, looking back to the raining sky. "She's more than that…"

When Alex doesn't finish the statement, Sara doesn't push. She simply gazes upon the older woman with an indescribable amount of respect and admiration. She never knew the Alex from her Earth, but if she is even half the woman this Alex is, she knows why Maggie still loves her so much. She draws closer to the woman, drinking in the sheer power and strength radiating from her bones. She feels comforted in her presence, confident in their future.

"Do you know what it means?" Alex asks, looking to her. Sara frowns.

"What what means?" She asks. Alex smiles, looking down the orb in her chest.

"Invictus," she says softly, "do you know what it means?"

"I know it was a movie about rugby or something. Pretty sure Morgan Freeman was in it," Sara replies, her witty response bringing a smile to Alex's lips. "Though I doubt that's what you had in mind when you picked it."

Alex's smile doesn't fade, but it becomes more reflective as she shakes her head. "No, it wasn't. Invictus is the name of a poem by William Earnest Henley. Written in his anthology, the Book of Verses, in the section Life and Death."

Sara glances upon her, nerves rattling through her veins as she reaches out and touches Alex's hand.

"What does it mean, Alex?"

Alex turns to her, tears in her eyes and a smile on her lips before she replies in a low, knowing tone.

"Undefeated."
The scene changes drastically and it nearly causes Kara to stagger backwards.

She glances upon a destroyed planet, one that is familiar, but not Krypton. She looks in the distance to see another version of herself kneeled over a slain body. Blood stains the rubble as this version of her continues to cry, sobbing over this mutilated and bloodied corpse. Kara watches as she's forced closer, until she's only a few feet away.

Darkseid appears from behind this version of her, staring down at the corpse with a slight smirk.

"Earth-48," he says as the other Supergirl keels and wails into the sky, "the beginning of the final chapter."

Kara isn't concerned with what Darkseid is saying. She's instead staring at the corpse.

Specifically, the only recognizable part left.

Lifeless, glassy, brown eyes.

"Alex," Kara gasps as she falls to her knees in the destroyed Earth. "No…"

"I killed her," Darkseid says casually, chuckling again. "Humans, so pathetically weak. Kara watched, helpless, as I tore her, limb-from-limb, until nothing was left. Your bond must have been extraordinary to still recognize her."

In the distance, Darkseid and the evil Supergirl hover down to the ground, accompanied by another woman.

But just not another woman, Kara realizes with a gasp.

Barda.

"The destruction of the planets drained Rao's blessed," Darkseid explains as Kara watches Barda approach the grieving Supergirl, her sword extended. "I needed to find a suitable replacement. I could not settle for anyone."

Kara watches in horror as Barda runs her sword through the grieving Supergirl's chest, her other hand reaching out to grab the evil Supergirl. A flash of bright light pierces the space between them, and Kara watches as the energy is transferred the same way the energy was transferred from her to Alex. A bright light bursts before the evil Supergirl collapses. The one who had been grieving over Alex's corpse rises, an empty gaze as her heat-vision starts to fill.

"The rage of losing Alex, of losing your entire world," Darkseid drawls as Kara watches the new Supergirl sear lines into the Earth, just as the previous one had done with Krypton. "It was more than enough power to finish the job."

Kara looks back to the war-monger, her eyes empty as Darkseid chuckles.

"Do you get it now?" Darkseid asks, smirking. "Do you understand the truth now, Kara?"

"I do, but I reject it."

The sound of another voice interrupts their conversation. Before Darkseid can look up, a blur whips past Kara's shoulder and she watches as he is thrown backwards and into the destruction of this Earth. Kara looks up to see Earth-1's Supergirl hovering in front of her, her hands reaching out to
cup her cheeks, her eyes steady and true.

"Stay with me, Kara. Snap out of it, okay? I need you to snap out of it."

"I…," Kara stammers as her eyes flicker to Supergirl's, "Krypton… Alex…"

"We can stop him," Supergirl says as Kara hears Darkseid roaring behind him. "You just have to stay with me. Fight, Kara. We can still save this planet. You need to focus on me. Focus on Alex. We have to get through this, now."

The mention of her sister snaps Kara from the hallucinogenic daze, and the tendrils of hypnosis tickle her vision. The scene around them begins to recede, filling the destruction of Earth with the blank, dark space beyond Earth.


"He killed Alex," Kara growls, rage filling her as she looks up. "He killed her—"

"I know," Supergirl says, her voice cracking. "I know, but Kara, you can't let that anger control you."

Kara seethes, tears still streaming down her face as she looks into Supergirl's eyes, ready to argue back. But when she looks into those calm blue depths, she doesn't see anger. She sees pain, hurt, loneliness, a great loss.

Beneath it all, however, she sees love.

Her love for Alex.

"I couldn't save my Alex," Supergirl croaks, swallowing thickly. "But I won't let him take yours."

Kara gasps as she feels Supergirl's hands move to her shoulders, squeezing lightly in encouragement.

"Remember what Alex said?" Supergirl asks as she turns, allowing them to face the oncoming charge of Darkseid. "Do you remember what she said, when we were young, when we were angry about Krypton, about our parents?"

Kara looks to the yellow Sun, feeling its' power rushing through her veins. She closes her eyes and imagines herself back in that room in Midvale, hiding beneath Alex's covers as her sister held her so tightly, so safely, so homely…

"Don't let your anger control you." Supergirl quotes the words Alex had said. "Harness it, Kara."

Kara opens her eyes, blinking back tears as Supergirl takes a deep breath and closes on the last of the memory.

"Harness your anger and your pain. You're not just a survivor, Kara. You're not just a girl."

Kara takes a deep breath, the strength returned in more force than she's ever felt.

She stares Darkseid's incoming body with a newfound determination as she finishes,

"You're not just a girl, Kara. You're a super girl."

* * *
"Holy shit!" Sara exclaims. "Alex, look up!"

Alex hears a supersonic boom and before she can even turn to look at the source of the sound, she watches as a black blur comes plummeting to the ground. She coughs at the plume of dust and fire before she sees a body laid deep in a crater of the Earth, limbs-askew. She looks further to see a second body standing atop it.

"Kara," Alex breathes out at the sight of the glowing white eyes, "you did it."

Kara eases off Darkseid before looking over in her direction. Alex flies forward, ready to finish the attack, but before she can even come close, Kara flies in her direction. Alex frowns in confusion and surprise as she's swept up in a strong hug. Alex wants to question the sudden show of affection, but before she can, the other Supergirl comes flying down. Alex meets her gaze over Kara's shoulder, and she sees the pain and guilt in the other woman's eyes.

"I love you," Kara whispers into her ear, "I love you, Alex."

"I love you too," Alex says, still confused. "What happened, are you—"

Before she can finish her statement, Darkseid growls and stands up again. Alex withdraws from the hug just in time to avoid the large piece of concrete hurled in their direction. Supergirl tries to land a punch, but he fires his omega beams at her, sending her careening into another abandoned building. He rises from the rubble, weaker than before.

"The final stand," Darkseid crows as he gestures around him. "The last chapter in your fate. How will it end?"

Alex's lip curls as she stands straighter. "With your body, cold and dead in the ground."

Darkseid's mouth forms a tight line. Alex knows, as she feels the rain continue to pound down, that this fight may as well be their last. She looks to Sara, who gives her another knowing nod, and she swallows, turning back to him.

"Interesting," Darkseid says as he clenches his fist. "You are confident in your clairvoyance?"

"Fate is a lie told by the Gods," Alex replies as she looks to where Supergirl is now hovering behind Darkseid. On her left, he's flanked by Sara, and on his right, he's flanked by Kara. Thunder booms and lightening cackles as the fires around the crater in the ground simmer. She turns back to him. "Nothing is written which cannot be unwritten."

Darkseid's eyes narrow as he grunts. "You know nothing of the Gods."

Alex draws the power of the Black Kryptonite into her body as her eyes turn black. She feels her power radiate throughout her extremities. She glares at Darkseid through her fiery gaze, preparing to unleash Hell on Earth.

"I know more than enough."

"Very well," Darkseid snarls as he hovers upwards, "do your worst, Invictus."

* * *

Maggie crawls through rubble, struggling her way to where Lena's body was shown to be stranded. Her vitals were decreasing with time, and she knows she has only seconds before the lack of oxygen will have irreversible effects.
"Come on," Maggie hisses to herself as she watches the damage increasing. "Stay with me, kid."

She finally clears the rubble obstruction in her way. Standing, Maggie dusts herself off before hobbling her way in the direction of the building. She is about to sigh with relief when she sees that Lena is only a few feet away, but then her heart drops into her stomach when she realizes exactly why she can't see the Luthor's floating body.

Concrete.

Layers upon layers of concrete, toppled over each other like some sick, collapsed game of Jenga. Maggie sinks to her knees, ignoring the pain in her injured leg as she shakes her head in disbelief. She tries tapping on the screen, desperate to figure out if the tablet glitched, but she knows that the screen isn't lying. She looks through the gaps in the building to where Darkseid has returned back to the ground and is battling it out with Alex, Sara, and the Supergirls. Maggie scrambles back over to the upturned concrete and scrabbles at it, trying to lift the pieces.

"Fuck," Maggie swears as she leans back, sweat pooling in her collarbone. "Fuck!"

She quickly presses down on her earpiece and stares back at the fighting outside.

"Help!" She shouts into the communicator. "Please help! Lena's stuck!"

When static replies, Maggie curses again. She presses down once more and cries out for help. But the radio replies with more static.

With second that passes, Maggie's hopes of saving Lena dwindles.

* * *

Kara is about to land an uppercut to Darkseid's jaw when she hears it. The rattling thumping, a familiar heartbeat, and then silence.

Kara focuses in on the source of the sound, a sound that she has come to love and cherish in the last few months, and she feels her heart drop. She sees a building covered in rubble, but a quick X-Ray scan reveals what she is truly looking for in the destruction. She can hear some crackling over her broken communicator, but she ignores it.

All she sees and hears is one person.

Lena.

Rather, Lena’s floating body.

Horror fills her veins as she can see the love of her life sinking in the cold water. Kara desperately looks to where Alex, Supergirl, and Sara are fighting off Darkseid. They’re working in tandem, so Kara makes a quick decision.

Without hesitation, Kara flies off in the direction of Lena’s body, smashing through the concrete. She hears a shout from behind her, but her only focus is on Lena—on saving Lena. She screams, tears filling her eyes as she lifts piece-by-piece, almost deliriously. With each block, her newfound strength is being drained with each second Lena spends breathless. At last, she lifts the last slab and looks down in horror to where Lena’s pale body is floating in the water.

Kara has to put aside the fact that not even a year ago, Alex’s body once looked the same way in
that tank, helpless and deadly. She has to throw aside memories of Alex, pale and blue, barely breathing, barely alive…

No, Kara decides, this is not the same.

Gritting her teeth, Kara dives in and grabs at Lena’s body, heaving her upwards and setting her down on a flat concrete piece. She feels her hands shake as she takes in the icy pallor of her girlfriend’s face. Her lips are blue and her veins stick out sickly, but she doesn’t give up. She tilts Lena’s head back and hovers her hands over her chest. She takes a breath and calms herself, focusing all of her energy on diverting her strength away to not hurt Lena.

Kara starts the compressions, keeping in mind what Alex had taught her all those years ago. She can feel Lena’s heart pumping wildly, but she can’t hear it starting a rhythm. Tears burn in Kara’s eyes as she loses herself in the motions, pumping erratically and more forcefully than before. She keeps going, but she knows it’s not working. Kara sobs, shaking her head as she leans down to breathe air into Lena’s lungs. Her lips quiver as she starts to lose it.

“No,” she gasps as Lena remains motionless. “No, Lena, please…”

Kara tries breathing into Lena’s lungs again, but it’s no use.

“Jesus, Lena!”

At the sound of Maggie’s familiar voice, Kara’s head turns. She looks to see Maggie limping in through her blurry vision. The detective looks like she’s in her own world of pain, but Kara dismisses her. She growls, leaning her body over Lena’s protectively. Her eyes burn a bright white, and even though she knows Maggie is friendly, she doesn’t want anyone to come near her love. The detective halts, throwing her hands up before nodding to her disarmingly.

“Easy, kid. It’s me. I can help. Let me help, please.”

Kara growls, clutching Lena’s cold body tighter to her own.

“Kara,” Maggie huffs impatiently, fear dancing in those brown eyes. “I can save her, but you have to let me get close. Please.” Kara gasps, pressing her lips to Lena’s matted hair. She cradles her love close, sobbing into her neck.

“Kara!” Maggie snaps before darting forward. “Let her go and let me help, Goddamnit!”

Before Kara can quip out something protective, Maggie damn-near wrangles her invulnerable body off of Lena. Kara is about to protest before Maggie assumes the correct position for CPR and begins the chest compressions once more. Kara watches her rhythmic motions helplessly, feeling more outside of her body than she’s ever felt before.

Because that’s Lena.

Lena, who is the love of her life.

Lena, the woman Kara wants to marry one day.

Lena, who has no heartbeat.

Kara stifles her gasp as she watches Maggie breathe into her.

Lena has no heartbeat.
"I don't know how long I can keep doing this," Clark gasps as the heat burns through his suit and the fire licks at his skin. "I don't know if we can destroy it, Bruce. I need something stronger. My heat vision might not cut through."

He looks up, and while he knows he cannot see Bruce, the man still replies over the radio.

"I might have an idea," Bruce replies, his voice cackling through static. "It's unorthodox and dangerous, but it could work." Clark nods, swiping the sweat from his brow as he turns back to the heat of Apokolips' core.

"So nothing too out of the extraordinary," he replies with a pained grunt. "What is it?"

There's a pause before Bruce asks, "how far can you extend your heat-vision?"

"Far enough," Clark says back with a huff, "why?"

Another pause lingers, and Clark cranes his neck upwards through the fire and flames.

Finally, Bruce replies.

"We're going to destroy the planet," he says, "with a bomb."

* * *

"You think that you can delay the inevitable?"

Darkseid growls the words as he flings Alex aside again, sending her careening into another building. He twists and blocks the approaching punch of Supergirl easily, grabbing at her cape before smashing her into the ground beside Sara. Alex gasps as she scrambles to lean against the concrete. Every inch of her body protests the movements, but she grits her teeth through it. She looks up to see Kara flying in the direction of some rubble and she frowns.

Before she can fly after her, Darkseid grabs at her throat and tosses her aside.

"I am here to save this planet, to usher in the new cycle!" Darkseid growls as he steps over to her, lifting her up and holding her out in front of him. “Look around you, Champion! You are destroying your own planet, not me.”

Alex squirms in his grasp, panting as her lungs constrict. Darkseid shakes his head in disgust, squeezing her.

“The rich stay rich,” Darkseid says, “living in the clouds, surrounded by the fruits of their wealth. Meanwhile, the less fortunate battle to simply feed themselves. You breathe chemicals into the air, slaughter your livestock and destroy your land. The Earth is dying, and her death will come, whether or not by my hand. Of this you must know, is true.”

Alex can see dark spots clinging to the corner of her eyes as Darkseid leans forward, his lip curling into a snarl as he growls. Alex kicks at his chest, but the force behind it is barely enough to make him flinch. Instead, he chuckles.

“What have you done to save them, Champion? You and these Kryptonians speak of justice and hope, of saving Earth, but what have you done to stop the injustices that are right under your nose? This is beyond a simple fight, Champion, this is a war, one that does not end with a resolution.
Death—*destruction*—is inevitable. It is fate.”

“*Enough!*”

Alex feels her body drop to the ground as a blur shoots past her and collides into Darkseid’s chest, throwing him backwards violently. Alex huffs as she feels her head smack against rock. She feels dizzy for a moment, but her Kryptonian genes immediately rectify the swirling vision. Staggering to her feet, she looks up to see Supergirl hovering above her, fists clenched tightly and her blue eyes searing heat. Alex watches as she stomps her foot down on his chest, pinning him to the Earth. Her hands crackles with blue wisps of energy as she reaches for his throat.

“I watched you almost destroy my home once,” Supergirl says, eyes still blazing blue with unrestricted power. “I stopped you then, and I’ll stop you again, now. You won’t hurt these people anymore. Your *truth* is a lie, Darkseid.”

“Fool,” Darkseid growls as he struggles in her grip, grabbing at her leg and trying to heave her off his chest. Supergirl releases a stream of heat-vision into his chest and he growls, releasing his grip. Her eyes turn back to normal as Darkseid hisses. “You think you wield a power comparable to mine? Your Darkseid may have been defeated, but you will not destroy me. Your universe had many flaws, one of them you. Your strength is *nothing.*”

Supergirl snarls. “You’re all talk, nothing more. A coward, not a God.”

“Don’t you remember what she did?” Darkseid asks, his voice airy as he hovers in the air, smirking as he flickers his gaze between Alex and Supergirl. “She ripped her apart and she enjoyed it. She didn’t care for love or family. She cared for death. For *power.* Just like you.” Supergirl winces, and even Alex can feel the tug in her chest at the images.

“The last time, before she became what she was, she watched as I killed Alex slowly and painfully,” Darkseid drawls, chuckling again. “She begged me to let her go, to end it all. She was so sure Kara would save her, but she didn’t.”

“Stop,” Supergirl spits out, her eyes blazing hotter. “*Enough.*”

“But she did,” Darkseid snarls, “and I watched you pummel her into the ground, punch-after-punch, until no part of her was left recognizable. You reduced her to pulp, and you enjoyed it, Kara. You *enjoyed* killing your greatest fear.”

“Stop!” Supergirl screams, tears sliding down her cheeks. "*Stop it!*"

Darkseid smirks, chuckling as he shakes his head before looking to Alex. He reaches up, grabbing at the crest of El on Supergirl’s armour before throwing her to the side, sending her crashing into an approaching Sara. He rises from the dirt, his armour torn and tattered as he hovers his way over to Alex, his gaze casting over all three of them.

“You see, there’s one important thing you should know,” Darkseid says as he flies over to where Alex is leaning against the concrete. “I’ve conquered every universe. I went to them, I wiped out my inferior clones, and I did the work they could not do. I was sent here with a purpose to usher this universe to a new beginning, to a rebirth.”

Alex’s heart drops as Darkseid looks back up to Supergirl.

“And once I’ve conquered this Earth,” he says coldly, “I’ll *finally* take yours.”

Supergirl clenches her teeth. “*Over my dead body.*”
Darkseid’s lips split into a blood-curdling grin.

“Gladly.”

* * *

Pain.
It’s the first thing that registers in Lena’s mind.

A fiery, lancing pain, throughout her chest.

She can hear something muddled in the background, but the pain overwhelms it all. She feels like she’s trapped, and no matter how hard she tries to open her eyes, she feels like they’re taped shut. Her entire body weighs a ton.

“Come on,” she hears, “that’s it, Luthor, come back to us.”

But she doesn’t want to. Lena is tired and sore and exhausted. She wants to melt into the abyss, to never feel this agony again. She wants to submit to the darkness. She wants to absolve everything, to collapse into the unknown.

“Please,” she hears a different voice, “I can’t lose you.”

It’s familiar.

It’s reassuring.

It’s… Kara?

“I love you and I need you,” Kara’s muddled voice whispers in her mind, growing clearer and nearer as Lena clings to it like a lifeline. “I can't lose you so I'm begging you. Please, Lena, open your eyes and come back to me, baby.”

It’s a slow and strenuous start, but eventually Lena focuses on the soft lilt of Kara’s voice. She feels the air coming through her lungs clearer now, and the strength returns to her body as she feels herself drawing away from the precarious edge over nowhere. The blackness fades and she finds herself being catapulted back into reality.

Finally, after Kara calls her name one more time, Lena breaks free of death's grasp.

When she blinks open her eyes, everything is blurry at first. Her chest still burns, and everything is swimming in front of her gaze. Her stomach flips, and suddenly she is curled on her side, spewing out almost a half-litre of water onto the dusty floor. There are hands on her back and a pair of soothing voices in her ear as she continues to heave.

After gagging and spitting out the remaining water a few more times, Lena rolls to her back, gasping as her vision clears to reveal a worried Kara and Maggie staring down at her. She focuses on the fuzzy image of her worried girlfriend, smiling weakly as Kara sobs and reaches down to cup her face and press frantic kisses into her hair.

“I was so worried,” Kara cries out, “you can’t scare me like that again, Lena. I love you… the thought of losing you…”

“Ssh,” Lena rasps, her chest still burning. She weakly pats Kara's forearm. “I’m okay, love.”
For a moment, Lena allows herself to be held in Kara’s arms, to soak up her warmth as her body continues to shiver. She burrows herself into her girlfriend’s embrace, taking in the scent of blood and sweat, as well as the tinge of smoke and dust in her suit. Kara only holds her tighter, murmuring sweet nothings to her ears as she recuperates.

But then, when a crashing boom interrupts the moment, Lena remembers just exactly where they are. She pulls away from Kara’s embrace and winces as she struggles to look outside the crack of the walls. Gathering the last of her remaining strength, she pulls herself up to sit against some concrete. Peering over her girlfriend’s shoulder, she looks outside to see Darkseid battling with three people. She can make out Alex and Sara fighting with… Kara?

Lena turns to her Kara in confusion. “Is that…?”

“Supergirl from Earth-1,” Kara explains with a weak smile. “Sara called in reinforcement, but he’s still really strong.”

The reminder of the warmonger's strength causes Lena’s eyes to widen. “The weapon!”

“Speaking of,” Maggie says as she comes between them. “Bruce just contacted me a few minutes ago. Clark and Diana are three minutes and forty seconds away from the core—I set a timer after we lost contact.” Kara frowns.

“Clark is alive?” She asks, and Lena looks to her sympathetically. “But Darkseid… he said that… that he…”

Maggie shakes her head. Lena can see the rage brewing in the detective's eyes as she looks to where the fighting is occurring just outside their containment. Kara follows her gaze as Maggie clears her throat roughly.

“He’s trying to rile you up,” Maggie growls, “he's playing us, planting seeds of doubts to try and break us, but he doesn’t know that we still have contact with Apokolips. Despite this, however, there’s a catch to our plan.”

Lena sits up further, throwing an arm around her middle to support her aching ribs. “What is it, Maggie?” She asks, grimacing as she feels pain lance up and down her frame. Maggie frowns, paling slightly as she looks to the tablet.

“Bruce said that if we don’t kill Darkseid after the planet is immediately destroyed, the power of the planet will be directly transferred over to him,” Maggie explains, and Lena can see the devastation and understanding dawn on Kara’s face. Lena feels her ribs crack as she leans back in shock. She looks to her pale-looking girlfriend in fear.

Kara takes a breath and looks up to Maggie as she whispers, “if we don’t kill him when Apokolips is destroyed—”

“He’ll be unstoppable,” Maggie finishes with a grim nod. She turns to Lena, frowning suddenly. "Wait, speaking of the weapon. Lena?"

The weapon.

Lena had completely forgotten about the weapon.

She turns her head and looks to the water, before glancing back to where Maggie and Kara are following her gaze. She crawls over to the edge, but her lungs give out before she can dip her hand in the water. Lena groans, turning on her side as she tries to ward off the waves of pain. She feels
Kara’s hands on her sides, rubbing soothing and comforting lines into her back and shoulders gently. Maggie kneels beside her, trying to figure out her motions.

“I fell,” Lena explains, gasping. She looks at both of them with wild, wet eyes. Maggie looks past her to the water as she explains, “the spear is at the bottom. I can go swim and grab it.” Maggie scoffs at her attempt at lying.

“You can hardly breathe,” Maggie says, “I’ll do it.”

Lena looks to the firm brace and the blood on her friend’s leg. “You can’t walk.”

“Well, it has to be one of us—”

“I’ll do it.”

Lena’s eyes bug out as she whirls on Kara. “No, Kara, it’ll—”

“I know,” Kara says, taking Lena’s hands into her own as she gives her a small, forced smile. “I know, but neither of you can make that dive. I can get it. I can hold out long enough to bring it to the surface so it can be used. I have to do this.” Lena shakes her head, tears welling in her eyes as she sees the seriousness in Kara’s gentle gaze.

“Kara, no, I’m not losing you—”

"Lena—"

"Even five seconds near that thing will kill you!"

“If I don’t get that weapon, you will. You all will die, Lena. It’s my life or the life of seven billion.” Kara’s voice is firm, but not unkind as she leans her head forward, closing her eyes. “You are the love of my life, Lena. I can’t live on a world without you in it. So, please, you have to let me do this. I can do it, Lena. You have to let me do this. Please.”

“Stop,” Lena begs, her voice cracking. “Kara, you’ll die.”

“I can do this,” Kara repeats again as she moves away from Lena and hovers over the pool of water. Lena’s heart sinks as Kara gives her a small, sad smile before she looks at the sloshing water. Lena reaches out, but her side twinges and she gasps. She can see the conflict in Kara’s eyes, between the spear and wanting to help her.

"Please," Lena croaks as Maggie helps her up, "don’t go, Kara."

“I love you,” Kara says with a watery smile. “Don’t forget that.”

Lena screams out in horror as the Last Daughter of Krypton, the Woman of Steel, the beloved hero of National City—her beautiful, brave, girlfriend and the love of her life—dives down into the icy water without another word.

And then, all they can do is wait.

* * *

"It’s set up,” Clark says as he finishes attaching the bomb to the core. "You just have to give me the word, Bruce."

He hovers a few feet backwards, swallowing thickly as he takes in the final moments. He prays
that Bruce got the message across to either Kara or one of the people on the team fighting Darkseid. They only had one chance at defeating him, and if they missed this opportunity, the entire fate of the universe would come crashing down.

"Give me a moment to do a final calibration," Bruce replies. "Hold tight, Clark."

Clark nods, and though he doesn't reply verbally, he knows Bruce will have understood his agreement. He remains hovered above the bomb. He reaches into the pocket of his torn suit and takes out a crumpled polaroid photo.

He smiles down at the picture of him, Lois, Kara and Alex at Kara's favourite sushi place in Midvale. The trip had been a surprise for Kara's Earth birthday, one that she knows she holds dear. He looks at the photo, at the way he's not looking at the camera at all, but instead his eyes are tuned only upon Lois. In turn, Lois only seems to have eyes for him. Clark smiles as he hovers his finger over her face, his hand shaking as he takes in her features a final time.

He holds the photo to his chest and closes his eyes, smiling. "In this lifetime and the next, I'm yours."

He thinks of Lois.

He thinks of wedding rings and flowers, of music and dancing, of skin on skin.

He thinks of a baby boy, a family, and new life.

He thinks of love.

"Clark," Bruce draws him back to reality softly, "it's time."

He takes one final moment to memorize his life before he opens his eyes and looks to the bomb.

"I love you, Lois."

With one final breath, he summons his heat-vision and fires.

* * *

"Pathetic!"

Alex stumbles backwards as she's thrown once again into the wall. Her arm burns as a piece of her armour is sheared off, leaving her forearm exposed. She snarls as pain lances up and down it. She looks down to see a deep laceration from her wrist to her elbow. She looks back up to see Darkseid hovering over her with a maniacal grin.

"Get away from her!"

Alex watches as Darkseid is knocked aside once more, replaced by Supergirl. Her sister's clone gives her a once-over, her eyes lingering on the exposed cut and mangled flesh of her arm. Alex shakes her head, gasping.

"Go," she orders, nodding in Darkseid's direction. "Get him."

Supergirl sets her face determinedly before bolting back to where Darkseid is stumbling upwards from where he'd fallen. Alex scrambles to her feet, wiping the blood from her jaw and lips before she takes in the scene mournfully.
“Fuck this shit,” Alex growls as she looks to where Supergirl is battling with Darkseid. She leaps back up and flies forward after Supergirl deals him a blow, extending the blade from her still good arm and sinking it into his wrist.

Alex rips her arm backwards, shearing off Darkseid’s wrist with one unsteady cleave. She jumps back, watching the severed limb of Darkseid’s hand fall to the ground. He twists and turns in pain, giving Supergirl the window to grab his face angle it so their eyes are locked. Alex watches as Supergirl’s eyes burn a bright blue, and two streams of heat vision sear through Darkseid’s eyes. She can see the sheer force of the heat-vision burning through his eyes.

A bloodcurdling roar leaves his lips as Darkseid juts his good fist up, connecting with Supergirl’s chest and knocking her backwards. His eyes are gone, replaced with two burnt holes. Before he can attack again, Sara stabs her swords into his legs and slices, bringing him back to his knees. Alex flies forward, slamming her fist to his head, sending him to the ground. She goes to deliver another blow when her radio cackles to life, a voice barely audible in static.

“Alex!” It’s Maggie’s voice, shrill and panicked. “We need help!”

Immediately, Alex turns and pinpoints Maggie’s voice. She does a quick scan of her surroundings and digs out her wife in a destroyed building a few feet away. She also makes out an injured Lena beside her, looking weak and pale.

But when she scans downwards, she sees someone else.

Kara.

More specifically, a lifeless Kara.

Without thinking, Alex rushes into supersonic flight with a roar. She whizzes past both Maggie and Lena, tuning out their voices as she dives deep underwater and after her sister. Ignoring the icy cold against her exposed skin, she plummets into the water. She swims deeper until the water goes from being dark, to suddenly glowing a bright gold.

Shit, Alex thinks, the weapon.

And right atop it: Kara’s floating body.

Low and behold, in her sister’s limp grasp is the spear. Alex seethes, cursing Kara for being so reckless. She hooks her arms underneath Kara’s armpits, but her sister keeps her grip on the spear. The sheer power radiating from the spear is enough to make her head spin, but she ignores it. Alex grits her teeth and heaves them both upwards, rising to the surface as quickly as she can. She looks down to the spear and curses again when she glances at Kara.

She can hear Kara’s heart beating, but it’s slower than she’d like. She can tell her sister is reserving all of her energy to hold onto the weapon, even it is killing her with each second. Alex cranes her neck upwards and sees the top of the surface, so she pushes herself to the max. She tightens her grip on Kara and stifles her own scream of pain.

Finally, after what feels like forever, they break the surface.

Immediately, Alex swoops Kara into her arms. She reaches down and grabs at the spear, her hand trembling under its’ power, before she tosses it as far away as she can. She stumbles downwards, feeling her own chest burn as her Kryptonian genes are muted for a moment. The agony of all her sustained wounds almost cause her to stagger.
“I’m here,” Maggie’s voice comes from behind her, “let me help her.”

Alex just nods, stumbling off to the side as she watches Maggie set Kara on the ground and roll her to her side. She hears a clattering noise and looks up to see Lena tossing the spear further away with a frantic throw. Alex’s lungs clear slightly, and she looks down, relieved to see Kara spluttering as she begins to regain consciousness herself.

“Hey,” Lena calls out, nudging past Maggie to draw Kara into her arms. “Hey, baby, it’s okay. You did it. You got the weapon, Kar. You did it, my sweet girl. You did it… I can’t believe it but you did it… come back to me, you’re okay.”

“L-Lena?” Kara mumbles weakly, blinking up at her sluggishly. “The… the time?”

Alex frowns in confusion, glancing over to her wife. Maggie grimaces.

“Time?” Alex asks when her wife looks away. Maggie swallows thickly, pulling up her tablet.

“Clark and Diana will fully destroy the core of Apokolips in fifty-one seconds,” Maggie says softly. “Only at that point will Darkseid be vulnerable to a lethal attack. If we wait longer, the power from the planet’s destruction will transfer completely to him. It will make him indestructible, even with the Gold Kryptonite. We have to make our move now.”

Alex takes the information in slowly, her eyes flickering to Kara, who is now leaning up against Lena’s side weakly, attempting to stand. She looks back out to where Sara and Supergirl are holding down Darkseid, and she feels her stomach flip. Turning back to Kara’s steadfast gaze, she can see her sister’s intentions, and her heart sinks.

She follows Kara’s steady gaze to the abandoned spear, but before she can speak, Lena interrupts.

“Don’t even think about it,” Lena growls as she places her hand on Kara’s trembling forearm. “You won’t make it two feet before it kills you. Kara, look at me, you can’t do this.” Kara tries waving her off, but she only stumbles forward.

"Little Danvers,” Maggie whispers, her voice cracking as she steadies Kara. "Don't do this."

* * *

Kara looks up to Maggie and Lena, ready to argue, but her voice gets caught when she sees Alex.

Alex, who isn't looking at her.

Alex, who is looking at the spear.

Kara stumbles forward again, this time falling to her knees as she feels the pain from her sustained wounds course through her. Even thought spear was tossed a good deal away, the effects are still devastating. Kara hisses in agony.

"Alex," she says, her voice cracking. "I can do this."

Alex doesn't turn around, doesn't take her gaze off the spear, and Kara is nervous all over again.

She can't stop hearing Alex's words in her ears, of what she told Eliza in Midvale.

Alex finally tears her gaze away to look back at her, and Kara staggers to her knees at the solemn understanding in those familiar brown eyes. Kara shakes her head, gritting her teeth as she crawls her way towards the spear.
"Kara," Lena cries, tugging on her shoulders. "Stop, Kara."

"No," Kara growls, "This is who I am, what I'm supposed to do…"

Each attempt at crawling grows weaker the closer she draws to the spear, and tears well in her eyes as she screams with each painful movement forward. Lena, too weak to hold her back, slumps against her side, sobbing. Kara tries to move forward once more, but eventually her body gives out and she collapses against the dirt with a huff. She watches Maggie rush forward and toss the spear a further distance away, allowing her to recover slightly.

"Little Danvers," Maggie rasps solemnly as she returns and kneels by her side, "Lena's right, kid…"

"No," Kara croaks as her eyes blur with tears, "no…"

Maggie hangs her head in bitter defeat, her cheeks wet with tears. "It's over, kid. I'm sorry."

She blearily looks past Maggie to Alex, who's attention is back on the spear. She reaches out towards her sister, her fingers shaking as she gurgles out Alex's name. Her sister's gaze turns back to her, calm and understanding.

Safe.

And then, Alex speaks, her voice confident and steady.

"No," her sister says, as her eyes stay glued on Kara. "It's not over."

* * *

"Alex?" Maggie’s voice sounds in her ear. “Baby?”

Alex breaks her gaze with Kara and looks to where Supergirl and Sara are fighting with Darkseid, struggling to keep him at bay, and she takes a deep breath. She closes her eyes, quivering as she feels Maggie’s hand on her exposed arm. She turns her head so her lips rest in her hair. Maggie’s trembling against her, but Alex kisses her forehead.

“I love you,” Alex whispers, opening her eyes as she looks down to Maggie with tears in her eyes. "I love you so much, Mags." Maggie’s own are red-rimmed. She shakes her head sadly as Alex gives her a slow, accepting nod.

“No,” Maggie pleads, voice cracking as Alex sees her realizing what she intends to do. “No, Alex, you can’t…”

Alex only smiles sadly, giving her a nod. “But I can.”

“Alex, please. Don’t... you can't leave me,” Maggie rasps, but before she can speak again, Alex reaches for her face and tilts it up, connecting their lips in a desperate kiss. Alex soaks it in as Maggie’s hands clutch onto her forearms.

“I love you,” Maggie mumbles into her lips, gasping as her cries grow stronger. “I love you, Alex, I love you so you can’t do this. We're supposed to grow old together, Alex. We're supposed to cause mayhem in our nursing home and watch the sunset from our beach house. This… this can't be it, Alex. We just got married. I can't lose you. I can't…”

Alex feels her eyes burn with tears as she imagines each item Maggie lists. She wants nothing more
than to follow Maggie into that fantasy, but she knows how this story ends, how it was always meant to end. She holds Maggie's shoulders closely, eyeing the time ticking down on the tablet trembling in her wife's grip. Alex swallows and smiles.

“You are the greatest thing to ever happen to me,” Alex whispers, ignoring Maggie’s desperate pleas. “I love you so much, Maggie Sawyer.” Maggie shakes her head with a watery, poignant chuckle, pressing another kiss to her lips.

“Danvers,” Maggie hiccups, breaking apart to look into Alex’s eyes with a bittersweet smile. “Maggie Danvers.”

Pride fills Alex’s chest as she nods and chokes down a sob. “And what a beautiful name that is.”

Maggie breaks into another cry and Alex wordlessly wipes her tears away, holding it together as best she can.

“Alex?”

Alex turns to see Kara staring at her in disbelief. She watches as Kara limps forward, stumbling to the ground with another yelp of pain. Alex bounds forward, gathering her in her arms. She can hear Maggie crying beside her, but she focuses her energy on Kara’s broken expression. She can hear her sister’s heart beating erratically, but she does her best to sweep her into the biggest, most comforting hug she can. She pulls Kara's head into her chest and sighs.

"It's okay," she whispers into Kara's hair, "it's okay, kid. You'll be okay."

“You can’t… you can’t leave me…,” Kara begs, shaking her head as she clutches onto Alex’s frayed armour. “I love you, Alex, you’re my family! You’re the only family I have left. Please, Alex, don’t do this. I can't do any of this without you. Please, Alex, don't do this!” Kara is trembling harder now, and Alex holds her tighter, looking over her shoulder to where Lena is staring down at her, a hand clasped over her mouth as tears stream down her pale cheeks.

“Please,” Kara pleads in a croak, digging her face into Alex’s neck. Her fists pound against Alex's chest weakly, as if to protest, but eventually she relents and sobs. “Please, Alex, you can’t go. This… this is your world, not mine.”

Alex’s lips turn up in a small, quivering smile. She hugs Kara tighter as she whispers, "no, it’s not.”

Kara frowns, looking up at her, hiccupping as she sobs. “Alex?”

“It’s not my world,” Alex whispers, reaching down to cup Kara’s face. She tucks a stray lock of hair behind her sister’s ear, much like she used to when they’d been young. She rests her forehead against Kara’s, closing her eyes and brushing their noses lightly. She drowns in the memories of growing up with her sister, of the love they share.

She remembers everything, from the first time that small, frightened girl walked through her front doors, to the day she’d been saved by her from that plane crash. She remembers listening to Kara rave about her first crush in high school, to watching her fall in love with Lena in adulthood. She remembers coming out, to the support and love and guilt Kara had felt, and then the freedom. She remembers Kara at her side at her wedding, grinning proudly as she kissed her wife. She remembers only hours ago, standing by her sister, feeling like she could take on anything.

And Alex can, because she has to.
The memories, the life spent with Kara, with Maggie, with Lena?

It makes what she's about to do absolutely worth it.

“Guys,” Maggie’s shrill voice interrupts, “we only have thirty seconds!”

A bright light crackles through the space between them, and all four women look out the hole in the walls to see electricity surrounding Darkseid’s frame. Alex looks up to see Supergirl and Sara holding the man down, but she knows they won’t be able to keep it up for much longer. She looks back down to Kara, tipping her chin upwards. She blinks back tears as Kara pulls at her armour desperately, trying to keep her grounded, but her powers are weak.

It's now or never.

* * *

"Please," Kara sobs as she watches Alex's gaze lock onto Darkseid, “you can’t do this, Alex.”

"I have to," Alex whispers back, resting their foreheads together again. Kara struggles against her grip, but her powers are zapped. “You know I have to, Kara. Remember what I said, kid. Supergirl—Earth—it's bigger than me.”

"That doesn't matter," Kara growls through snot and tears. "None of that matters without you.”

She clings to her sister, to the only pillar of strength and safety she has ever known. But Alex smiles sadly, kissing her hair before she pulls back to cup Kara’s cheeks in her hand. She stares into her sister’s warm brown eyes, her gut wrenching at the solemn acceptance brewing in them. Kara shakes her head, her jaw cracking as she tries to form words, to say anything to convince her sister to stop what she's about to do. But her efforts are fruitless.

"Please," she ends up croaking, "I don't know how to live without you, Alex." Alex smiles bittersweetly, kissing her forehead. "You do, Kara. You're strong, my sweet girl.” Kara shakes her head, sobbing harder as she burrows into her sister's grasp. "Alex—"

"Kara," Alex soothes as Maggie calls fifteen seconds, "I'll always be with you." Kara shakes her head, clutching onto Alex like she's a lifeline. She's not ready, she can't let go—

“It’s not my world,” Alex repeats as the electricity cackles around Darkseid. “Kara, it’s not…”

“Alex,” Kara gasps as she closes her eyes and tethers herself to her sister. "You can't do this. Please." Alex pulls away from her grip and kneels so they're face to face. Kara blinks back the tears clogging her vision as Alex cups her face, her thumbs wiping away the training droplets to give her a proud, poignant smile as she nods.

“You,” Alex says softly, her voice cracking. “You are my world, Kara.” Kara shakes her head, but Alex just leans up to kiss her forehead. “I love you, Kara, in every universe and beyond.”

And then, without another glance, Alex hurtles past her and grabs the spear.
The last thing Kara screams is her sister's name as she watches Alex fly off to do what she always does:

Protect her world.

Protect Kara.

* * *

Alex doesn’t give Kara the chance to reply as she flies past her, picking up the spear as she shoots through the crack in the wall. She ignores Kara’s heartbreaking scream as she flies faster, mentally counting the seconds down as she approaches Darkseid. She can feel her eyes burning, the pain in her arm intensifying, but she holds strong.

Alex, Kelex says, the power of the Gold Kryptonite—

"I know," Alex says as she feels herself waning. "You still with me, Kelex?"

I am by your side until the end, Alex.

Alex can feel the powers of the spear weakening her as she flies faster, and black spots dot her vision as she grows closer. She digs deep, taking as much strength as she can from the Kryptonite. She looks to where Sara is standing, her swords buried into Darkseid’s thigh. She watches the White Canary look up to her with a knowing, sad look.

Taking one last deep breath Alex slams forward with a supersonic boom.

She stabs the spear into Darkseid’s chest just as the electricity around them cackles and splutters violently. She hears both Sara and Supergirl being thrown back from the sheer force of the collision and the explosion, releasing Darkseid’s pinned arms. He roars in agony as Alex digs the spear in deeper, twisting it harshly as it digs into him.

"You fool!" Darkseid spits out as he chokes at the pain. Blood pools out from his mouth and drips down his chin in large rivulets. “You have made a grave mistake. I am your penance! I am your saviour! You cannot stop fate!"

"Enough," Alex growls as she digs it in deeper. "I decide my own fate."

"You think you can escape the inevitable?" Darkseid glowers in a clogged snarl. "You can't change the future."

As she digs it in deeper, she sees Darkseid’s severed hand slide upwards. She looks to see the bone reshaped into a jagged tip. It glistens in the golden light of the weapon, but Alex grits her teeth and holds her position, sliding the spear in deeper. She can hear Kelex’s voice in her ear, warning of her what's to come, but she ignores it.

Just as she gives another twist, Alex watches as Darkseid’s makeshift dagger digs into her chest, right into the heart of the Black Kryptonite orb. Alex screams as pain and fire ignite her body, her free hand gripping at the exposed bone of the man’s arm. She pushes her other arm further forward, sliding the weapon deeper into Darkseid.

“I am death,” Darkseid growls as he slides his own arm forward. The life is slowly bleeding from him, but Alex can see his resolve weakening. He growls and fits in her grasp, his teeth blood-stained as he snarls at her. Alex feels her grip loosening as he digs his makeshift dagger deeper into the stone, cracking it. “I am the destroyer of worlds."
“Kelex,” Alex hisses as she feels her strength fading quickly. “Initiate Plan B. Perform the complete fusion, now.”

Alex, it will—

“Do it,” Alex growls ferociously as she gasps for breath, blood pooling in the back of her throat as she slides further along the bone protruding through her to push the spear as far as it can go into his chest. She can feel Darkseid’s blade deep inside her chest, and she knows the Black Kryptonite can only take the damage for so long.

Alex digs her spear in deeper to Darkseid's chest as she fights through the pain.

There’s a pause, before Kelex mournfully replies, as you wish.

“What are you doing?” Darkseid asks, his eyes widening in horror as black wisps start to form around Alex's body. She offers him a weak grin, her lips tinged crimson with blood as she feels a newfound power and energy course through her. Darkseid watches in complete fear and shock as her body thrums and vibrates with the fusion process.

“You… may be death,” she rasps as she stares at him through blackened eyes, “but I am justice."

The black orb in her chest starts to brighten and pulsate rapidly, and Darkseid gasps.

"No," Darkseid seethes, "no!"

Alex sucks in a deep breath and gives Darkseid one final smirk.

"I am Invictus."

Just as Alex feels the tip of the spear break through and fully impale the warmonger, she feels her entire body tear itself apart. The burn of the fusion is worse than the first time the Black Kryptonite had been partially integrated to her vitals, and Alex screams until her voice gives out. Her eyes blaze with black heat, and her mouth cocks open.

There is a flash of black, the sound of the sky and the earth tearing itself apart, followed by an inferno of pain.

Alex thinks of J’onn, of her mother, of Lena, of Maggie, of Kara.

A smile curls at her lips as she feels the pain begin to recede as the force of their love for her, and her love for them, fills her body with relief. She feels like she's floating as the darkness latches onto her and snags her downwards.

She’s tired, so very tired, and it’s time for her to rest. She's fought long and hard, upholding her father's promise to protect humanity, her mother's promise to protect her sister. She's made it through years of tragedy and loss, her body a map of scars which paint a painful and lonely story. It is a body which has seen enough to last ten lifetimes.

But through it all, only one thing kept her going.

Hope.

Hope that she would reach a day where her secret would be revealed. Hope that she would find a woman and fall in love and live her true, authentic life. Hope that she would walk amongst the stars, to be with her father again. Hope that she could stand by her sister as an equal, to shine
beside her rather than burrow away in her shadow. Hope that she would hold her child to her chest and dote upon her, love her, and raise her with everything she possibly could.

Alexandra Danvers lived for hope.

The pain finally disappears into numbness and moments later, there is nothing but silence.

Only one thought crosses Alex's mind before she surrenders to the unknown.

*I'll see you soon, Little Bean.*

Chapter End Notes

... yup :)

the quote about the fate of the gods is from god of war.

also i would deffos read more about invictus the poem if you're interested--it will be drawn into more detail in the coming chapters, but it's really fitting.

also this is earth-1 supergirl's armour: https://www.neogaf.com/threads/injustice-2-gameplay-analysis-thread-new-e3-gameplay.1232652/page-5#lg=_xfUid-1-1577604255&slide=0

End Notes

As always, thank you all so much for the support and love <3

Chapters will try to be updated every Sunday and Wednesday!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](https://www.neogaf.com/threads/injustice-2-gameplay-analysis-thread-new-e3-gameplay.1232652/page-5#lg=_xfUid-1-1577604255&slide=0) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!