The Many Facets of Family

by AgentGrey

Summary

Sam Arias is no longer Reign and now must find her place in the world as a superhero in her own right. At the same time, she must juggle a new relationship with Kara and a strained friendship with Lena. Relationships will fray, strengthen, blossom, and solidify. Lots of love, but lots of angst as well. Worst of all, Lillian Luthor returns to wreak havoc, and it will change our protagonists' lives forever. What is family, and what binds us together?

Notes

Originally the back half of And Sam Makes Three. I realized far too late that it was actually two distinct stories, and now I have fixed my error. This story constitutes Chapters 30-62 of what was originally And Sam Makes Three, which now ends in Chapter 29. I do hope everyone will forgive me my perfectionism in making these changes, and give this story all the love and support you gave it when it was still part of ASMT.
New Beginnings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kara Danvers was definitely getting used to having Cat Grant back in town permanently. Things between them were so radically different than she could've imagined back when she first revealed herself to the world as Supergirl. No longer Cat's direct subordinate, Kara had grown accustomed to calling her mentor by her given name, and the two shared a much easier bond now that Cat was among the small circle of people with whom Kara had intentionally shared her secret identity. While it had been less than a year since Cat promoted Kara and made her mysterious exit from CatCo, Kara felt like she had left the bashful but enthusiastic young assistant behind completely. Now she was a reporter with a few worthwhile stories under her belt, and she was publicly dating the infamous Lena Luthor. More quietly, she was also in a relationship with Lena's best friend, Samantha Arias, who had her own mysterious Kryptonian past.

It was the latter woman on Kara's mind when she touched down on Cat's balcony in full Supergirl regalia. Much had changed for all of them in the past month, and now was the time for new beginnings. A rebranding of sorts. And no one was better at branding than the Queen of All Media. Even so, as the diminutive CEO and journalist strutted out to meet her favourite superhero, Kara was more than a little nervous about what she was about to reveal to her mentor.

"You know Kara, now that we’re not pretending you aren’t obviously Supergirl, it’s really okay if you just come talk to me in your normal terrible office attire. You don’t have to get all suited up just to swoop down onto my balcony. You do have an office two floors down, you could just take the stairs.” Kara narrowed her eyes. Cat raised an eyebrow, then added, “Not that you don’t make the whole ‘cape, skirt, and tights’ thing look just bafflingly sexy.”

Now it was Kara’s turn to raise an eyebrow. “Flirting will get you nowhere with me, Cat. I’m spoken for, as you well know.” Though … it’s not like I haven’t fantasized... “And it helps me to keep boundaries in place, which include wearing the suit when I’m on official Supergirl business.”

“Oh, Supergirl business. Well, if you’re here to ask me to play Livewire bait again, I’m going to have to respectfully decline.”

Kara smiled brightly, but she couldn’t resist teasing Cat a little. “Hah hah. Has anyone ever told you that you’re just so funny?”

“Careful, Kara. Just because we’re friends now doesn’t mean that you’re allowed to give me sass.” She fixed Kara with that no nonsense look that still had the ability to make her stand up a little straighter and avert her gaze. Their relationship had grow tremendously since Cat came back to town, but there were certain aspects of their old mentor-mentee relationship that would probably never go away. Cat shot her a satisfied smirk, apparently pleased with herself that she ‘still had it.’ “Now, what is this Supergirl business you insisted on flying to my balcony about?”

Kara felt her chest grow tighter. She and Sam had discussed this at length, and they were on the same page, but she still felt crazy nervous about the prospect of this interview. It had been over a month since Lena freed Sam of Reign, and Sam was sure about what she wanted next. And Kara fully supported her. Still, she did her best not to let her nerves show—she was very well aware of how observant Cat could be, especially with someone she knew as well as she knew Kara. “I want to discuss a potential interview with the illustrious Cat Grant, actually.”
“What did you have in mind, exactly? I’m not sure what you have to gain from any additional interviews at this point, unless you’re ready to tell the world Supergirl and Kara Danvers are one and the same. That’s an interview I would definitely be interested in, Kara, but I’m not sure it’s the best idea.”

“Yeah, no, the interview wouldn’t be with me.” The fact that Cat even thought Kara would consider coming out publicly as Supergirl was a bit startling, and not something she had ever considered. She’d have to discuss it with Cat later, but she had a more pressing interview topic in mind right now. “Look, first of all, nothing is on the record right now. I want to float an idea with you, but discretion is non-negotiable. This could be huge for CatCo and for the city, but nothing is happening unless I’m sure about the direction of the story.”

Cat leaned back in her seat, surveying Kara carefully. Already, Kara could tell that Cat’s curiosity was piqued. She refused to back down from Cat’s searching gaze. After what felt like the longest thirty seconds of Kara’s life, Cat leaned forward again and reached her hand across to rest on hers. “Supergirl, I hope that by now you know you can trust me.” She searched Kara’s eyes for confirmation, and Kara responded with a small but confident nod. “Good. You have my word, that whatever you and I discuss about this mystery interviewee will remain in confidence unless and until you tell me you want something on the record. So, stop beating around the bush—I can tell this is something juicy. Who is it?”

Moment of truth. Kara exhaled softly, trying to relax all her nerves. “The only name you would know her by is Reign, but that isn’t who she is.” The shock on Cat’s face was immediate, before her steely reporter’s instincts took over. “You have questions already—shoot.”

“You never told me what happened to her, only that she wasn’t a problem anymore. If you’ll remember, I was quite frustrated with you about it, because ‘Supergirl assures city that Reign is no longer a problem’ is a shitty headline and an even shittier story.”

“Yeah sorry, but I’m hoping you’ll forgive me for being vague once you have the full story.”

“So, what is the full story then? Reign is alive, but what—she’s not a murdering sociopath anymore?”

“The short answer? Yes.” Kara frowned, because she hated the idea of anyone thinking of Sam as Reign. “But that’s not even close to the true story. I guess I should start by explaining more about what Reign was.”

“Your use of was intrigues me, Supergirl. Go on.”

“Cat Grant, so impatient.” Cat rolled her eyes. “So, I already explained to you that Reign was a Worldkiller, a genetically engineered super-Kryptonian created by some religious fanatics just before Krypton was destroyed. What I have since learned is that she was also sort of like a parasite split personality taking over a seemingly human host.”

Whatever Cat was expecting from this conversation, it wasn’t this. “A … parasite?”

“Sort of. It’s complicated. The pod that brought Reign to this planet was equipped with some sort of program that analyzed our society and masked Reign, on a biological and genetic level, as a human baby. We can’t actually figure out whether the program intended to do this or not—but in doing so, it created a whole separate person, distinct from whatever Reign was supposed to be. Up until a few months ago, this person was just a normal human woman.”

“So, why now? Why did the Reign personality stay buried for so long?” Cat paused, placing her
index finger on her chin as she thought about something. “Even with all the black and the makeup and the mask … that woman didn’t look any younger than 25, if that. So, what took so long?”

“Another unsolved mystery. We all have theories, but nothing that we can say for sure. But whatever awakened the beast, it was a gradual process. We didn’t figure all this out about Reign until weeks after my fight with her. We captured her, briefly, and were able to obtain her pod. But that’s just backstory, it’s not the point. Ultimately, Lena was able to come up with a solution that rid this woman of the Reign personality. She isn’t Reign anymore. Reign is gone, hence the past tense.”

“And now you want me to interview this not-Reign person? What is the story here, Kara? What haven’t you told me?” Always insightful, Ms. Grant. And straight to the point.

“Well … it’s a redemption story, actually.” She could see Cat’s face light up, and she could only imagine what wheels were turning in that head of hers. “This woman—who is an incredible, resilient, kind, beautiful person who didn’t deserve any of this—but … she feels guilty. And now that she has all these powers … she wants to help. She wants to try to make amends for these horrific things that this monster did while in possession of her body. And I think the best way to start that is with an interview with Cat Grant. Sort of like my first interview with you.”

There was a look in Cat’s eyes that Kara couldn’t figure out. Something like suspicion… but not in any sort of unnerving or uncomfortable way. She could see the wheels turning, but she had no idea what about. She had the feeling it wasn’t necessarily about this story. Suddenly, Kara worried that Sam had been mentioned by name yet. She hadn’t said anything that might hint at their relationship. At least … she didn’t think she had.

Cat stood and began to stroll leisurely around the balcony. Kara knew that meant Cat was confident she had a worthwhile story on her hands. She waited patiently for the impending onslaught of follow up questions. She didn’t have to wait long.

“So this ‘incredible, resilient, kind, … beautiful’ not-Reign person is no longer just a normal human?” Kara didn’t much care for the quote or the emphasis on the word beautiful, but she knew if she protested right then, Cat would only get more suspicious.

“I guess she was never a totally normal human. I mean … she didn’t have powers or anything until recently, but she was still born on another planet. But yes, to answer your question, she has all the powers Reign had, just with none of the murderous impulses.”

“Okay well, first of all, what are we going to call her? Reign is a tainted brand—she’ll never escape it. Even with Supergirl vouching for her. She needs a full rebrand. New name, new suit … do you think she would consider a different hair colour? Maybe a vibrant red?”

Kara was momentarily distracted by the very sexy thought of Sam as a redhead, and she had to clear her head before responding in any kind of a normal way. “Uhh, well that’s actually a big part of why I wanted to talk to you beforehand. We’ve got the new suit covered already, but we’re having trouble coming up with the name. And you can ask her yourself about the hair, but I can already imagine what her answer will be.”

Cat turned, eyebrows raised. “Is she going to be joining us?” Kara winced, not having meant to give that part away yet. “Ooo she is. That’s excellent. Well, what are you waiting for?”

Kara sighed. She felt beyond silly about this, but she needed to get on the same page with Cat if they had any shot at convincing Sam. “It’s the name. You and I need to decide what the name should be, because I’m going to need your help to convince her.”
“I suppose I am the superhero whisperer. I don’t know if I’m going to be able to top Supergirl, though.” Kara struggled—and ultimately failed—to keep a straight face. Cat noticed and immediately realized what she had said. “Getting your hopes up there, Supergirl? I thought you were ‘spoken for.’”

Kara blushed wildly, but immediately crinkled her brow scoldingly at Cat. “I am, thank you very much. And … ugh … Cat! It was funny, okay?! Doesn’t mean I was fishing for anything.”

Mmhmm. Of course not. Who knew, innocent little Kara Danvers isn’t so innocent after all?”

The words were out of her mouth before she could stop them. “Oh please, you know Lena, surely you had to have guessed that by now. I am—” she didn’t know how to say what she meant in a way that sounded … right, “—a … mature … adult … queer woman. I’m not exactly sure how I could have avoided interpreting it that way!”

“Yes well … I’ll give you that, dear. Still, the statement remains true … however you want to interpret it.”

“Hey, you’re the one who has made it very clear that I have no shot with Supergirl, no matter how excellent I am at flirting.” She winked at Kara, and her face heated up yet again. “Now, if you’re done obsessing over my possibly intentional choice of words, let’s get back to the subject of the as of yet unnamed superhero formerly known as Reign.”

“What do you think about ‘Power Girl’?” Kara kept her voice steady and monotonous. The idea was Winn’s, and no one had been able to come up with anything better, even though Sam was adamantly against it. She genuinely wanted to know what Cat would think, without giving away her own feelings on the subject.

Cat faced away, looking out over the city. Her lack of immediate reaction made Kara nervous, but she sat there calmly waiting for Cat, trying not to nervously chew on her lip. Cat’s voice was almost sultry in how soft and playful it was. “Well, obviously ‘Superwoman’ is off the table. I mean … you’re both grown adults. No more than five years’ age difference, I would think—”

“Three,” Kara mumbled under her breath, but Cat didn’t move a bit.

“And we definitely don’t want to invite some sort of weird Madonna and whore dichotomy. Plus … yes, I think we want to keep the ‘Super’ name strictly in the family.” Cat turned all the way around, placing her hands out wide against the railing and leaning back ever so slightly. “‘Power Girl’ could work, though. It sounds a little too much like an idea Wesley the IT hobbit would have suggested, but it does have a nice symmetry with Supergirl, assuming that you’re going to be working in tandem?”

“That’s the plan, yes.” Kara stood and walked slowly to go lean against the railing beside Cat.

“I suppose we could go with something really out there, something new. Such a tired pattern with superhero names—Supergirl, Wonder Woman, the Batman—at least your friend Mr. Allen had a unique moniker, as much as the Blur would’ve been vastly superior. Now let’s see …” she paused dramatically, “Huntress is already taken. I don’t suppose Krypton was in the Andromeda galaxy, because that would be a great name.” She looked sideways at Kara expectantly.
“Well … I mean, it was, but I’m not sure she really feels any connection to our homeworld. She’s like Kal; she left as an infant. She had no memory of our culture or our history. I mean, she didn’t even realize she was anything other than human until this year.”

“Okay, well, we should at least run it by her—it doesn’t have the same sort of symmetry that Power Girl might, but Andromeda is an excellent and unique choice. Especially if she’s keeping the black on black colour scheme, which … well, that’s actually a really bad idea. She needs to lighten it up if she wants to become a symbol of hope rather than fear.” She shrugged. “Well those are the best two options I’ve got.” She propped herself enough to face towards Kara. “Is that all we needed to work out? Do I get to meet your girl now?”

*My girl.* Kara managed to keep herself from visibly sighing out of happiness. She straightened and nodded, reaching down and pulling her phone out of the hidden pocket in her boot. Cat wondered aloud, “What am I even supposed to call this woman, given that she hasn’t chosen a name yet?”

“S—shit. I don’t know, Cat. Let’s maybe tackle the name issue first, so that you have something to call her.” Kara couldn’t believe she almost let Sam’s name slip. She wasn’t used to keeping her guard up around Cat anymore. Cat’s sly grin told her that Cat knew it, too. Kara shot Sam a quick text, giving her the go ahead to meet them on the balcony. “She’ll be here any minute.”

Sam was looking over her new superhero outfit for the millionth time when she got the text from Kara. She was in Kara’s loft, pacing back and forth in front of the full length mirror. She loved her new look, mostly. She had worked closely with Kara and Winn on the design, which was equal parts Reign and Super, with a little bit of a unique flair to separate her from Kara or her cousin.

She stuck with the black but added a lot of white and brightened the red accents to match the shade in Kara’s costume. The suit was a full body skintight flight suit, more like Superman’s suit than Supergirl’s. She kept the boots and gauntlets from the Reign outfit, but Winn was able to dye them red. There was a white metallic belt modeled after the leather enclosure from the Reign outfit, but lower on her waist like Kara’s v-shaped belt. The biggest changes were the top of the outfit. Kara had insisted that if she was truly dedicated to changing her public image and using her powers for good, she needed to be a living symbol of hope. For better or worse, the sigil of the House of El had become that on Earth, and even though they had argued about it for hours—days—Sam had eventually, very reluctantly, agreed. She still felt like she didn’t deserve it. She felt wrong putting herself on the same level as Supergirl.

The sigil was a little larger and higher on her chest than Kara’s, and it formed all one piece with her cape, the outer bottom triangle of the pentagon rising up past the sigil to form the outer edges of the cape going up and over her shoulders. The cape, outside of the sigil, and ‘S’ were white, while the inside of sigil and the inner lining of the cape were red. The cape and sigil connected seamlessly into a white cowl that completely covered her collarbones and neck before rising up to enclose most of the back of her head, her ears, and her face from the nose up. The cowl ended at her hairline, allowing her hair to flow freely. It was important that Sam protect her identity, and it was far too late in life for Samantha Arias to even attempt the whole ponytail and glasses disguise. And the Reign mask felt wrong. It has a sort of alien beauty to it, but it was inseparable from the fear and violence left in Reign’s wake. The cowl was Winn’s idea, and it was a great one. It would protect her identity perfectly. Winn had also seen fit to add in two-inch-wide red accent lines coming down from the sigil, curving slightly past her belt to follow the shape of her hips, and then cutting of in a diagonal edge just above the knee. Sam had to admit, they really added an extra pop that the suit needed.
Once she had decided on this path, everything had become easier. The guilt and remorse—the darkness, as she’d taken to calling it—had been easier to ignore by focusing on the outfit, brainstorming name and ideas, and training with Kara. But they were still there. She wondered if they would always be there. It was hard for her, because she had no one to talk to about it. Kara was so encouraging and supportive, but she wouldn’t allow Sam to take any responsibility for Reign’s actions. Wouldn’t even talk about it. She still had only a few flashes of memories from when Reign was in control, but they were enough to fill her with overwhelming guilt, disgust, and self-loathing. Ignoring it didn’t make her feel any less responsible. Didn’t cleanse her hands of the blood she felt all over them late at night.

And Lena … well, she was fortunate enough that Kara’s text came just in time to spare her from having to think about Lena.

[10:15 a.m.] **Hey babe, Cat and Supergirl are ready for you. Let’s see how fast you can fly from the loft to CatCo ;)**

Instead of responding, Sam grinned and darted out the open window at full speed, accidentally blowing the furniture out of place with the wind created by her sudden departure. *Oops!* She was still getting the hang of flying, but the cape really helped. At first she had thought a half cape over only one shoulder would have been a more distinctive look for her, but Kara had insisted that the full cape was more aerodynamically sound. Plus it could be used for protection from bullets and flame, so the more material the better. Now, she could see what Kara had meant. She made it from Kara and Lena’s loft to CatCo in under a minute, which she thought was pretty damn good. Even though she was pretty sure Kara probably could’ve done it in half that time without even trying.

Sam paused briefly above the building. It never failed. Kara just looked so gorgeous as Supergirl. It was especially the case now that Sam’s vision was so vastly improved. The sun in in her hair was captivating. She could already tell that Kara had noticed her presence, and wow was that sexy. Caught up in the moment, she whispered, “You look so sexy right now. I wish I could fly you away right now and rip that suit off your body,” knowing that Kara, and only Kara, could hear her. Seeing Kara blush immediately, she felt her face erupt in a wide smile. She loved teasing her girlfriend, especially now that their powers allowed her to do it in inappropriate situations.

Having accomplished her mission, Sam floated down to the CatCo balcony and landed beside Kara. It was her first time meeting Cat Grant, and she tried not to let all the gushing Kara had done prevent her from coming to her own conclusions. If she was going to trust this woman with her story, she needed more than Kara’s assurance that Cat was reliable and respectful.

She nodded warmly at Kara—they had talked previously about playing the part of nothing more than friends, with a slightly professional edge to their relationship—then turned to Cat with her hand outstretched. “Ms. Grant, it is nice to finally meet you.” Cat shook her hand firmly before gesturing that they should all sit.

“Well, this is quite the transformation. My compliments to your seamstress—Supergirl, you weren’t kidding about taking care of the suit.” Cat looked her up and down. “If Reign wasn’t still fresh on all our minds, I would never have guessed you used to be her. Or … were possessed by her—my apologies for the slip in the phrasing there. Supergirl assures me that you are not Reign, and I trust her. Please, call me Cat. And we can figure out what we’re going to call you.”

Sam was a little taken aback by Cat’s casual reference to Reign and immediate apology. She decided to flip it into a joke. She needed to get a firm bearing on Cat Grant before she was willing to open up. “Well, you sure as hell shouldn’t call me Reign, I suppose. And don’t tell me you’re
gonna go along with this whole ‘Power Girl’ thing, because there’s no way I’m letting people call me that.”

“Look, I hate to tell you this, **Power Girl**, but they’re going to call you whatever I tell them to call you. I’m Cat Grant. You know, Supergirl wasn’t exactly thrilled with her moniker when I bestowed it on her either. Not at first anyway. Now she loves it.” Cat smiled knowingly at Kara, and Sam couldn’t help but roll her eyes at the easy familiarity between the two women.

“Yes, well. I’m **not** Supergirl. And I’m not **Power Girl** either. Surely the great and mighty Cat Grant can think of something less … derivative.” Sam was actually pretty okay with Power Girl, now that she had had time to process it. It had a certain ring to it and worked well as a mirror of Kara’s superhero name. But she was testing Cat, and honestly, it wouldn’t hurt to hear a few other options.

“I mean, I **could**. Hell, when you and your **friend**—” Sam didn’t care at all for the cocky tone with which Cat said ‘friend,’ and she shot a questioning look Kara’s way, only to have her keep her eyes firmly on Cat, “—head home, feel free to ask her about some of my other ideas. But no. No, Power Girl is the right choice. I see that now.” Cat paused, uncrossing her legs then crossing them again in the reverse direction. “Now. I’m sure you both know each other’s secret identities, and I’m fully aware of Supergirl’s identity, but I think we should limit ourselves to official superhero monikers for this little talk, just to be sure that no one slips up and uses S—” Cat made a show of interrupting herself before she finished the syllable, and Sam glared daggers at Kara, who wilted immediately under her gaze. **Does she know?!** Cat chuckled before saying, “Easy there, Power Girl. No, she didn’t tell me your real name. She was actually doing a remarkable job of hiding your identity and her relationship to you, other than a couple of tiny slip ups that most people might not have caught. I’m quite proud of her, if I’m being completely honest.”

Sam shifted uneasily. She recognized Cat’s insistence on superhero names for what it was—a truly skillful and compassionate overture. An attempt to help protect Sam, since they both knew how likely it was that Kara would slip up at some point if the conversation got too comfortable. Nevertheless, the power dynamics here were off, at least in Sam’s mind. She and Kara were the ones who could fly and break this building in half with one hand—and yet, Cat Grant was the one making them feel uncomfortable. Sam didn’t like it at all. She was accustomed to having the upper hand in a conversation with a new person—especially an attractive woman. She hated to admit it to herself, but she was legitimately intimidated by Cat, if only a little. Still, it didn’t make her any more likely to trust the Queen of All Media.

Cat watched her reaction carefully, then sighed. She slouched a little into her chair and somehow, as if by magic, she suddenly seemed 30 percent less intimidating. Sam knew it had to be a practiced skill from Cat’s reporting days, but that didn’t change the automatic reaction her body had, relaxing just slightly. “Look, I’m sorry for this whole song and dance. I sincerely did not mean to put you ill at ease. Old habits die hard.” She smiled softly at Sam. “As I told Supergirl before you arrived, nothing is on the record until you say it is. I would never do anything to betray her trust, and if she tells me to extend you the same courtesy, I will. And have.”

Sam searched her eyes, unsure if she could trust the sincerity she read in them. She narrowed her own eyes before responding. “I’m having trouble getting a good read on you, Cat. I’m fully aware that **Supergirl** trusts you with her life. And with her reputation, for that matter. But I’m not willing to just take her word for it, even though I trust her fully. I’m in a difficult spot right now, as I’m sure you can imagine, and I need to know for myself that I can trust you before I open myself up to you. On or off the record.”

“You’re a smart woman,” Cat offered immediately. Sam believed the compliment was genuine. “I
don’t blame you for being cautious. Supergirl assures me that you’re a victim in all this, but I’m not going to beat around the bush—you’re up against it. No matter how you go about this, it won’t take long for people to put two and two together when you start doing the whole superhero thing. And once that happens, they won’t trust you. Who knows—the military might come after you. The police, if they’re stupid. I assume you have an in with the DEO at this point, so that’s less of a concern. And maybe if Supergirl vouches for you publicly, gets the word out in some way, that will help. But people will still see you as Reign, and you could very well derail Supergirl’s reputation in the process.”

Sam glanced over at Kara, who was glaring at Cat. She knew that Kara was just being protective, but she reached over and placed a hand on Kara’s arm, just for a moment. She appreciated hearing the blunt truth from Cat, even if Kara didn’t like to entertain worst case scenarios. Kara caught her eye for just a second, calming down. As Sam looked back at Cat, she caught the older woman surveying them with noticeable interest. *Fuck.* Kara had warned her that Cat’s observation skills were superhuman, and Sam could already tell that this brief moment had set off some alarm bells. *Shit.* Trusting Cat with her superhero rebranding efforts was one thing—letting her in on the fact that Supergirl was in a polyamorous relationship with her new crime fighting partner and Lena Luthor was another thing entirely.

“Unlike my friend, who I’m sure you know is the beaming epitome of optimism, I appreciate your frankness. I’m well aware that I face an uphill battle, even if Supergirl is insistent that I am in no way responsible for the actions of Reign. But I still need you to convince me that you’re the one to tell my story.”

Cat smiled at her. Sam got the impression that she enjoyed the chase of a hard sell. “*Now that* I can do. The only question is how to convince you I’m on your side. But before I do that, may I offer just one suggestion about your disguise? While your hair is quite beautiful, this whole honeyed brunette look is a little distinctive. Have you ever thought about a wig? You could probably sew it directly into that cowl so that it looks like it’s your natural hair. Given your choice of colour scheme, red might be nice—I imagine you’re trying pretty hard to hide your true identity, for reasons I hope to learn one day. Hair colour and style can be a dead give away.” She tilted her head slightly and pursed her lips. “Just a thought. Up to you.” Sam actually really liked the idea, and she made a mental note to discuss it with Winn later. “Anyway, to the point, since I only know what Supergirl has told me, the best I can do to convince you is to walk you through how I would present the story she told me.”

Sam gestured for her to continue, and Cat stood, pacing as she told her version of the story and gesturing as necessary. “You are a miracle, Power Girl. Despite their best efforts to create an evil goddess, the end result of the genetic experiment of a dying Kryptonian religious cult was a strong, powerful woman dedicated to using her gifts for a better world. You weren’t supposed to be. But despite having literally the entire deck stacked against you, you refused the dark destiny that was foisted upon you, and now, you are determined to be the opposite of what your creators intended. You’re not here to kill the world; you’re here to save it.”

*Fuck, she is good.* Sam didn’t have to look over to know that there were tears in Kara’s eyes. Sam breathed out in faux exasperation. “You know, I don’t exactly love using clichés, but I guess they’re clichés for a reason. You tell a good story, Ms. Grant, and maybe this time flattery will get you somewhere. But only because I already trust Supergirl’s judgment of you.”

Cat raised an eyebrow, waiting for Sam to clarify further. Sam made a face but gave her the answer she sought. “I consent to an interview with you, on the record. But Supergirl and I want to review the finished product, *with* absolute veto power on what goes to publication. Can you handle that?” Sam could immediately feel the tension from both Cat and Kara. She didn’t imagine
that Cat was accustomed to these sorts of ultimatums, and obviously Kara knew Cat well enough that her unease confirmed Sam’s suspicion about Cat.

Of course, Cat Grant was just full of surprises. “You realize how big an ask that is, right?” Sam hoped that even through the mask, her confident look was all the answer Cat needed. Apparently, it was. “Well then, you’ll understand how big a concession it is for me to say yes. Which I am. On one condition.” Sam exchanged a nervous look with Kara.

“Let me hear your condition.”

“First let me just be sure you understand exactly what you’re asking of me here. I am the best person to tell this story. I do not take notes. I do not let the feelings of my interviewees interfere with my ability to tell the best story that presents itself. But I am willing to make this one time exception, which I have never made for anyone else—not even Supergirl—” Cat looked at Kara with an unusual, but also unusually delightful, expression, “—but only if you let me into your circle of trust. You will have final say on what gets published, but only if I have the whole story.”

“The whole story?” Sam’s eyes narrowed, already sure what Cat was asking, but needing to hear it aloud.

“The whole story, my dear. Your name, personal history, how you know Kara, everything. Again … I wouldn’t dream of publishing anything irrelevant to the story, and obviously, I’m agreeing also to not publish anything you don’t want published, no further questions asked.” Cat looked back and forth between Kara and Sam. “Feel free to discuss amongst yourselves. I can go back into my office, or if it’s easier, I’ll wait here while you two fly off to somewhere more private.”

Sam whispered under her breath, barely making any sound at all, “Meet me on the roof,” then she nodded warmly at Cat. “Give us five minutes or so; we’ll be right back.” Then she was off to the roof. It came as no surprise that Kara beat her there.

Acting purely on impulse, Sam didn’t stop in front of Kara—she just kept flying until her lips collided with Kara’s. Her tongue moving along the inside of Sam’s lower lip sent sparks throughout her body and elicited a soft moan from the back of her throat. Kara giggled, then pulled away, taking a step back. “So, what are you thinking?”

“I’m thinking that you’re even hotter now that all my senses are heightened.” Kara rolled her eyes. “Nooooo, babe. Be serious. And no deflecting! What are you thinking about Cat’s proposal?”

“Yeah, Kara, that’s the thing though. I’m not sure.” She stepped closer, wrapping her hands around Kara’s face. “You really trust her? Not just with my story—but with my identity? With Ruby’s?” Kara’s smile faltered and concern seeped into her features. Clearly, Kara hadn’t been thinking about Ruby, which was okay—she was new to this whole kid thing. She hadn’t been a mother for fourteen years. But then the smile returned, and her bright blue eyes shown with confidence.

“I do, Sam. Cat’s a mom, too. And I know what her reputation is, but trust me, there’s nothing she wouldn’t do to protect her son Carter. I have zero doubt she will understand your concerns about Ruby. As for your identity, I trust Cat with my identity as much as I trust you or Alex or Lena or Winn. I can’t tell you what you should do here—I can only tell you that if I was in your place, I’d take the deal.”

She gave Sam a peck on the lips, then leaned in to whisper near her ear. Sam was pleased to find that the cowl didn’t take any of the sweet sexiness out of Kara’s voice. “I also feel that I should
point out that this cowl is really growing on me. At first, I hated it because it covers up your pretty face.” Kara traced a finger along Sam’s cheek. “Your amazing cheekbones.” She booped Sam’s nose affectionately, causing Sam to giggle softly. “Your adorable nose.” She pulled back, catching Sam’s eyes with her own. “But … it is pretty sexy. I started to see it during your back and forth with Cat. I think I can live with it.”

Sam smirked at her. “You do, do you? You sure I shouldn’t invest in a good pair of glasses and some hair clips instead?”

“Har har,” Kara snarked as she shoved Sam playfully. “Now. What are we gonna do?”

“We’re going to put my life in Cat Grant’s hands, and you’re going to swear to me that I’m not making the biggest mistake of my life.” Kara smiled, then pulled her in slowly for a deep, passionate kiss.

“I swear to you, this is not the biggest mistake of your life. This is the start of a brave new beginning for you. And, I hope, for us.”

Sam smiled back at her. “Alright, let’s head back down there then.”

Chapter End Notes

If anyone is wondering, I drew inspiration from the comics costumes for Batwoman and Lana Lang's Superwoman, and the Supergirl show costume for Saturn Girl in my concept for Sam's new suit. I also agonized over what name she should take, but it was important that it was something related to Supergirl. I feel like Sam's personality is similar to the Power Girl from the comics, so that's ultimately what I went with.

Tipsy Maggie was an absolute delight. A little looser, a little louder, a little flirtier, and a lot more excitable. It had been a great idea to have a boozy brunch before they started shopping. After brunch nearby, they were walking over to the local fine jewelry store that catered specifically to the queer community. As much as Lena adored tipsy Maggie, in this particular instance it unfortunately lead to an uncomfortable, but thankfully short, conversation on the way.

“So, have you seen Sam’s new super suit or whatever?” Maggie asked so casually, probably without thinking. Lena felt her body stiffen, but she kept pace with her friend. She had no idea how to respond to the question without giving away her inner turmoil.

She tried to answer as succinctly as possible, without any inflection that could give her away. “No, I haven’t had the chance.” Lena didn’t look, but she could sense Maggie hesitate in her step, ever so slightly.

“Shit. Dammit, Lena, I’m sorry. Things are still iffy between you and Sam, huh?” Lena really didn’t want to discuss this right now, because she wasn’t really sure what there was to say, other than yes. Things hadn’t been the same between Sam and Lena since everything blew up with Reign, and she had no idea how to get back to the place they were in before. It was a constant struggle just to keep their rift from affecting her relationship with Kara.

“Yeah, Maggs, they are.” She rubbed her temple in frustration.

“Do you need to talk about it? I mean … what’s the issue? Surely you don’t blame her for what Reign did?”

Lena felt her brow furrow, but she resisted the fleeting urge to lash out at Maggie. She sighed, then answered, “Logically, no, I cannot blame her for that. I know that Reign was another person. We’ve discussed this, Maggie—I, of all people, know the distinction. I’m the one who figured out how to get rid of that monstrous bitch.”

“But?”

“Honestly, I don’t know. It makes no logical sense. I know that they’re not the same. That Sam isn’t to blame. But then I look at her face … and all I see is those red eyes. I can’t think of anything but the footage of her beating the shit out of Kara. It’s this instinctual, visceral feeling that I just can’t shake, as much as I love Sam.” She glanced over at Maggie to find her glancing back with genuine concern in her eyes. “Fuck me, it’s the worst. I feel genuinely awful about it, because I know it hurts Sam. And it makes life so much more difficult for Kara, who is trying not to take sides. But I have no idea how to deal. I just keep hoping that time will close and heal the wound, that we’ll replace bad memories with good ones… but it’s still so hard just being around her.”

“I wish I could help somehow. Have you talked to your therapist about it? You’re still seeing the DEO chick, right? So you don’t have to hide anything?”

They arrived at their destination, and slowed down to finish their conversation outside the store before going inside. Lena winced. Maggie was going to be pissed at her. “I ummm, no. Fine. No, I haven’t mentioned it. I’ve avoided it because I know how fucking stupid it is, and I’m beyond embarrassed at how irrational and awful I’m being.”
She could feel the look Maggie was aiming at the side of her head, but she refused to face her. “You’re a fucking idiot, you know that?”

“Yes, I fucking know that, okay? Look, today is supposed to be happy. And about you, not me. If I promise that I’ll talk about my issues with Sam next time I see Dr. Letamendi, can we drop it for now?”

“You’ve got yourself a deal. And we’re definitely going to need some more booze after this.”

“You’re damn right. Now, let’s get you a ring.” Lena opened the door and held it for Maggie, following her inside. No one else was there, and the employee behind the counter, a tall black man, with a bald head and a very well-trimmed beard, greeted them warmly. Lena returned the greeting and explained that they would need a few minutes to themselves, before leading Maggie to the first glass jewelry display on the right.

Lena enjoyed how much Maggie’s eyes widened after only two cases. “Jesus fucking Christ, this is too much. How am I supposed to pick something?” When Maggie had told her that she was planning to propose to Alex, this store was the first place Lena had thought of. Lena made sure to invest in as many local businesses either owned by queer folks or catering to the queer community as she could find, and she had been a silent minority partner in this place for nearly as long as she’d been in National City. So, when Maggie told her, the first sentence out of her mouth was congratulations, and the second was an insistence that they purchase all their rings here, Lena’s treat. She hadn’t even had to fight Maggie that hard on it, which was one more thing she loved about her diminutive friend.

“Well, darling, let’s start out with some simple questions that will help you narrow things down a bit.” Lena put her hand on Maggie’s shoulder and turned her away from the glass case to look at Lena. “Let’s start with the metal—Alex mostly wears silver jewelry, right?”

“Fuck me, I don’t know.” Maggie looked up at the ceiling for a second, then back at Lena. “Yeah, I think that’s right. Damn, Li’l Luthor, that’s some powers of perception you’ve got there. Should I be worried that you know what kind of jewelry my girlfriend wears?”

Lena waggled her eyebrows suggestively. “Well, I do have a thing for Danvers women, you know.”

“Hey! Back off, bitch. You already have a Danvers woman. Mine is off limits.” They exchanged fake glares for all of two seconds before they each burst into laughter.

“So, that’s our starting point—either a white gold or platinum ring. White gold is cheaper, but I suggest we go with platinum. It won’t fade over the years, and you’re not worrying about price—not for this decision.” She gestured back towards the jewelry case. “Now, were you thinking of a more traditional sort of ring or something decidedly more unique?”

“Definitely not traditional. I mean, still something relatively femme—this is Alex we’re talking about, and despite all her sexy badass masculine energy, her style is definitely more femme—so something a little delicate, but I don’t want anyone mistakenly assuming she’s engaged to some bro dude.”

Lena smirked, but her eyes stayed firmly on the rings in front of them, dancing from ring to ring as she began to get an idea of what Maggie had in mind. “Okay, then the only other major decision is on the sort of gem—or gems—you want. If we’re going non-traditional, maybe we’ll stay away from a ring with a prominent single diamond. Maybe a band with several gems or a non-traditional shape with some other gems offsetting it. Hell, maybe even something like an infinity pattern?”
She glanced sideways at Maggie, whose face was nakedly deep in thought. Lena was trying to help, but she could tell the detective was overwhelmed. “Let’s focus a little more.” Lena took Maggie’s hands, forcing her to face Lena again. “Close your eyes.” Maggie did as asked but bounced a little, nervously. “Clear your mind out. … Now, I’m going to have you think about something, and you blurt out the first thing that comes to mind, okay darling? Okay. When you imagine this ring in your head, what colour jumps to mind?”

The response was unhesitating. “Purple.”

“Perfect, Maggie! You can open your eyes.” They turned back to the jewelry. “Purple is plenty unique. So, we’re going to be looking at an amethyst, or possibly a synthetic purple sapphire, if you’re looking for a lighter purple.”

Maggie frowned. “Lena, I’m not seeing any rings with a purple stone.”

Lena rolled her eyes dramatically. “That’s not a problem. We haven’t looked at everything yet, and besides, it’s perfectly fine to pick a setting and change out the stones. No limitations here.” She rubbed Maggie’s back reassuringly. “You wait here, distract yourself with your phone or something. I’m going to bring you some options—but pay me no mind until I’ve gotten everything together.”

She walked away from Maggie, crossing the floor to go ask the employee behind the counter to let Dana know Lena was hoping to chat with her. Dana was the owner of the store, and a delightful—if slightly neurotic—person who Lena was happy to call a friend. She was a former up and coming soccer star whose career got derailed a little over a decade prior thanks to a serious breast cancer scare. She had survived and found a new life’s passion in curating jewelry for all the big moments in the lives of queer people in National City. Her wife of ten years, Lara, was a chef who Lena regularly contracted with her to cater all of L-Corp’s events. And yes, Lena had given her tons of shit already for basically being the bizarre real life version of *The L Word* character. Lena smiled brightly as Dana rushed out to meet her, positively exuding her trademark goofy energy.

“Darling, you’re looking wonderful as ever! How’s Lara?”

Dana came around and gave Lena a firm hug. “Lara’s fantastic, as always. How is Kara?” They both grinned, as they always did—it was an ongoing joke how similar their partners’ names were. “Please tell me you’re finally buying her a ring.”

“Believe me, when I do, you’ll be one of the first to know. But not yet. I’m actually here with my very good friend Maggie Sawyer, who is here to buy an engagement ring for her girlfriend, Alex Danvers.”

Dana raised an eyebrow. “Danvers, huh?”

“Kara’s older sister.”

“That is so great. I love giant families full of lesbians.” Lena tilted her head, adding in the slightest frown. “Oh fine, queer women. I know Kara doesn’t identify as a lesbian. I’m still not used to all the modern lingo. She’s—what?—a homo…, homo—”

“Homoromantic pansexual, yes. How kind of you to almost remember,” Lena scolded jokingly. “So, I’m trying to put together some options for Maggie, whose head might explode from having too many options.” Lena led them over to the first display on the other side of the room from Maggie. “I’ve narrowed down the options a bit. We’re looking for a platinum ring, something nontraditional but still feminine, and she wants a purple gemstone—I’m thinking either an
amethyst or one of those purple sapphires.”

Dana walked around to the back of the display, wheels already turning in her head. “Okay, I’ve already got a few ideas that spring to mind, one of which, I’ll have to get from the back actually.” She reached into the case to grab a ring, dashed three panels over to reach in for another, then raised her finger for Lena to give her a couple more seconds. Then she walked around to one of the cases nearer to Maggie, who gave her a curious look but kept her focus on whatever game she was playing on her phone, plucking a ring from there as well. Finally, she disappeared to the back, returning seconds later with all four rings perfectly displayed on a little rectangular tray with a velvet cushion insert. “Lena, Maggie, gather ‘round.”

Lena nodded to Maggie, and they met in front of Dana. “Alright, Maggie, first of all, congratulations! Welcome to the excellent world of lesbian marriage and domestic bliss. Maybe when all this is through you can help me convince this one to join the club.”

“Oh my god, Li’l Luthor, I’m not the only one bugging you to lock Li’l Danvers down?! You should’ve introduced me to—holy shit, I’m so sorry, I don’t even know your name!” Maggie smiled brightly at Dana.

“Holy crap, your dimples are insane. I’m Dana, Dana Davenport. Nice to meet you. Glad to meet another member of Team Luthor-Danvers.”

“Oooo you think they would hyphenate? That’s tasty. Lena, why have you been holding out on me?”

“I’m not holding out on anyone, and today is most definitely not about me. Now, let’s turn our focus back on the impending Sanvers nuptials, or you’ll be buying this ring yourself.”

“Jesus, will that name never die?”

“Not once you and Alex change your last names.”

“That’s never happening, and nothing you or Kara say is going to convince us.” Maggie turned to Dana with a measure of finality. “Now, let’s see these rings.”

Of the four options, three of them had purple stones. One of them was a little bit more traditional than the rest, with a thin band and a prominent round amethyst at the center, but the top half of the band split into twisting arms that formed looping vines leading into the central stone, each with a smaller, clear oval stone. The only non-purple ring was an asymmetrical design, a thin platinum band that cut into a sharp and steep curving v-shape up top, in order to make room for the pear-cut diamond in the center. The other two were more like wedding bands than engagement rings, each with their own unique style. One was a band whose top half split into a very wide and thin infinity symbol, with rows of tiny square pale lavender sapphires all along the symbol. The final ring was a slightly thicker ring, with an antique sort of scroll pattern along the top and sides of the band. Five small purple amethysts adorned the top of the band, separated by four slightly smaller white diamonds.

Maggie looked them over for a long time, tracing a finger along each. After giving her a few moments to analyze each, Dana launched into a brief pitch for each. “So obviously, this one is a bit more traditional, and I know that you’re looking for something non-traditional, but the amethyst and the off-center accent stones really add a unique flair to a very feminine ring. This one is my personal favourite, just because it is so different, and we can be sure to swap out the diamond for a pear-shaped amethyst or purple sapphire. It also pairs very well with a wide variety of wedding bands. The other two are more like wedding bands than engagement rings, but who
gives a crap about that distinction. The infinity ring can’t exactly pair with a band, but it can serve as both the engagement and wedding, especially if you wanted to get one to match it. And this last one—that’s the one I had to get from the back, Lena—works by itself or paired with a simple wedding band.” She smiled at Maggie, raising her eyebrows in curiosity. “So, what are you thinking?”

Lena knew which one would be her choice, but she guessed Maggie’s tastes differed from her own. She made a mental note for a future date, then turned to face Maggie. The detective reached out and plucked the fourth ring from the tray.

“This is the one. I can feel it in my gut.” She was grinning like a delightful, adorable idiot, and Dana and Lena exchanged a knowing look. “Umm… so… do you have another one like this?”

“In case Alex wants to put a ring on it, too? Yeah, I don’t have another one of these in the store right now, but I can put in an order for one, with whatever colour accent stone you want.”

“I don’t know, I mean … I hadn’t really thought about whether we should both have engagement rings, but I guess we should, and this is just a really badass ring, and obviously I’ll see what Alex thinks, but now I’m feeling like I just want the whole world to know that I’m hers, and shit, now I’m rambling, so I’ll just shut up now.”

“The rambling thing is cute—you’re so clearly in love. Lena’s already taken care of the price, so we’ll just need to fill out this form and I can get it resized for Alex. You can pick it up probably Monday, or Tuesday at the latest.” Maggie went to work on the form, then looked up at Lena and Dana.

“Thank you both, seriously. I was worried this was going to be a fucking nightmare, but you made it the easiest thing in the world. Well… second easiest, after falling in love with Alex.”

“God, Maggs, you’re such a fucking sap.” Lena kept her own unease very well hidden, smirking teasingly at the shorter woman before turning back to the proprietor of the store. “Dana, it’s been a pleasure as always. I’m going to take this one for some more celebratory drinking, but give Lara my best.”

“I’ll do that, but I expect to see you back in here soon with your own business. Tell Kara I said ‘hey girl.’” Lena winked, then followed Maggie out the door.

“Okay okay okay, are we done here? I’m a C—superhero, not a model. I don’t think I can handle many more flashes in my alien eyes.” Kara agreed with Sam—she was over this. And that’s without even factoring in the awkwardness of having James doing the photo shoot for the magazine cover. He wasn’t really part of team Supergirl anymore, so he still didn’t know that Sam had been Reign, and his initial hesitation at doing the photo shoot appeared legitimately motivated by fear of the newly named Power Girl. Kara had the nagging feeling that James was dying to take her aside and question her about everything—and probably to scold her while he was at it. No, thank you.

“Yes, fine, I think we’ve got what we need, Power Girl,” came the slightly exasperated response from where Cat was sitting comfortably behind James and his camera. “You might wanna work on the attitude if you’re going to be taken seriously as a superhero though. Just follow Supergirl’s lead.”

Sam’s eyes flashed in challenge, but she held her tongue. James made as if to speak, but Cat cut
“That will be all, Mr. Olsen. I’m expecting your best work with this. It’s the biggest story in National City in nearly three years, and I want a quick turnaround.” *In other words, since the appearance of Supergirl.* James reluctantly took his equipment and left. Kara breathed a sigh of relief before exchanging a look with Sam.

“Ready to go?” Sam nodded and turned to offer her thanks and a goodbye to Cat. But the Queen of All Media had other ideas.

“Actually, Sam, would you mind if I kept Kara just a bit longer?” She phrased it as a question, but Kara could tell from her voice it was not one. Kara shot Sam a slightly nervous smile.

“I’ll come find you in a bit?” Sam made a face as if she was considering utilizing her usual blunt straightforwardness to dig into what Cat really wanted, but a very subtle head shake from Kara convinced her otherwise.

“Sure thing, *Supergirl.* Cat, thank you for your time, and for your discretion. Please let Kara know when a draft is ready for review.” Cat nodded warmly, and Power Girl was out the window and into the sky in a flash.

“What’s this about, Cat? Was there something wrong with the interview? What is it you couldn’t say in front of Sam?” Kara made sure to put her sternest foot forward, posing dramatically with her hands at her hips and using her slightly deeper, much more confident Supergirl voice. Cat responded by taking her time standing up from her chair, then looked Kara up and down.

“You know, I know I mentioned it already, but consider me a big fan of the new look. So much more, *mature* with pants instead of the skirt and tights.” Caught off guard, Kara glanced down at the new look. Inspired by Sam, Kara had decided to finally make a change in her own outfit. She kept the same colour scheme but went for the full flight-suit look like Power Girl or Superman. Her sigil and golden belt remained the same, but her cape now had a slight edge of gold lining around its outer edges. Without the skirt, it was important to her to add some more red to the ensemble, and Winn hadn’t disappointed. She had expected him to simply reuse the accents he had designed for Power Girl, but she was pleasantly surprised to see that her design was unique. A slim red triangle poking out from under her cape on either shoulder. A strip of red extended from under each arm, curving under each breast before plunging down towards her belt at a slight angle. Each of these red accents narrowed down to the belt, but continued after the belt in the form of two thin seams that subtly traced the curve of her hips before continuing straight down to her boots, which now had a thing gold lining at the top, to match her cape. The final touch was two sharp, slightly curved triangles extending outward from the seams on her legs, starting maybe two or three inches below the belt and coming to a point just before reaching the bottom edge of the belt.

Kara felt somehow more powerful in the new outfit, and she liked it. Clearly Cat did, too. But she was also trying to distract Kara. “Thank you, Cat, I like it, too. But you’re not going to divert my attention that easily. What’s on your mind?”

“Honestly? I’m worried about you, Kara.” Kara was a bit taken aback by the sudden sincerity and concern in Cat’s voice, without any of her usual wry sarcasm. She felt her posture soften as Cat walked closer and put a hand on Kara’s arm. “What are you doing with that girl?”

*Ummm what?* Kara struggled to keep a positive look on her face, even as her mind went wild with fears about what Cat was getting at, whether she was about to be judged or outed or otherwise mistreated by a woman she held in such high esteem, and how she could try to spin things to avoid that sort of outcome. After a few seconds of wild speculation, she decided to try humour. “Uh,
fighting crime? I thought we had made that obvious at this point.”

Cat immediately stepped back, withdrawing her hand at the same time that she shot Kara a very emphatic ‘cut the bullshit’ look. “Kara Zor-El, you know damn well what I’m talking about. I’m not an idiot, and I can very clearly see that you two are more than just friends. I also know how annoyingly in love with Lena Luthor you are, so tell me what the hell you’re thinking.”

Kara could feel herself sputtering, completely unsure how to respond. She knew Cat was perceptive, but this was next level. Her chest tightened with anxiety. What if Cat doesn’t understand? What if she exposes us? She wouldn’t out Supergirl, would she? No. No way! But … shit. I am so not prepared for this conversation. She blew out a frustrated exhale, then turned and walked towards Cat’s private elevator. “Let’s talk about this on your balcony, okay?” Cat raised an eyebrow but nodded nonchalantly, indicating for Kara to lead the way. Kara immediately shot out a text on her group chat with Lena and Sam as she walked.

Sunny D [3:46 p.m.]: Red alert! Cat Grant’s superpowers of perception caught onto something more than platonic bt me & Sam. Don’t think I’m gonna be able to walk it back wo her thinking I’m being awful to Lena somehow. I trust Cat … think I should tell her the truth. But I won’t do it wo both of you signing off on it.

They stood in uncomfortable silence as the elevator climbed from the floor that housed the art department’s photo studios up to Cat’s office. Kara ignored the glances she received from the employees with desks outside Cat’s office but gave Eve a warm smile on her way inside. She didn’t stop until she reached the balcony, then turned nervously and indicated for Cat to sit down. She got one response on her way through the office, and quickly looked at the text from Sam.

Sam Slam [3:47 p.m.]: Prior to today, I would’ve said absolutely not. But now I see what you see in her, babe. If you’re confident & you really believe it’s the right choice, I trust you. And I trust Cat not to betray you. If we don’t wanna tell her, the best lie I can think of is that there’s a definite attraction between us, but we’ve talked about it & don’t wanna hurt Lena, so we decided not to act on it? I don’t know – is that any good? Lee, thoughts?

Sam’s text was soothing, and it helped Kara feel better about her gut instinct. She still needed to hear from Lena though. She paced about anxiously, trying to figure out how to explain her unorthodox love life to Cat freaking Grant. Kara ran a hand through her hair, then blurted out, “It isn’t what you think.” Then her face turned bright red—that sounded so cliché. “I’m not … I wouldn’t … Cat, Lena is the love of my life, and I would never ever hurt her. I’m not cheating on her.”

Cat looked at her curiously, and Kara was relieved that she couldn’t read any condemnation in those honey brown eyes. “Then tell me what I’m missing here. You’re not seriously going to try and tell me that your feelings for Sam are purely platonic. I know chemistry when I see it.”

“That’s not what I’m trying to tell you. I’m just … nervous, I guess. Worried about how you’re going to look at me when I tell you the truth, which isn’t something I was prepared to do today. But I can’t … ugh, I just can’t have you thinking that I would ever do that to Lena.” She leaned against the wall, tilted her head back until it rested against the wall, and closed her eyes. Kara centered herself, taking control of her breathing until she felt confident she could have a conversation without falling into full on Kara Danvers ramble mode. Then she turned back to Cat, having formed a plan to buy herself some more time.

“First, tell me what you think of Sam.” Kara wasn’t sure if Cat would go along with this, but hoped she would indulge her. Even beyond stalling until Lena texted her, Kara was genuinely
curious to hear Cat’s unfiltered opinion before she considered opened up about her love life.

Cat gazed out over the city briefly, then turned back to Kara. “I assume that if I do so, you’ll eventually answer my question?” Kara nodded, and Cat shrugged. “Very well then. Samantha Arias is quite possibly one of the most impressive women I’ve ever met. I mean, she’s got a tragic backstory to rival yours, which is really saying something. Yet she’s managed to go from a homeless teenage single mom to the CFO of a major multinational tech company by the age of thirty. If you’re to be believed—and yes, Kara I think you are—she is an excellent mother with a bright and precocious teenage daughter. And now, just a month or so removed from finding out that she was created as a literal weapon of violence with an alter ego who has murdered at least fifty people, she has the mental and emotional fortitude to attempt to use her gifts for good in the world, to atone for the actions of her other self whether she truly deserves that burden or not. All that, and she hasn’t lost her bravado or her sense of humour.”

Kara appreciated that Cat thought Sam hadn’t lost any of her bravado, even if Kara knew that this wasn’t actually the case. Maybe that was a sign of just how much bravado Sam used to have, before all of this. But even so, Cat’s unabashed praise of Sam brought tears of happiness to Kara’s eyes. And she had talked long enough for Lena to respond to her text.

Lee [3:46 p.m.]: Darling, I’m fairly sure Cat Grant is in love with you. My only concern is not that she will judge or expose you, but simply that she will try to toss her hat in the ring as well. Feel free to tell her the truth if you feel that is right. Just remind her that she would be wise not to fuck with two Kryptonians and a Luthor.

Kara grinned at Lena’s response, but Cat offered an unexpected coda to her appraisal of Sam, one that took Kara completely by surprise. “I also think she looks about ready to break in half, and I genuinely hope she has a strong support system in place, beyond her daughter.” Kara felt her eyes widen, and before she had time to even think about it the words were out of her mouth.

“She does,” Kara whispered. She took a deep breath and ran her fingers through her hair again. “Cat … Sam is my girlfriend. But, but … Lena knows, and she’s been nothing but encouraging and supportive to both of us. Sam is her oldest friend in the world, and this is something that we all talked about at length before anyone acted on anything.” Cat had an amused look on her face, but her raised eyebrows told Kara to continue. “We’re polyamorous—do you, umm, do you know what that means?”

“Dear girl, I’m old, but I’m not naïve. I will say … I’m a bit hurt that you’ve blown off all my flirting given this new information.” Kara blushed.

“Cat! I … oh geez. That’s not … I …”

“Oh Jesus, Kara. Calm down. You don’t have to explain anything, I’m just messing with you.” Kara’s blush intensified, for more than a few reasons. It wasn’t like she hadn’t thought about … anyway, she felt stupid for taking Cat’s cajoling seriously, even if it was Lena’s fault for putting the idea in her head.

“Ah! Sorry. I just … like I said, I wasn’t expecting to have this conversation with you. I’m a little flustered. I was worried you might—”

“Kara, I would hope by now that you know you can trust me. I’m not here to yuck anyone’s yum. If you three are happy with your arrangement, then great. And I’m sorry if I pushed you to reveal something you weren’t ready to reveal. I just… well, you know I take my role as your mentor and friend seriously. I couldn’t ignore what I was seeing right in front of my face.” Cat was grinning
at her now, and Kara felt her own face relax and brighten into a small smile.

“I get it. And I appreciate it, Cat. I definitely value your advice. I didn’t … well, I know our situation is unorthodox. I’m not ashamed of anything, but obviously it’s complicated given that all three of us are now varying forms of famous for different reasons. And we’re trying not to make Ruby’s life any more difficult than absolutely necessary, so … it’s just not something we advertise, especially to the most eminent member of the press in all of National City.” Kara made sure her tone was appropriately joking for that last sentence, earning her a devious smirk from Cat.

“Well in that case, I suppose I could avoid mention of it in my story on Power Girl. If you insist.” Kara chuckled, then Cat surprised her again. “So, is it challenging for Lena to be the only regular human in the relationship? I suppose regular might be quite the wrong word for your Lena, but you know what I mean.”

_Huh._ That particular avenue for conflict had not come up, at least not yet. For that, Kara was grateful. “There have certainly been challenges and adjustments that we’re all struggling with in the wake of all the Reign insanity, but we’re working through it. Together.”

Cat didn’t seem convinced. “Be careful, Kara. Love is tricky enough even between two people without superpowers or secret identities. Just … well—” she made a face, “—be careful.”

“Sure thing, Cat.” Kara stood. “Now, if you’re done grilling me on my love life, I need to get a few things done for Snapper before I head to Sam’s for dinner with her and Ruby.” She moved to hug the older woman, who held her warmly.

“Good luck, Supergirl. I’ll have a draft to you and your girlfriend by the end of the day tomorrow. And don’t worry. Your secret is safe with me.” Kara nodded, then took a few steps away from Cat before taking off. She had actually meant to finish up some of her Kara Danvers work, but now that was the farthest thing from her mind. Cat’s words ate at her, and her body carried her straight to L-Corp before her mind even had time to realize where she was going.
Lena's Struggles

Chapter Notes

Fair warning, there is smut ahead :)

Lena met her on the balcony with a gorgeous smile and a spine-tingling kiss. Then she pulled away and fixed Kara with an impish grin. “Well, when is your first date with Cat Grant?”

Rao. Kara rolled her eyes dramatically at Lena before responding, “Lena Luthor, everyone: CEO, billionaire, philanthropist, engineer, girlfriend, and now, comedian.” She gestured as if she was introducing Lena to some imaginary crowd. “Just by putting that idea in my head, you made me embarrass myself. Thanks for that.”

“My pleasure, darling. So, why are you here, instead of making out with Cat? I hear she is quite skillful with her tongue, but you can’t always trust the rumours.” Kara was starting to get the sense that Lena was focusing on Cat to deflect the conversation away from some other potential topic. But it was important to Kara that she broach the question raised by Cat—namely, whether Sam’s recent acquisition of superpowers was proving difficult for Lena to handle.

“I’m here because you’re my girlfriend, and she’s not. And I was struck with the sudden desperate urge to have your lips on mine. Have I ever told you that your lips are as sweet as they are soft?”

Lena stepped closer to Kara, and her perfume was intoxicating. Kara bit her lip as Lena captured her gaze with a sultry expression sparkling in her clear green eyes. “Is that right? I suppose it works out for you, then, that you can kiss me whenever you like.” She leaned in until her lips were less than an inch from Kara’s but didn’t release Kara’s eyes from her gaze. Suddenly Kara was feeling playful, and Lena’s proximity was so enticing that she licked her lips subconsciously. As she did so, her tongue gently brushed Lena’s upper lip, and Kara sensed Lena’s body tense in anticipation. It was too much. Any sense of teasing was gone—her tongue pushed across Lena’s lip and into her mouth. Lena pushed herself closer, taking Kara’s tongue into her mouth with an almost provocative hum. As Lena’s tongue met her own, Kara felt her entire body light up. In a heartbeat, Kara had Lena up against the wall, pressing her body solidly against Lena’s, desperate to close any distance between them.

Lena’s hand glided around the side of Kara’s neck and into her hair, and her other was already gripping Kara’s hip firmly underneath her skirt. A whimper escaped Kara’s lips as her body cried out for Lena’s touch. Lena pushed herself up and flipped them around so that Kara was against the wall. Her hand found the top of Kara’s tights and teased them down slowly, so that her hand was free to explore Kara’s hip bones, upper thighs … and everything in between. Kara felt the heat pooling between her legs, and Lena’s touch electrified every nerve in her body in the absolute best way. Any thought of conversation was gone.

As Kara hummed with pleasure, her body pressing against Lena’s hand in anticipation, Lena nipped at Kara’s earlobe before whispering, “Tell me what you want, Supergirl.” Kara’s whole body tightened, and a pleasant shudder rippled down her. She bit her lip, catching Lena’s eyes as she pulled back to wait for Kara’s answer. Lena hand hovered agonizingly less than an inch from her skin, and it felt as if there was electricity flowing through that tiny space between them. Kara’s
body screamed for Lena’s touch, and Lena’s gorgeous green eyes shimmered with sultry intention.

“Please, Lena. Please, I need you to touch me.” Kara almost grabbed Lena’s hand to press it firmly between her legs, but Lena moved immediately with Kara’s plea. Her hand was so soft and delicate, but her fingers moved with precision. Her fingers traced down through the soft curls of Kara’s pubic hair, and then moved lightly, teasingly down. To Kara’s delight and dismay, Lena avoided her clit on the first pass, savouring the feel of the delicate skin below. A low moan escaped Kara’s throat. Lena traced lines along Kara’s folds, working her way languidly inwards until Lena finally slipped two fingers inside of her. Kara gasped, locking eyes with Lena as she slowly worked her fingers in and fucked her ever so gently. “Rao, Lena, you feel so good.”

She smiled softly back at Kara, enjoying the ways in which the pleasure making its way through Kara’s body displayed itself across her face. Lena always watched Kara with so much tenderness and appreciation when they made love. Her fingers began to move faster, rougher, and then she added a thumb to Kara’s clit. Her legs shook as she worked to remain standing while focusing on the intense shocks of pleasure radiating from her gut outward as Lena pushed her towards the edge. Their eyes remained locked together, and Lena’s face radiated with the anticipation of Kara’s climax. She bit her bright red lower lip in that way that drove Kara crazy, just as she increased the speed of her thumb’s movement. Kara moaned loudly as her body rocked through the orgasm, the power of it overtaking her. Once her body calmed, she wrapped her arms around Lena’s neck and slumped into a tight embrace, enjoying the light scent of Lena’s shampoo as she caught her breath again.

Kara had no idea how long they lingered there, holding each other. It didn’t matter. At that moment, there was nothing else but Lena and Kara, at home in each other’s arms. The sun was low in the sky, but not yet setting. As Kara looked out at her city, she giggled softly into Lena’s ear. “I don’t think we’ve ever fucked on the balcony, have we?”

She could feel Lena grin wickedly in response. “No, this was our first. You fucked me on the roof that one time, and we’ve christened every surface of my office at this point. How on Earth did we go this long without having sex on the balcony?”

“I have no idea, but you gave me that look and told me that I could kiss you anytime I wanted, and I just needed to have your hands all over me. I couldn’t wait to get you inside.”

“That look?” Whatever look could you be talking about, darling?” Lena’s voice was airy and lyrical. Kara pulled away, worked her tights back up, adjusted her skirt, and then leaned back against the wall, resting her hands on Lena’s hips.

She crinkled her brow and said, “You know exactly what look I’m talking about.”

“I assure you, I haven’t the slightest clue. Don’t blame me for your desperate need for my oh so skillful touch. I’m just glad that you came by my office.” Kara giggled at the obvious double entendre and leaned forward to kiss Lena softly.

“Whatever, it was wonderful. How has your day been?” Lena shrugged nonchalantly.

“The usual. I’ll probably need to stick around a bit late tonight to catch up on things, but things are running as smoothly as ever. Which I’m sure means I’m due for another unpleasant visit from Mother any day now.” Lena’s tone was joking, but Kara could hear the tiny bit of anxiety hidden underneath the joke.

“Well if she does, punch her in the face, and I’ll come grab her immediately. No problem.”
“That sounds delightful, Kara.” Lena smirked, clearly visually the thought of socking Lillian. “So … not that I am complaining, but to what do I owe the pleasure of Supergirl’s company? Don’t you have plans tonight?”

“Yeah, actually, I wanted to see if you wanted to join us for dinner. Sam said she would love to have you, and Ruby really misses you lately.” Lena’s face darkened, and Kara cringed just slightly, anticipating the no.

“I’m sorry, Kara. I know I’m making this hard for you, and I don’t want to. But I really can’t tonight. I’ve got to finish up work here, then I’m seeing Dr. Letamendi. Maggie convinced me that I absolutely need to talk through my issues about Sam, even though I feel like such a terrible person to be having these feelings. I really can’t … I just, I’m not ready to talk about it with you. Not yet. Is that okay?” Lena’s face was sincerely apologetic, and Kara was relieved to hear that she was finally going to talk about this with her therapist. Her two romantic partners had been caught in this stalemate of hurt feelings and mistrust for over a month now, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for her to avoid feeling some resentment about it.

“Of course it is okay. I’m really happy that you’re willing to talk to her. You’ve been really hard on yourself about this dark cloud between you and Sam, and I really think this will help you. Since you won’t let me help you.” Kara winced, realizing that sounded harsher than she intended. “Sorry! I’m not scolding you; I’m saying this is good, and I’m proud of you. Your feelings are not stupid, and it’s important to figure them out and deal with them, in whatever way works for you.” Lena smiled slightly, tracing her finger softly along Kara’s wrist.

Kara remembered that she had wanted to ask Lena about whether being the only one without powers might have something to do with her negative feelings towards Sam, but decided not to bring it up right then. Let Lena do some work on it in therapy first. “I … you’re right, this is really hard for me.” The small smile on Lena’s lips vanished, and her body slumped in just slightly, signaling the guilt Lena continued to carry. Kara moved her hand from Lena’s hip and began stroking her lower back softly. She hated making Lena uncomfortable. “I love you both, and I know that you love each other, and it is hard for me to see you going through this. Too have to avoid talking about one of you when I’m with the other. This isn’t what I want. But I know you’ll figure it out. You’re too strong, and too good, and you love Sam too much not to.” She pulled Lena in for another hug, kissing her along her neck. “Just … Ruby really does miss you. Even if it’s weird being around Sam right now, please find time for Ruby. I can coordinate everything, okay?”

Lena stiffened, and Kara pulled back to see her eyes growing watery. Kara smiled reassuringly, and gently moved a loose strand of hair out of Lena’s face. Her voice was apologetic. “You’re right. I’m sorry. I really hate how awful I’ve been, but I don’t … nothing. Not important. I’m working on it. But yes, absolutely, I want to see Ruby. I’ll reach out on the group chat that includes Ruby and see when I can take her out for ice cream and adventure soon.”

Kara put her arms back around Lena’s neck, and she began to gently play with Lena’s earlobe and trace softly along the outside of her ear. “She would love that, I’m sure. I’m sleeping over at Sam’s, but will you call me after therapy—I’d like to hear about how it went, if you’re willing to talk to me about it.”

Lena smiled, but there was clearly pain and remorse behind those eyes. “I’ll definitely call you, darling. I can’t promise I’ll want to talk about it, but we’ll see.” She kissed her again. It was short, but full of emotion. “I love you, Kara. I’m sorry to put you through this.”

Kara kissed her back, responding, “It’s okay. I don’t understand it, but I know you. I support you.
We’ll get through this. And I love you too, creampuff.” The term of endearment earned her a grin, and it brightened Kara’s mood tremendously. “And thanks for the lovely orgasm,” Kara added, winking slyly.

“Any time, Supergirl. You always know where to find me.” Lena’s voice was all seduction and intention, and Kara was almost tempted to have another go. But Sam and Ruby were waiting.

She kissed Lena one last time. “Good luck in therapy. I’ll talk to you later.”

“Bye, darling.”

After Kara flew off, Lena had immediately locked away the troubling feelings they had discussed, choosing instead to luxuriate in the memory of their physical intimacy as she worked to finish up her work for the day. She smiled warmly at Jess on her way out, and she rose to follow Lena down the elevator, all the way to the parking garage. Lena had to drive herself, since she had long since elected not to have the DEO’s location available to the car company she used to get about town when she didn’t feel like driving herself.

The drive was short, but lengthened slightly by traffic, as always. She made her way through the security checkpoints quickly—the DEO agents were slowly but surely getting used to her presence at the facility on a regular basis. Dr. Letamendi’s office was on the same floor as Pam’s HR department, and there was no one else in the waiting room when she arrived. Dr. Letamendi waved her right in, a big smile shining on her face.

“Lena, good evening! I’m glad you could make it—I know how busy you are.”

Lena smiled politely, responding, “Well, I made a promise to a friend.” Her therapist raised an eyebrow in question, and Lena added, “Fine, I also really need to get something out in the open and figure it out, and I probably should have come to you with it sooner.” Lena raised her own eyebrows. “Happy?”

“Oh, come now Lena, you know I’m always happy when I get to see you. You’re a therapist’s wet dream.” One of the things Lena appreciated most about Dr. Letamendi was her complete lack of decorum and her overly familiar demeanor. She would’ve never guessed, but having a therapist who behaved more like a bartender was very much Lena’s thing.

“Now now, Doctor, I don’t think it’s all that professional to talk to your clients about your nocturnal emissions.” She grinned wickedly.

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“Come now, Lena, we both know I’m not all that professional. Now, what would you like to talk about tonight. I’m sure you didn’t come here just to shoot the shit.” Dr. Letamendi leaned back, fixing an expectant look on her face. Lena sighed, preparing herself to actually open up and address whatever this was that she was feeling about Sam.

“Well. I suppose we should try to figure out why I’ve barely said more than ten words to my best friend in the entire world over the past month.” She couldn’t quite bring herself to look Dr. Letamendi in the eyes after saying this. This was not a subject she had an easy time being vulnerable with, even with Kara.

“Ah, so you’re finally ready to talk about Sam? Lena … Lena, look at me.” She glanced over, and Dr. Letamendi’s face was full of warmth. “I’m proud of you. This is a big step, and I think you’re ready for it. Now, tell me about Sam.”
Lena paused, considering where to start. Then she floundered, having no fucking idea where to start. Lena exhaled loudly. “I honestly don’t know. Ask me something, see if you can draw it out of me. I really don’t know where to start."

“I can do that. You said you’ve only talked to her a handful of times in the past month. So, what is the hold up? What is stopping you from engaging?”

The question gave her pause. Briefly. “I … okay so before I answer that, I need to explain something. The reason I haven’t wanted to talk about this in our last two sessions is that I feel really fucking stupid. I’m fully aware that my feelings have no foundation in fact, and I’ve avoided talking about it because I am so goddamn embarrassed that I’m having such juvenile emotions, and I can’t shake them.”

“You’re sure as shit not getting any judgment from me. That’s why I’m here, so that you can tell me all the juvenile shit you’re sure you should be better than. One of these days you’re going to learn this. Now tell me what you’re feeling, dummy.” That last challenge came with such affected exasperation that it caught Lena off guard, and she found herself blurting out an answer without thinking first.

“She isn’t my Sam anymore!” Lena paused, following that train of thought. “Sam isn’t … look, I know she isn’t Reign. She was never Reign. She had no control over the violence that was inflicted on Kara.” Her train of thought halted, her resolve fading.

“But?” Dr. Letamendi nudged.

“But I still see those red eyes at night. Kara’s broken body. That metallic voice goading me to join her in her dark mission.” Lena shuddered without meaning to.

“So you’re struggling with some subconscious part of yourself that associates Sam with Reign, despite knowing—on some abstract level—that Sam isn’t at fault. Do you think that is because of Kara? Or, something more?”

“The way you say that makes me think that you definitely think there’s something more. Kara is the only thing that makes sense to me. But that isn’t it. Sam was absolutely destroyed to think about what her body was made to do to Kara. She still carries those scars. That guilt. And I hate that I make her feel even worse about it. I don’t want to blame her. If I could have figured out the reason why my heart is doing this when my head knows better, you and I wouldn’t be having this conversation.” Lena wasn’t trying to be snarky, but she had only given in to Maggie’s insistence that she discuss Sam with Dr. Letamendi because she was at her wit’s end. She felt so awful about it, and she had no idea why these feelings lingered.

“Let me ask you this. Is Sam any different now then before all this Reign drama happened?” From her expression, Lena was sure that Dr. Letamendi already knew the answer, but Lena humoured her, because what the fuck else was she going to do?

“Of course she is! She can give herself a new name and a new mask and a new suit, but she has all of that monster’s powers now. She isn’t my Sam anymore! We … despite our very different backgrounds, in some ways, we were so very much the same, Sam and I. It was always us against the world at LuthorCorp. We just got each other, and no one else could touch that. But now …” She drifted off, her mind racing. But now, everything is different. It isn’t me and Sam against the world. It’s Kara and Sam against the world.

“I … fuck. Kara’s the one who was beaten within an inch of her life, but Kara’s faith in Sam never
wavered. Kara never gave up on her, and she immediately forgave her once Reign was eliminated. Kara
was the one to support Sam through the grief and the guilt and the agonizing over the horrific violence
committed by someone wearing her face. Meanwhile ... I just ... I couldn’t. They didn’t need me. I had
nothing to offer.” Lena closed her eyes for just a moment, breathing deeply. “Nothing was the same.
It should have been me, but I couldn’t do it.” Lena wiped at her eyes, trying not to let the tears forming
there escalate into something she couldn’t control.

“That’s good, Lena. Is it okay if I ask—why? Why couldn’t you be there? Why are things different
between you and Sam?” There was nothing but compassion in Dr. Letamendi’s voice, and Lena felt like
she was being led somewhere, but where, she knew not. She wasn’t there yet; she was still processing
through her feelings on not being there for Sam.

“I know that Kara loves her—that they’re in love. But Sam is my family. I’ve known her for
years. Loved her for years. Longer than Kara. I should have been the one to believe in her. To
lift her out of that pit of darkness that she found herself in—”

Dr. Letamendi interrupted her, “Didn’t you?” She paused, and Lena could tell the question was
genuine, even though it was intentionally provocative. “From what I understand, you’re the one
who came up with the solution. You’re the one that, for lack of a better terminology, exorcised her
demon. You brought her back when no one else could. Lena, I suspect that we’re about to start
getting at something under the surface here that you haven’t quite wrapped your mind around, but I
do want you to understand this. To genuinely believe it. I’m not shitting on anything Kara did,
but you’re the one who saved her. You were there for your friend—your family—when she
needed you most. Never discount that. Never.”

Lena was speechless. Objectively, she knew this was true. And she could think back and put
herself in that headspace. She was frantic at times, single-minded in her dogged pursuit of a way to
save Sam from herself. From Reign. She had driven herself to the brink of emotional and physical
exhaustion in doing so. And she had saved her.

She remembered when Sam woke up, how she had immediately thanked Lena and told her that she
saved her. Her voice had been so rough with emotion, and when they got back to the DEO, she had
asked Kara to give them a moment alone. Sam had wrapped her up in her arms, and even though
Lena resisted at first—some part of her still angry and unnerved by the Reign outfit—she had
leaned in after a moment. They had embraced for a very long time, and both had sobbed into each
other. It was a moment of pure catharsis. Lena didn’t think that, deep down, either of them had
truly believed that Sam would survive Reign. And both were overwhelmingly relieved to have
been wrong, but still fundamentally changed by the experience. The trauma of it all. Lena felt
something shift as they released each other, as Sam left her to go change so that she could see
Ruby.

So much had changed in the last month. Reign was gone... but regardless, Sam wasn’t just Sam
anymore. She was Power Girl now, teaming up with Supergirl to redeem herself through heroics
and selfless feats of service, grace, and strength. The old Sam was gone, and whether it made
sense or not, Lena was still mourning that loss. The loss of who they used to be to each other. And
she didn’t know how to find her way back to a new foundation. She had saved her friend’s life, but
it felt as if she had somehow lost Sam anyway. Lena hated feeling this way. Hated it with a
passion. It made no fucking sense. Sam still talked like Sam. Joked like Sam. She was exactly
the same mom with Ruby. Nothing was different, yet somehow everything was. Lena’s fist
tightened, and she could feel her nails biting into the skin of her palm. It didn’t make sense.

Lena growled. Literally. Christ, I’m picking up Kara’s bad habits. She sighed, and decided that
the only way to try to make sense of this was to keep talking. She needed a perspective outside of


her own fucked up mind. “I don’t … I don’t know. She just … I can’t see her … as my Sam. We’re not the same Sam and Lena we’ve always been. The thought I just had—nothing is different, with Sam. She is the same as always, in so many ways. Nothing is different. But everything is different. She is something—someone—different.” Lena paused, processing again. Trying to work through the swirl of thoughts and emotions crashing against each other in her subconscious. “Sam is someone different. More powerful. Beyond me. She’s … she’s more Kara now than me.”

Dr. Letamendi’s response was immediate and emphatic. “There it is.” Lena’s eyes shot up, wide and full of shock.

“There what is?!” Lena pondered it, confused as to what her therapist meant. “She … I … Seriously, what the fuck are you talking about?”

“Lena we’ve been working together for a while now, and you have made tremendous progress. But that doesn’t mean that your foundational issues are gone forever. They manifest in different ways, and as much as you’ve grown, it isn’t outside the realm of possibility that severe trauma can trigger your deepest insecurities and struggles in new and confusing ways.” Lena gave that some thought.

Insecurities. Trust issues. Isolation. Inability to believe that I’m deserving of love—that people can really see me for myself. But … Sam got past those barriers years ago. How? Lena frowned. Surely all that growth, all the trust and rapport and comfort she had developed with Sam over the years couldn’t have just evaporated. The last couple of months had been traumatic, sure, but … it felt true, in a way. Her walls were up again, when it came to Sam. She didn’t have a fucking clue why that was the case, but she couldn’t deny it.

Lena looked up. “I don’t see it. Sam got past my barriers years ago. She’s still her. How are things different? Why are my walls up again?” She gave Dr. Letamendi her most intimidating Luthor stare. “You are so sure that I admitted to some sort of foundational something or other—what is it? What are you seeing that I’m not?”

Dr. Letamendi didn’t shrink in the slightest under Lena’s gaze. “Lena. You insist that while she’s still Sam, she’s no longer your Sam. Now that Reign is gone, what is the only difference in Sam? Don’t overthink it, there’s a simple answer here.” Lena’s eyes narrowed as she considered the question. Don’t overthink it. The only difference is…

Lena’s shot open, wide as plates. Oh. Oh fuck.

“There it is,” Dr. Letamendi chuckled. “Now, let’s really dig into this.”
It was a Saturday afternoon, and Sam found herself in full Power Girl regalia, wandering the DEO with the one and only Alex Danvers. Ruby was hanging out with Lena and Kara, and Power Girl was on superhero duty while Supergirl enjoyed her weekend. Fortunately, there was very little in the way of DEO-level incidents going on today, and other than a couple of quick rescues—Power Girl helped a lost little girl back to her mom, and a little later, put a stop to a minor robbery—Sam had spent the day hanging out with Alex.

She was still getting used to being Power Girl. Cat Grant’s exclusive interview had been hugely popular when it dropped nearly two weeks ago, and the non-CatCo press response had been fairly mixed since she appeared on the scene at Supergirl’s side. She couldn’t shake the feeling that people still looked at her with fear. This was helpful when she faced off against criminals, but as much as she was proud to jump in and stop violence and wrongdoing, the look of pure terror in these criminals’ eyes, the genuine fear for their lives, still haunted Sam. And that had nothing on the fear that she still received from some people she was actively trying to save or help.

But others had welcomed her with open arms. There were many for whom Supergirl’s endorsement was more than enough to convince them that Power Girl was a force for good.

Throughout it all, Alex had been a constant friend. They had grown much closer as Sam’s association with the DEO took hold. Alex had even taken to giving her a lollipop after their lab sessions, which were now thankfully waning. Sam had a firm grasp on her powers now, and they were all but certain that Reign was gone forever. Moreover, Alex had taken it upon herself to be Sam’s primary ally and mentor in the DEO, teaching her terminology and strategy, giving her the low down on different agents’ personalities and quirks, and going out of her way to be the agent in the field with Power Girl whenever possible.

Sam didn’t quite have words for how much she appreciated Alex’s friendship. It went beyond just being on good terms with her girlfriend’s sister—in some ways, Alex had filled a gaping hole in her heart left by Lena’s sudden alienation. Plus Ruby loved her stories of working with Supergirl.

“So really, how long do you and Kara think you’re going to be able to hide it from her?” Sam sidestepped Alex’s jab, then immediately moved her arm to block the kick she knew would follow. They had been practicing hand-to-hand combat for weeks now, and while her offensive skillset was still shaky, Sam had gotten quite skilled at defense and evasion. She gave Alex a snarky look as they retook their positions. The sickly green glow of the room always looked so strange against Alex’s purple hair. While Sam did have a weakness for kryptonite, her tolerance for the toxic element was so much higher than Kara’s that they had to practically irradiate the room with the stuff just to dull her reaction time and strength enough that Alex could train her. If Kara stepped within 50 feet of the room, it’d probably knock her on her ass.

“Honestly, I’ve been entirely normal her whole life. I’ve never had powers, and she has absolutely no reason to suspect that I’m Power Girl. Plus we had J’onn pull the whole ‘Supergirl just wanted to stop by and say hello’ routine while Kara, Ruby, and I were hanging out.” Sam cocked an eyebrow, before exploding into an offensive maneuver, hoping to catch Alex off guard. Instead she found herself on her ass again.

Alex chuckled as she helped Sam up. “I have no idea how you two manage to fight in those heavy ass capes. Not only does it slow you down, it also forces you to exaggerate your movements slightly. And I could already see them coming as it is.”
“Well, when I’m not in a room with enough kryptonite to kill Kara three times over, the cape weighs almost nothing. And I move faster than your eye can register, so it doesn’t exactly matter if Agent ‘Master of the Perfect Form’ Danvers can see my moves coming in training.” Anticipating Alex’s retort, Sam added, “And my powers won’t disappear in different coloured sunlight, so the chances of me finding myself suddenly human again seem astronomically small.”

“Fine. But for all we know, you’re not the only Worldkiller out there. And who knows what other sorts of superpowered people might show up someday. Better to be prepared, just in case you suddenly find yourself in a situation where some new stranger can match you blow-for-blow.” Sam shuddered at the thought of that, literally. She was the most physically powerful person on Earth, and she was slowly getting the impression that it wasn’t actually that close. Kara and Kal El each had so many more weaknesses than her, and neither could quite match her speed and strength.

“Yeah yeah yeah. You know the only reason I keep coming to these sessions is because I like it when you’re a little rough with me.” Alex’s reaction was immediate—her face scrunched up in that silly way it did when Sam inevitably made her uncomfortable, then her brow furrowed as if she were considering whether the fastest way out of this conversation was to kill Sam or run away. Fortunately, she settled on scolding.

“Does Kara know how much you flirt with me?” Sam shot her a look that made it very clear that Kara was very aware.

“Come now, have you met me? The only person flirtier than me is that girlfriend of yours. It amazes me that it even still gets to you.” Alex reached over to the panel on the wall and turned off the kryptonite emitters, signaling an end to their session. Almost instantaneously, Sam felt the world around her become crisper, clearer, and louder. The sweat practically evaporated from her skin as her heart rate normalized. The pleasant strain she had worked into her muscles disappeared, and she almost missed the sensation. Being a perfectly engineered pinnacle of evolution was a weird experience. She walked with Alex towards the showers—if nothing else, Sam could tell she was making progress because she could actually make Alex sweat now.

“Yes well, unlike you crazy kids, Maggie and I are all old-fashioned and monogamous.” Sam cocked her head, curious about Alex’s meaning.

“Alex, you do realize that just because we’re poly, that doesn’t mean I’m going around looking to jump into every pretty girl’s pants, right?” Alex tried to keep a straight face, but Sam’s eyes could catch every tiny little microexpression these days. “You do! Jesus, Alex what kind of person do you think I am?” Sam shoved her playfully, but couldn’t pretend she wasn’t a little hurt.

“No! No no, okay. No. Not like that.” Alex looked over at her as they continued to walk, trying to reassure her. “Sorry. It’s still all kinda weird to me, but no, I definitely don’t think that. It just feels … different … somehow, when you flirt with people other than Kara than when Maggie does it. Maybe that isn’t fair—it isn’t something that I really understand anyway.”

“Well, for the record, you’re hot stuff Agent Danvers, and maybe in some alternate universe we could be a thing, but I’m definitely not looking to get in your pants. For starters, Kara would never go for it, and honestly … I just don’t really see you that way.” She winked casually. “No offense.”

Alex snorted and rolled her eyes, but otherwise didn’t respond. Sam dug a little deeper. “If you’d like to discuss polyamory more over drinks sometime, I would really appreciate it. Clearly there’s some issues—even if they’re minor ones—swirling around in that head of yours, and it’s important to me that my friends—not to mention my girlfriend’s sister—don’t think of me as … whatever.
My relationship with your sister is important and serious and wonderful and not something I take lightly.” Alex frowned. “And I think you get that, but there’s still some stuff there that you’re uneasy with. That’s fine. It’s why we should talk about it. Especially now that you actually know me and stuff.”

Alex turned away from her, not hesitating to strip down as she tossed her sweaty clothes into her locker and grabbed a towel before turning to the showers. Without looking back, Alex said softly, “I don’t mean to judge. I’d really like to talk more about it sometime.” Then she glanced back, smirked, and said, in a much more confident voice, “Now stop staring at my ass, and wait for me outside.”

Sam vacated the locker room with a joking pout and walked down the hallway. She absentmindedly fiddled with the edge of her cowl. It wasn’t uncomfortable—Winn had designed it to fit her head perfectly, and the materials were surprisingly soft and breathable. But it was annoying to have to remain masked whenever she was at the DEO. Power Girl’s identity was a highly classified, closely guarded secret, even within the black ops group. Sam appreciated this, but it was a hassle at times. While they had long since given up trying to keep Supergirl’s identity hidden from the rank and file, only Alex, Kara, J’onn, Lucy, Vasquez, Winn, and Pam from HR knew that Supergirl’s other girlfriend Samantha Arias was the red-wigged superhero formerly known as Reign.

She heard Alex coming before the agent had left the locker room, but she could tell Alex was being intentionally sneaky, so she feigned surprise when a voice rang out from directly behind her. “So, when do you need to get back? Do you and Kara have plans with Ruby tonight?” She continued walking, matching Alex’s brisker pace, and tried to keep the frown from forming on her face. She failed. “We’re playing it by ear. Doesn’t seem like National City will really be needing either of us tonight, so maybe. Gotta coordinate with Kara.” So that I don’t have to see Lena, she left off.

Alex grabbed her arm and pulled her into a gentle hug. Sam took a deep breath, trying to release some of the instant and overwhelming sorrow she always felt when she thought too hard about Lena these days. “I know Kara has forbidden me from giving Lena the stern talking to that she so richly deserves, but you just say the word, and I’ll take whatever heat Kara wants to throw at me.” Sam felt her heart lift a little in her chest. The situation was so fucking bizarre. Usually it would be Lena offering to take down whomever had potentially harmed Sam—she couldn’t quite wrap her brain around Lena being the one who was harming her, and Alex offering to step in and do something about it.

She was the new one in Kara’s life, the new one in town, the new one to their friend group. Not to mention the whole ‘formerly a monster who nearly killed Supergirl’ thing. And yet here Alex was, being protective and taking care of her like she was family. She teared up but was able to answer. “Please don’t. This is the hardest thing I’ve ever had to suffer through—which is saying something—” Sam laughed darkly, “—but I agree with Kara. Lena’s talking to her therapist. She’s working through this. Hopefully. She doesn’t respond well to lectures, especially when she already knows that she is in the wrong. Whatever has driven this wedge between us, it’s going to take more than a stern talking to in order to resolve. Even one from the terrifying and illustrious Alex Danvers.”

Alex grinned. “You’re damn right, I am. Anyways, the offer is on the table. I love Lena, but I have no fucking clue what she’s doing here. I’m amazed that you and Kara are able to put up with it.”
“If it weren’t for Lena, there would be no me to put up with anything,” Sam pointed out, quietly but firmly. The response hit Alex like a ton of bricks, and she missed a step before catching herself and quickening her pace to return to Sam’s side.

“You’re right. I’m being way harsh. Have you talked to her—”

“About wanting to step down from the job I moved to National City to take? Not yet. I can barely get her in a room alone with me.”

“I don’t suppose this is something you should ambush her with either. Still … you’re burning the candle at both ends. You may not need much sleep anymore, but pulling triple duty between momming, CFOing, and superheroing is going to start taking a toll on you soon. Whatever her issues, I’m sure—”

The women had reached the main communications hub of the DEO several minutes prior, but Alex was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a creepy, nearly featureless talking doll’s head on every screen in the building. It spoke with a distorted voice, which only added to the creep factor.

“You were warned. Less than a year has passed since National City was nearly destroyed by alien invaders, and yet the world has continued to embrace our invaders as ‘heroes.’” Intentionally ominous-looking silhouettes of Supergirl and Superman flashed across the screen. “Now, an alien invader is being allowed to murder upstanding members of society with impunity.” A clip of Reign killing Morgan Edge played, only this time with footage apparently taken from inside the building, allowing the view to see all the gory detail as Reign melted away Morgan’s skull before tossing his body aside like garbage. “The city’s beloved protector has seen fit in her infinite wisdom to declare herself and those like her above the law. She has pardoned this monster for her crimes, and now the two openly conspire against humanity.” Camera footage of two silhouettes flying over the city, both distinctly female but otherwise featureless from far below. “The day is coming when they will give up the façade of heroism and declare openly their intentions to rule. They come here posing as refugees only to inflict upon humanity their own twisted sense of morality. A leopard cannot change its spots. A tiger cannot change its stripes. We have all seen the horrors Reign enacted upon this city in the name of her perverse sense of justice. It is only a matter of time before she begins anew, this time with Supergirl at her side. This despot has made her intentions clear. Humanity must protect itself. Time is running out. Those who side with the invaders will be wiped out along with them. We are Earth’s salvation. We are Cadmus.”

Throughout the last part of the video, countless clips—shaky cam, ostensibly taken on cell phones—of Reign were shown. Red eyes glowing. Standing imposingly. Moving at impossible speeds. Beating, throwing, and incinerating people. Sam felt her feet give out as she dropped to her knees. Wave after wave of guilt and anger washed over her, threatening to drown her in the depths of her anguish and depression. The voice of Cadmus rang in her ears on repeat. “Monster.” “Murderer.” “Invader.” “Despot.”

Images of her face. Her eyes. Her violence. Everything flashed over and over again. Sam couldn’t take it anymore. Couldn’t look up at the eyes that were all firmly fixed on her now, waiting for a reaction. “I’m sorry,” she whispered to Alex, then she was out of the DEO and into the sky. She could breathe again. But she couldn’t escape her past. She’d never escape it. She kept flying until day turned to night, with no destination in mind.
“Holy shit, Kara, that feels incredible!” Kara could feel the pleasure bubbling off of her as she ran her fingers firmly through soft strands of hair. “Fuck, I needed this.” Rivulets of warm water painted Kara’s hand.

“This feels so nice, Alex. I’m glad you finally agreed to let me do this.” She was still a little surprised that Alex had relaxed enough to trust Kara with this, much less enough to actually enjoy it. She moved her fingers slowly and confidently, and Alex hummed in response.

Varying shades of purple cascaded down as she gently kneaded Alex’s hair in the warm water. She had always enjoyed having people play with her hair—it was one of Alex’s absolute favourite things, but Kara was the only person she had let do so back when they were teenagers. Now, since Kara had learned how to cut and colour Alex’s hair (technically, she was pretty sure she could get her cosmetology license if she wanted it), she had been begging Alex to trust her with her beloved purple locks.

Kara had comported herself like a pro, though she wasn’t one to brag. And it wasn’t like Alex could openly enjoy having someone’s hands in her hair if she was at the salon. She’d have to wait to see what Alex thought, but she thought this was the best dye job yet. Now she just had to trim it up around the back. She moved at superspeed to grab the hair dryer, and before long she was flitting about with her handheld mirror, showing Alex the finished product from every possible angle.

“Holy shit, Kara. I’m sorry I ever doubted you.” She glanced over at Gertrude, who was hiding in the corner of the bathroom, shivering while she waited for all the movement to stop and the cuddles to resume. “What do you think, Gerty? Did Auntie Kara do good with Mommy’s hair?” Gertrude’s head tilted in curiosity, but she darted forward just enough to lick Alex’s outstretched fingers before retreating again. Alex turned back to Kara. “You would think she’d have learned by now that Auntie Kara would never ever let anything happen to her, but no, she still hides like you’re gonna step on her.”

Kara shrugged. “The world is a scary place for a tiny floof, Alex. You shouldn’t mock her.” They were both joking. Kara knew that Alex’s softest spot was for that tiny little dog. Alex got up and put her tank top back on, then met Kara back in the living room. Gerty followed cautiously behind Alex’s bare feet. “Alright, Alex, now that I’ve proven I’m capable of doing your hair, you have to tell me.”

Alex sighed, pouring a glass of whiskey and sitting down next to Kara on the couch. Gertrude settled in, pressed firmly to the side of Alex’s thigh. “Kara, you were right about being able to do my hair; can’t you just be satisfied with that?”

Kara smiled at the exasperation in her sister’s voice. “Nope. That wasn’t our deal. You’ve gotta fangirl with me now.” She smiled slyly.

“Fiiiiine. But I will never admit to being a fangirl. To anyone.” Kara got up and walked towards the kitchen. “So spill it, who is your favourite ship?” Kara opened the door of the fridge and was rewarded with four slices of leftover pizza.

“As if you don’t already know,” came the response. Kara did, in fact, know, but she was going to force Alex to talk about geek girl stuff tonight.

“Spill it,” she demanded between bites. Alex grumbled a few choice four-letter words under her breath, fully aware that Kara could hear her, before finally giving in.

“Root and Shaw.”
“Shoot,” Kara corrected.

“I’m not doing any of that stupid portmanteau fangirl shipper nonsense, Kara. We’re not fifteen anymore!”

“Alex! I know you. It’s just us here, unless Maggie is filming us and you didn’t tell me?” Kara did a quick review of the room just in case. “Nope! It’s really just us. You don’t have to play the part of Agent Alex Danvers, who never has fun!”

Alex groaned. “I’m not drunk enough to let fangirl Alex out yet.” Before she could blink, Kara had topped off her whiskey.

“Let’s fix that, then.” Kara finished off the pizza, then plopped down on the couch, her feet in Alex’s lap. “Now, why Shoot? What is it about their love story that moves you so?”

Kara was met with an immediate sardonic look. She didn’t give an inch, returning Alex’s mockery with a genuine curiosity and insistence. Alex was the one who broke. “Fine. They’re brilliant and unusual and a rarity that just happened! I just loved that the show creators didn’t even intend any kind of romance, they just went with it because it was there. And it was so unlike any of that cheesy romcom shit that you love so much. Just two badass chicks who knew their way around weaponry who happened to fall for each other while saving the world.”

“So tragic though.” Kara immediately regretted her blurted out response, because she knew exactly where Alex was going next.

“Root is alive! Nothing tragic about that.”

Kara’s nose crinkled. “Aaaaaaex! I knowww. Sorry I asked.” Kara prayed to Rao that Alex didn’t start ranting about ‘fucking Harold’ and his ‘stupid fucking glasses.’

“Fine. What’s yours? Harry and Ginny? Jack and Kate? … No no, we’re all about the girl-girl relationships now, so … Cosima and Delphine is a little dark for my baby sis. Clarke and Lexa is far too tragic.” Alex took another sip, pondering. “Okay, I’ve got it! Brittany and Santana from Glee!”

Kara grinned. “Ahhhh, I do love Brittanna, though not quite as much as QuinnBerry. You’re wrong, though. You forgot about anime!”

“Shit! I’m an idiot. Of course I forgot the literal cartoon version of your actual girlfriend.” Alex rolled her eyes dramatically.

“Lena isn’t that much like Asami,” Kara protested half-heartedly. She couldn’t pretend like that hadn’t absolutely been her thought when she had first gotten to know Lena.

“Uh huh.” Alex’s voice was full of gleeful skepticism. “You know, I don’t know how I didn’t realize you had a crush on Lena Luthor so much sooner. You were obsessed with Asami when we watched that show together.”

“You know the funniest part?” Kara grinned wildly, unable to control her lips. “Lena doesn’t see it.”

“No fucking way!” Alex’s face was all shock and disbelief. “Rich girl. Evil family. Trying to do good in the world. Dark hair. Green eyes. Stupidly hot. Falls for the chosen one. The Legends of Korra is basically a fictional version of your love story.”
“I know! But she won’t see it!” Kara frowned. “Honestly, I think she’s just screwing with me. But she hasn’t slipped, not once, and it has come up more than once.”

“Alright, well that’s one more thing I’ve gotta yell at that dummy about …” Alex’s voice drifted off as she realized what she was saying. They had agreed not to discuss anything heavy tonight. Things were so complicated with Sam and Lena, and now Cadmus was back on top of that, and it was hurting Supergirl’s reputation a little with each new video reminding the public of the atrocities committed by Reign. They both just really needed a quiet night in, just the two of them, like old times. Kara quickly changed the subject.

“Okay, you’ve gotta tell me a character you love who isn’t part of some violent, secret agent whatever.”

“Well, there’s Julia from—”

“Too dark!”

Alex glared at her but gave it some thought. “Fine then! I pick Janet, from The Good Place.”

“Ahhhh!” Kara bounced in excitement. “Such a great choice! Janet is such an awesome girl—”

“Not a girl!” Both Danvers shouted at the same time, correcting Kara’s rookie mistake. Alex’s Janet impression was surprisingly good, and Kara checked to confirm her suspicion that the bottle of whiskey was now half-empty. They both burst into laughter. Gertrude startled, but not enough to leave Alex’s side.

“How much longer until the game starts?” Kara glanced down at her watch.

“Should be soon,” she replied, picking up the remote to turn on the Olympics coverage. “You sure you don’t wanna fly over to the penthouse really quick?”

Alex’s eyes shot sideways at her. “Just us tonight. We talked about this. And I’m not sure I could avoid saying something to Lena, even if your TV is the size of my entire wall.” Kara conceded the point. They were waiting for the women’s hockey gold medal game to begin. Kara was super nervous about it—Canada had beaten the United States 2-1 in the final game of the preliminary round, and there was an insane amount of hype for the gold medal game between the two countries. The U.S. had lost the 2014 gold medal game in heartbreaking fashion, a fact which the TV broadcast would not allow Kara to forget.

She was still trying to get over the Ladies’ Short Program results from last night’s figure skating broadcast. Kara had been absolutely captivated by Russia’s Evgenia Medvedeva ever since she came across a YouTube video of the teen skating a Sailor Moon-themed routine. Her short program had been so hauntingly beautiful, but she was upstaged by her frenemy Alina Zagitova.

“Kara!” Alex snapped in front of her face playfully. “No more dwelling on figure skating. Medvedeva will take it back in the free skate. Tonight is about hockey.”

Kara grinned deviously at Alex. “You know, I bet Hilary Knight is a Supergirl fan. I could probably figure out a way to introduce you.” Alex turned the brightest red Kara had ever seen.

“You know you can’t take advantage of your celebrity like that, Kara!”

“Plus, you might actually die if you met her in person. I could ask her to kindly cover her arms if that would help?” Alex immediately punched her on the arm. Gertrude, not a fan of such violence, jumped down from the couch. “Now you’ve upset the baby girl, geez Alex.”
“Whatever, she’ll come back. Besides, the game is starting. Stop teasing me.” As it turns out, Gerty did not come back. The game was intense and nerve-wracking, and Gertrude ended up retreating to the bedroom to hide from the yelling and antics of the Danvers sisters. Heading into the third period, the girls were down 2-1, but a late breakaway goal by one of the Lamoureux twins —Monique?, Kara thought—forced an overtime period. No one scored in the tense overtime, and Alex groaned as the game went to a shootout.

“Fuck, I hate shootouts. Just do another overtime period!” Alex was going to be so hungover in the morning. The game had gone on for nearly three hours now.

“I don’t know why you hate it so much, it’s exciting!”

“Because Canada’s goalkeeper is insane, Kara! We’re so fucked.” Alex was sprawled out sideways on the couch, head in hands. Kara was pacing behind the couch. She had been unable to sit since Lamoureaux tied it in the third.

“Well, I believe in this team. They started shaky, but they’ve got the magic now.” They stayed in position for the shootout, with Alex watching from behind her hands. Canada shot first was blocked, and Kara jumped up and down shouting the U.S. goalkeeper’s name, “Rooney! Rooney! Rooney!”

Gigi Martin scored the first shot for the U.S., and this time Alex joined Kara in her screams of glee. Then the room went quiet again as Canada tied it up. Nothing happened again until the fourth shot, and Alex started muttering, “Shit shit shit shit shit,” under her breath when Canada scored to take the advantage. Kara glowered at her sister’s pessimism.

“Come on, Kessel, you’ve got this. Come on, come on—GOAAAAAAAAL!” Kara was shouting and jumping again. Alex sat up, and Kara placed her hands firmly on Alex’s shoulders, both of them watching the final shot for each team tensely. Who would break the tie?

Rooney saved Canada’s final shot, and Kara and Alex both went stiff. They exchanged a hopeful look. “Your girl has got this. We saved the best for last.”

Alex nodded, then shouted at the TV, “You got this Hilary!”

She didn’t have this. Canada’s goalie blocked her attempt, and with everything still tied, the shootout went to a sixth round. This time the U.S. shot first, and Alex jumped up with Kara when Jocelyn Lamoureux pulled of the absolutely insane fakeout move to score. Then the briefly paused, both standing upright on the couch, holding each other tightly as Canada tried to tie it back up. As Maddie Rooney blocked the shot, the room erupted with the noise of gleeful Danvers sisters. They shouted and hugged and ran around the room and watched as the team did more or less the same on the TV screen. Maggie walked in during the celebrations, finding Kara upside down, back against the ceiling of the apartment, giggling her head off.

“Li’ll Danvers! Bad! No hanging out on the ceiling!” She laughed as Kara pouted, then floated back down to the floor. Then Kara flashed over and wrapped Maggie up in a massive hug, picking the tiny detective off the ground.

“Maggiiiiiieee! You have no idea what you missed! WE WON! THIS GAME WAS CRAZY!! She put Maggie down, who promptly grabbed Gertrude to take her for a short walk outside before bed. Kara scolded Alex for her pessimism, and Alex promised she would never doubt this team again. They stayed up the extra thirty minutes or so to watch the gold medal ceremony, neither of them calm enough to sit back down. When Maggie came in, she didn’t even bother interrupting, saying goodnight to Kara before heading into the bedroom with Gerty and
Kara made sure Alex had at least three glasses of water before she headed back home to Lena, who she was sure would be asleep already. She hugged Alex tightly before flying off, enjoying the afterglow of all their celebration. It was the best Danvers sister night they had had in a long time, and she hadn’t realized just how much she had needed it. Alex kissed her forehead, then looked at her knowingly, even through eyes foggy with booze and sleepiness. “Get home safe, Kara.”

“I will. Drink some more water. I’ll drop by with greasy food in the morning.”

“Bless you.”

Kara got home to find Lena fast asleep, as expected, and she was in her PJs and snuggled up to Lena’s warmth in a heartbeat. _Today was a good day._
The meeting was at the end of the day, and Sam had not informed her what it was about, only that it was a matter of pressing concern both professionally and personally. So naturally, Lena had been dreading her 5:00 p.m. all day. Poor Jess had been subjected to Lena’s increasingly temperamental mood as the day wore on, and while she was fully aware of the cause, none of her expert assistant sleuthing could produce an answer as to what the agenda was for Sam’s calendar event.

*Is she quitting?  Can’t stand to even be in the same building with me anymore, I suppose. Too busy superheroing around with my girlfriend.* Lena knew that was petty. Knew she was jumping to conclusions. Hell, she knew the distance between herself and Sam was largely her own fault. But the heart was a tricky, fickle little asshole of a muscle.

When Jess buzzed Sam in, Lena was immediately certain she had never witnessed her friend of over six years walk into a room with such hesitation. Bordering on something like dread. While this did nothing to calm the tempest of emotions and speculation in Lena’s mind, it did give her the sense of having the upper hand. Whatever this meeting was about, Sam was not expecting a positive reaction from Lena. Or at the very least, didn’t know what to expect.

Waiting for Sam to sit across from her before pressing her advantage, Lena was careful to project calm, cold Luthor confidence. As Sam opened her mouth to speak, Lena cut in. “Rather a ballsy move to schedule an end of the day meeting with your boss without any prior discussion or even so much as a subject line.”

Annoyance flashed across Sam’s face for a split second, replaced almost instantly by resignation and a forced pleasantness. Perhaps she had believed this would be like casual meetings of old between the two, equal parts business and pleasure when it was just the two of them. But their relationship hadn’t been like that of late, and Lena didn’t like being put ill at ease all day by a mysterious meeting of unknown purpose. Sam had scheduled a sit down with Lena Luthor, CEO, and that was what she would get. If she had wanted to talk to her *friend*, she should have invited her over for drinks.

“I’m sorry. I thought about a few different ways to potentially have this conversation with you, but honestly, nothing felt right. So, I just added it to your calendar before I chickened out again.” *Again?* There was a sincerity and vulnerability to Sam’s tone that almost slipped past Lena’s defenses. “We just … we need to talk, Lee.”

Lena held strong, leaning back into her throne-like chair imperiously, allowing the trappings of her office to give her a necessary steel. She could feel all her emotions bubbling just under the surface, and she sure as fuck wasn’t ready to give them free rein. Her only response to Sam’s statement was a raised eyebrow. Realizing that she would have to be the one to steer the conversation, Sam took a deep breath and leaned forward, settling her weight forward in the seat across Lena’s desk. “I can’t keep doing this.” *Here we go.* “I can’t be a good mom, girlfriend, CFO—” she paused to lock eyes with Lena, and the deep sorrow behind those soft brown irises threatened to swallow Lena, “—and *friend*, while also trying to use my … powers … to help Supergirl. I don’t have the time or energy, and I refuse to let my relationships suffer because I find myself with this unexpected burden thrust upon me.” *Burden?* Inwardly, Lena scoffed. She had read the interview, seen Kara and Sam smiling brightly in their new *costumes*. *Burden my ass.*

This was exactly what Lena had dreaded. Sam’s shiny new life had no place in it for L-Corp. *For*
Lena. “So, what then? You want to resign? Take some assistant job somewhere, so that you can flit in and out of work as often as you feel the urge for a good bout of vigilantism?” Sam didn’t bother to hide the pain of the jab. “Because I think you’ll find rather quickly that it is difficult to support a child on a superhero’s salary.” A deep sense of self-loathing rocked through Lena, but she couldn’t stop herself. Deep down, she knew that she would support Ruby and Sam financially if she felt the right choice for herself was to be Power Girl full-time, but Lena was acting fully out of hurt and insecurity now.

“What the fuck, Lee?” Lena felt her eyes narrow at Sam’s brazen outburst, even though she knew that she deserved it. “No, I don’t want to quit. Jesus, I can’t believe you would even consider that might be what I want. You know me better than that.”

A tension began rising in her. Lena was as determined to maintain her cool as she was sure that she would lose it soon. “Know you, do I? The Sam I knew believed in what we were doing here. You believed in me, when I told you how I wanted to change LuthorCorp. You believed in my vision. You’ve been my partner in it every step of the way, and now—what? It isn’t enough anymore? Maybe I don’t wear a cape or murder rapists, but I do a hell of a lot of good for the world. Not just National City. But I guess I shouldn’t be surprised that the mundane work of us mere mortals doesn’t hold the same significance with you that it used to.”

Lena couldn’t keep the hurt fully out of her voice. With anyone else, she wouldn’t worry about it, but Sam was right about something. She did know Lena. “I’m not! Fuck, Lena. I’m not abandoning you. I haven’t given up on this, and I don’t believe in you any less. I just have to prioritize. I’m running myself ragged here. I can’t in good conscience commit the same amount of myself to being your CFO as I could have before…” Sam couldn’t bring herself to say it. As far as Lena knew, she hadn’t uttered the word ‘Reign’ aloud since she had freed herself of that ghastly outfit the final time.

Sam continued before Lena could start insulting her again. “I think Kaziah and I should switch roles. You and I both know that she is fully deserving of the promotion, and there’s no way in which this isn’t a win.” My best friend doesn’t want to work directly with me anymore—I definitely wouldn’t call that a win. “Kaziah would be the first openly alien CFO in the country—maybe in the world! We can spin it, rather easily, that I am choosing to spend more time with my teenage daughter in the last few years I have with her before she goes off to college. You and Kaziah both know that I am Power Girl, and with a lighter load, I can contribute to the greater good on both fronts, without straining my relationship with Ruby any further.”

She was absolutely right, from a logistical and PR standpoint. But all Lena could focus on was that Sam was looking to cut Lena out of her life as much as possible. This is just the first step down the inevitable path, a dark voice whispered in her ear. How long before she wanted extra nights with Kara? Before she was less okay with Lena taking care of Ruby? Would it be months—a year—before her superheroes were too caught up in their mission, in their love for each other, in their family, to be bothered with keeping up with the effort of loving Lena. How long before she was right back where she found herself when she first moved to National City—alone with nothing more than her goals and ambition. Why would either of these literal goddesses need to keep her around anymore?

All of Lena’s deepest fears—everything that had been seething and growing under the surface since her synthetic kryptonite had ended Reign but left Sam with all the beast’s powers—felt justified. So, she did what she knew best how to do; she retreated into herself. “Fine.” She tried to make it very clear from her tone that she considered the conversation over, the decision made.

Confusion and turmoil were written all over Sam’s visage. She seemed at a loss for words. Lena
considered that maybe she had expected more of a fight. More derision. Whatever, Lena wasn’t about to beg. Her heart screamed at her to just talk about it, to just admit how much this hurt her. But she wouldn’t allow it. She would hold onto what remaining dignity she had left. She was Lena Luthor. Maybe she had thought, however briefly, that could mean something more for her, but she was hardly surprised to see life reasserting its old patterns again. As much as she strived for it, she would never be anyone’s first priority. Not for long.

Then Sam surprised her again. She said it so softly that Lena almost missed it. “I miss you, Lee.” She got up out of the chair and paced halfway to the couch, before turning back to Lena, eyes fixed on her feet. Then she looked up, eyes pleading. “I don’t understand … w-what exactly I did to deserve this from you. Why you’ve chosen to put this distance between us. But … fuck, I’m done pretending it doesn’t faze me. It hurts. And I’m sorry. I want to fix this. Fix us. I miss you.”

Then why are you leaving me behind?

Lena knew this had started with her own fears about Reign, about Sam. And that it was made worse by her own insecurities. But she was working on it in therapy. She had asked for time. And this was the first time Sam had bothered to say anything about it. Sam had never once pushed her to try to work out their issues. Never once fought to force a fight, to get it all out in the open. To have it out with her, like they would have done in the old days. Lena knew what it felt like to have Sam fight for their relationship. This felt like mere platitudes.

Lena also got up, facing the floor-to-ceiling windows behind her. She was at war with herself. She couldn’t shake the dark voice. The one insisting that everyone leaves eventually. That love actually was a weakness, and one that was inevitably going to bite her in the ass. As much as her heart shouted at her that her love was real, was reliable, she couldn’t shake this obvious and unavoidable truth: her oldest friend and her beloved partner were going to leave her behind. Why wouldn’t they?

She refused to face Sam again. Lena clasped her hands together behind her back, her posture straightening into a statuesque image of confidence and finality. “Fine. Your wish is granted. Kaziah will be an incredible CFO. I will talk to her first thing in the morning, and she and I will decide how and when to announce the news and restructure the department. After all—” she paused, almost convincing herself not to go here, “—she and I have already proven that we make an excellent team. Lest anyone forget that it was technology and brainpower—not superpowers—that put an end to Reign. We’ll be sure to cc you on any important decisions, and Kaziah will let you know when the plan is in place. Now, I have some things I need to take care of, so kindly see yourself out, Ms. Arias.”

Lena’s heart broke as her mouth emphasized the formal name viciously. She felt her shoulders sag just slightly as her conscience berated her relentlessly. But it didn’t stop the spite and irrational fear driving her emotions from muttering one last retort under her breath as she heard Sam open the door to leave. “You may as well go ahead and take Kara from me, too. I can see where this is headed.”

She had no idea if Sam heard her. She hoped not. When Lena turned back to face the room, it was empty. A sob immediately wracked her body, and she crumpled to the floor, leaning back against the harsh cold of the window as all the emotion of the confrontation bled out of her. She had no clue how long she sat there, quietly wailing and hating herself. There was no way that Jess couldn’t hear her, but the assistant was kind enough to leave Lena alone.

Eventually, she collected herself enough to slump back down into her chair, and she set to work, mechanically putting into place the necessary steps for her meeting with Kaziah in the morning. She emailed Jess to set it up. When she finally closed down her computer, over an hour had passed...
since Sam left. Lena didn’t trust herself to look at Jess on her way out of the office, offering a passing goodbye with her eyes locked firmly ahead of her.

Lena was so in her own head that she didn’t even think to ask Jess to have her car ready, but she was unsurprised to see that her assistant had taken care of it. As she did with Jess, she averted her gaze when the driver moved to open her door. A tiny sense in the back of her mind warned her that something felt off, but she couldn’t stand to risk Mark seeing the emotions she didn’t trust herself to keep off of her face. She flung herself in the backseat as quickly as possible, and her entire body slumped into the comfortable leather. She just wanted to be at home in her own bed.

Her mind was so taxed with trying to avoid the thought of talking to Kara about her day that her sudden and immediate realization of what her mind had been trying to tell her was far too late. Just as she noticed the door was locked, she could smell the gas in the air. Her hand was on her watch immediately, but she felt her motor control slip before she could get it open. Her last thought was of Kara as the darkness took her.

Kara could feel the panic consuming her body. She hadn’t expected Lena home on time, not necessarily, after Sam had told her how poorly their meeting went. Neither of them understood why Lena had placed so much distance between herself and Sam, but Sam thought Lena was very clearly still hurting for some reason. She worried that Lena felt as though Sam and Kara would abandon her. Sam hadn’t been eager to share a lot of details, and Kara got the sense that Lena may have really taken her emotions out on Sam. Kara knew she couldn’t let this go on much longer before she felt like she had to intervene. Had to understand what was going on with Lena. But for tonight, she settled for sending Lena a comforting text. She knew that Lena probably needed some space, so she didn’t press the issue. Until it was 1 a.m., and she still hadn’t heard from Lena.

She called several times on Lena’s cell and work phones, then immediately flew to the office. No one was there, and it didn’t look like anyone had been in Lena’s office in hours. That was the point at which Kara began to hyperventilate, and each breath pulled her higher and higher into the air. As she breached the lowest level of cloud cover, she put her hands together over the center of her chest and forced a deep breath in and out. Then again. And again.

Her head cleared slightly. She hasn’t used her beacon. The thought washed over her like a soothing balm. She wouldn’t have hesitated. So, either she is okay … or she was caught off guard. Taken. Kara’s mind went wild again. Sam! She was the last person that Kara knew had seen Lena. Well … Jess had too. She’s the next step, but first…

Sam was asleep, but Kara was in her bedroom, kneeling beside the bed and gently waking her with a soft hand on her cheek in less than a minute. She came out of her slumber softly, and Kara felt a momentary pang of warmth, then regret. Nights where Sam slept peacefully, without being haunted by nightmares of Reign, were few and far between still. Kara wish she hadn’t had to wake her. They locked eyes, and Sam immediately sprung awake. “Kara, baby, what’s wrong?”

“I can’t find her.” Kara knew she was probably overreacted, but it was Lena. “I … I know the meeting didn’t go well, but did she stay in the office after you left? Did you stick around at all?”

Compassion flooded Sam’s bleary chocolate eyes. “Baby, I don’t know. I didn’t stick around. She didn’t come home?” Kara shook her head in frustration. “But she didn’t activate her beacon?” Kara shook her head again, more softly this time. “It’s okay, she’s probably okay. Maybe she went out drinking. Or … did you check the basement lab?” Kara’s eyes widened. She hadn’t been thorough enough in her search. She had panicked. Maybe Lena had just fallen asleep
in the lab. Maybe her phone was on silent. Maybe everything was fine.

“I’ll go check.” Sam rose with Kara, grabbing her wrist before she took off.

“You go to L-Corp, search the whole building, see what you can find. I’ll fly around, check out some of Lena’s hangouts, see if I can hear her. We’ll stay in touch over the comms, okay?” Kara nodded again. “We’ll find her. I promise.” Kara’s heart relaxed from its panic for a split second, filled with love. She kissed Sam quickly, then she was gone. Back to L-Corp.

She started with the basement lab, then searched the entire building. It took her about five minutes, and she found nothing. “Sam, please tell me you found her.”

The response was delayed by a few seconds, and Kara felt her heart race as she waited. “Nothing yet. I wanna check a couple more places. Could you please go leave a note for Ruby, in case she wakes up and I’m gone, and meet me at the DEO. We’ll regroup there.” Kara needed a task, a goal to focus on, so she agreed. She left the note and still beat Power Girl to the DEO. Vasquez was on an overnight shift, so ey was the first person Kara found.

“Lena is missing. We have to find her!” Vasquez looked up in surprise.

“Missing? Are you sure? For how long?”

Sam jumped in. “We don’t know that she’s missing, not yet. We just can’t find her. Supergirl is, understandably, freaking out a little.”

“Of course I’m freaking out! This is Lillian; it has to be. It can’t be a coincidence that Cadmus started dropping videos again, and now Lena didn’t come home.”

“Ma’am, calm down. We’ll figure it out, okay? Now, how long has Lena been missing?”

Sam offered a guess. “We can’t be sure, but as much as eight hours now, potentially. We had a meeting at 5—it was fairly short, and I left at maybe 5:30. I don’t know what happened to Lena after that. I don’t think she would have left immediately, but Jess would know. Lena’s assistant doesn’t leave until Lena does.”

“Jess! That’s where we’ll start!” Kara felt Sam’s hand on her arm, holding her down. Kara’s brow furrowed.

“Supergirl.” Kara sometimes hated being in the DEO with Sam, having to pretend not to be a couple. “She’s asleep, and we don’t know that Lena is actually missing yet. You can reach out to her first thing in the morning.” Kara wanted to fight her. Wanted to scream. Lena was in trouble—who cared if she had to wake up Jess?

“Ma’am?” Vasquez spoke up softly but firmly. “Power Girl is right. No need to wake the civilians just yet. There’s plenty we can do here and now, okay? We’re gonna find your girl.” Kara fisted her hands tightly, knuckles going white. But she kept her feet on the ground. She pulled out her phone and was dialing when Sam’s hand again found her arm.

“Alex is already on her way.” Kara nodded in recognition, but that wasn’t who she was calling. There were four rings before the groggy voice answered.

“Whyyyy?” Winn’s voice was 80 percent whine.

“We need you at the DEO right now, Winn. Get dressed, I’m coming to get you.”
“Kara? What—” Kara hung up. She looked from Vasquez to Sam.

“Get to work. I’m getting backup. We can’t leave her with Lillian.” She didn’t like the doubt she saw in her friends’ eyes, but she didn’t have time to worry about it now. She took off to go get Winn.

Lena was seated in a surprisingly comfortable chair when she came to. There was, however, nothing comfortable about waking up to the sight of her mother watching her predatorily from across the dimly lit room. The elder Luthor had her hair pulled tightly behind her head in a bun and was clad in a fitted, but long, dark trench coat, collar perfectly framing her long, thin neck. A thin smile painted her face, which was held in such a way as to mimic a warmth Lena believed was surely beyond her mother’s emotional capability. They were in some sort of office lounge area, nothing as sophisticated as she was sure her mother would prefer, but sufficiently dark and villainous-looking. She didn’t bother to check, but she was almost certain that the cyborg Hank Henshaw was lurking behind her somewhere.

“Well well, National City’s most eminent and celebrated humanitarian and CEO finally wakes from her slumber. How are you feeling, my darling daughter?” Lillian’s voice was as Lena remembered it, equal parts ice, ire, and impishness. “Now, come give your mother a hug.” Lena was surprised to find that she wasn’t bound in any way, but her heart dropped when she realized that her watch had been taken. She must have managed to get it open slightly before the gas knocked her out, and Lillian took it when she saw it for what it was. “Okay. No hug. Probably too much to ask.”

Lena considered her options. Would Kara have even realized she was missing yet? How long had she been out? She immediately regretted how she had left things with Sam. What if they thought she had simply … run away from her issues?

And even if Kara was looking for her, where did Lillian take her, and why? Lena hated having to play this by ear, but at least she had the use of her hands. She crossed her legs and leaned back in the chair, gazing up at her mother with a look somewhere between boredom and impatience. “Is all this tawdry show of power really necessary, Mother? If you wanted to chat, you could’ve simply made an appointment with my secretary.”

Lillian’s mouth quirked up in a slight smirk. “Oh yes, and I suppose you would have gladly agreed to meet without involving, say, the National City Police Department.”

“Well if I happened to have a friend on the force who just happened to arrive around the same time with a few of her heavily armed pals, that would just be an odd coincidence, I suppose.” Lena relaxed her body, making it abundantly clear that she was not intimidated or otherwise ill at ease with this latest kidnapping. “But, as long as I’m here, you may as well tell me what’s on your mind.”

“Oh believe me, I’ve finally got something that I know you’ll be interested in, dear. Something that will finally open your eyes to the kinds of … creatures … these aliens are.” Oh for fuck’s sake. Really, Mother? Lena couldn’t believe that her mother still hadn’t given up on her, after everything. The fuck does she have that she honestly believes could convince me to turn against my serious live-in, long-term girlfriend? Lena supposed that this was better than Lillian simply wanting her dead. It was almost touching—her mother might be completely mad—genocidal, even—but she still believed in Lena. Wanted her daughter on her side.
“This should be rich. Well, let’s have it, Mom. What’s your big selling point this time? Are they spitting in our food now? Torturing puppies?” A deep and angry growl came from behind her, but Lillian’s eyes immediately shot daggers in the direction of the sound. *Guess I was right about her pet cyborg.*

“’You know, you really hurt me, Lena. No matter how hard I try to show it, you still doubt my love for you. Do you know of any other mother who would kill for her daughter?’” Lena gaped at Lillian incredulously. This was the most out of touch with reality Lena had ever seen her. That, or Lena had finally reached a place where she was simply so unfazed by her Machiavellian manipulation tactics that she recognized the sheer absurdity of the things that came out of Lillian’s mouth.

Lena’s response dripped with sarcasm. “No, I *don’t*. It’s probably a *good* thing for society.” Lena flashed a brilliant smile, tilting her head slightly to make her condescension very clear.

Lillian’s face hardened slightly, her lips pressing together in frustration. “Yes, well, as charming as your jokes are, I think you’ll find that this is no laughing matter.” She picked up a remote from the desk she was leaning on. “This is going to hurt, but I want you to know that it brings me no pleasure having to tell you this. But you deserve the truth. You deserve to know what your … alien paramour … has been up to behind your back. What she really thinks of you.”

The screen on the wall to Lena’s right lit up, displaying a small rectangle of grainy footage, likely from some sort of hidden camera. The video began playing, and while the video quality was poor and there was no sound attached, the subjects of the video were clear. Supergirl and Powergirl making out on the edge of a roof. Lena couldn’t keep the shock off her face, but she refused to face her mother. She needed to believe that the shock was because Lena didn’t know about Kara and Sam.

Lena was surprised that Cadmus had gotten this footage. Surely, there wasn’t anyone on the building with them—their superhearing would have detected any such peeping tom. So, it must be a hidden camera installed innocuously on the building’s roof. But how could they have known the heroes would be there? The video shifted to another shot, this one at night and in an alleyway, but again of Supergirl and Powergirl together. This time they were simply talking, but it was clear from their body language that they were very much in love. Lena felt a pang in her heart, all her earlier insecurities and fears rushing back up into her throat. They just looked so … *right* together. The two Kryptonian heroes. The most amazing women Lena knew.

A few similar videos played, and then a few still images. It became clear that Cadmus had installed or otherwise had access to cameras all over the city, and Lillian had been compiling and stockpiling useful footage for months. The final one was a James Olsen-caliber shot. Lena had no clue how Cadmus had gotten it, but it was of Supergirl and Power Girl wrapped into a tight kiss in midair, with the sun and clouds perfectly captured behind them in a way that almost made the Kryptonians glow. They were posed as if slow dancing together, with Kara’s hands at Sam’s waist and Sam’s arms wrapped around Kara’s neck, golden curls flowing down over the black-clad arms. It was a beautiful shot, one that she knew Kara and Sam would love, if not for the source.

Lena immediately committed to painting a believable cover story. She didn’t know when she might be able to expect a rescue, and she wasn’t about to sit around waiting to be saved. She might not be able to fly, but she was no damsel. Her mother believed she was the master manipulator, but Lena had picked up a thing or two over the years. She would play her mother’s game until she could turn it to her advantage. She pushed herself up from the chair, refusing to look at Lillian but being sure to keep an icy visage on her face. Lena paced, as if processing what she had been shown. As if dealing with the stabbing pain of betrayal, but in a way that indicated she had no
desire for Lillian to see her turmoil. She even briefly wiped at her eye, as if scratching an itch, but she was sure Lillian would believe she was fighting back tears.

“The high and mighty Supergirl, who claims to be so righteous and upstanding, revealed for her true self: a hypocrite. Not only is she working with that monster, she is fucking her behind your back. She pretends to be committed to you, claimed that she would never hurt you, and while you’re hard at work, she’s off cavorting with the devil.” Lillian couldn’t hide the satisfaction in her voice. “Lena, she doesn’t deserve you. That much is clear. I tried to keep you off this path. Her sort are not to be trusted, and while I’m not surprised that she would betray you so callously, I want you to know that I am here for you. I can help you get back at them.”

Lena snapped, “I don’t need your help, Mother. If I want her gone, I can do it myself.”

“Oh, I’m well aware. Don’t think I don’t know about your secret stores of kryptonite, even if I haven’t been able to locate them yet. I’ve had to lay low since the Daxamite invasion, but I’ve kept tabs. I know you’re the one who neutered Reign. Pity how that ended up turning out for you.”

Lena flashed a furious glare at her mother, pouring some very real emotions into the façade she was creating. “You know, I’ll never forget the time Cindy Ryan stole your little girlfriend.” Lillian still said the word ‘girlfriend’ with such distaste. Even when she was ostensibly trying to comfort and placate Lena, to woo her to her side, she couldn’t hide her judgment. Frankly, Lena was a little shocked Lillian knew about Cindy. She had happened a few years after Lillian first caught Lena with a girl, and from that moment until Kara, Lena had worked diligently to stay firmly in the closet. She thought she had sufficiently hidden her exploits, conquests, and flings from Lillian, but clearly she had not.

“ Took you months of planning, but you exacted your revenge. You outed her diary, publicly humiliated her, ruined her life.” Lillian’s voice sounded almost proud as she stalked around Lena, painting a picture of the epitome of Luthor power and control. She grinned as she praised, “It was fantastic.”

Lena rolled her eyes. “I was also nineteen, Mother. Teenage hormones can cause even the best of us to engage in some less than savoury behaviours.”

Lillian tilted her head, gazing down at Lena wryly. “There you go again, devaluing yourself. You know, Lex was brilliant, but he was a hothead.” Lillian halted her pacing, stopping in front of Lena and placing a hand on her arm as she made her impassioned pitch. Lena rigidly held her face in a stony neutrality, as if refusing to let her mother see the inner turmoil. Lena hoped that Lillian would believe her words were having their desired effect. “You’re equally as fiendish, but savvier. You have a cold-blooded talent. You can plot three moves ahead, use your brain. When you finally own that—” she exhaled for emphasis, “—you’ll be great.”

“Other than my apparent poor taste in women, I am great.” Lena held her head a little higher, raising an eyebrow for emphasis on the word ‘am.’

“Perhaps, but your priorities are still out of whack.” Lillian turned, giving Lena a little space to process. “All this work you put into making the world a better place—solving hunger, clean energy, advancements in medical technology—none of it amounts to anything if one overpowered alien can wipe out swathes of the population with a single angry glance.” Lillian paused, glancing back at Lena to gauge her audience. “I’m not asking you to join Cadmus, not yet. But surely we have a common enemy now. Surely you can see that the Kryptonians at least cannot be trusted. They have no moral center, no loyalty. Nothing keeping them from turning on us all, when it suits
their whims.”

Lena turned her head theatrically, as if she was actually considering this, but trying to hide it from Lillian. She turned and walked slowly across the office, holding her body as if all the wheels in her head were turning. As if her cold, angry Luthor lizard brain was slowly burning away whatever love she had felt for Kara. Lillian’s voice came again from behind her, just a bit softer this time.

“I know you, Lena. This betrayal won’t stand. Whatever you might have felt for her before, you loathe this alien. You want to kill her as much as I do.”

Lena stiffened, halting her slow stride as if caught off guard by Lillian’s blunt suggestion. She lowered her head just enough for the movement to be visible. She whispered, “Even if that were true, I’d never act on it.”

Lillian’s voice became stronger, more confident, as it filled with a feigned sweetness. “Which is why you need your mother. I won’t let you deal with this betrayal alone. Finally, we can work together. Please let me prove to you how much I love you.”

Lena glanced back at Lillian, warm tears brimming in her eyes without falling. “Okay,” she whispered, filling her voice with doubt and confusion. She was met with the exact reaction she wanted. Lillian’s eyes flashed in triumph, and a smile broke across her face.

“Good girl.” She stood and gestured towards the door, which made a loud and obvious click as it unlocked. The face that greeted her, holding the door open for the exiting Luthors, caught her completely off guard, and she gasped in shock and dismay.

It was Jeremiah Danvers.
Memories That Haunt

Sam was doing her best to take care of Kara, but it was difficult with her own emotional turmoil raging. It was almost noon, and Kara hadn’t slept at all. Sam had left briefly to be there when Ruby woke up to get her fed and to school, and Vasquez had gone home to crash around 9:00. Otherwise, everyone had been working nonstop to find Lena. It became clear when the resources of the DEO were insufficient to track her down in the first hour that Kara's fears were legitimate.

Winn hacked into cameras around L-Corp, and they were able to see when Lena left the building in one of her chauffeured cars. Kara pointed out immediately that she didn’t recognize the driver—it definitely wasn’t Lena’s usual driver, Mark. A quick search and facial recognition software made it very clear that whoever the mystery driver was, he didn’t match any employee of the car company employed by Lena. Winn was able to track the movements of the car to the outskirts of town, but they lost it there.

At that point, Kara had freaked out about Lena not activating her beacon. “Winn, can you track it? I know that we made it so Lena could call to me if she needs me, but can it work the other way around?”

Winn’s face crinkled with consideration. “Maybe … give me some time to work on it.” He eventually figured it out—Sam was quickly learning not to doubt Winn’s technical expertise or creativity—but unfortunately, it didn’t get them anywhere. Kara found the destroyed watch abandoned on a road, right where the signal cut out. She didn’t return immediately, and Sam had found her on the balcony of the penthouse.

Sam collapsed to the balcony floor next to her, wrapping the sobbing and distraught young woman up tightly in her arms. Kara’s tears were hot enough that Sam could feel them through the lining of her cape and suit. The remains of Lena’s watch were held tightly in Kara’s right hand. Sam rubbed her back. “Let it out, babe. It’s okay, just let it out.” Her other hand climbed to the back of Kara’s head, stroking through her hair and holding her firm and safe. “Let it out, then we’ll regroup. We’ll find her. No giving up.”

Kara’s sobs died down, and she pulled back to look Sam in the eyes. Sam pulled back her wig and cowl, so that it was just her and Kara in this moment. No secret identities; nothing hidden between them. Watery blue eyes drew strength from resolute brown ones. Sam couldn’t be sure how long they had sat there in silence, holding each other without breaking their shared gaze. Long enough that the air around them warmed and the sky transitioned from a nearly black navy to a thin royal blue. The balcony was on the west side of the building, so they couldn’t see the sunrise, but they could both feel it. Something shifted in Kara’s eyes, and she nodded. It was a small movement, but it was steady. Sam nodded back, and they stood together, Sam slipping her Power Girl disguise back into place before they took off for the DEO again.

Unfortunately, that was hours ago, and they still had no idea where Lena was. Kara had withdrawn to a training room to destroy things, and Sam was left pacing the DEO, trying to wrap her mind around the many conflicting feelings raging through her. She was still angry and hurting after the way Lena treated her yesterday. Even when she had broken up with Sam, Lena never treated her like this. She had pushed her away, put up walls—but she was never petty. Never attacked her like yesterday, never actively tried to put her down.

Sam thought back to that time. It was among the three most difficult periods in her life. She jumped a little at the hand that suddenly came to rest on her shoulder, however gentle the touch was. She had been so lost in thought that she hadn’t noticed Alex come up behind her.
“Sorry! I can’t remember the last time I managed to actually sneak up on a Kryptonian.” Alex made an ‘oops’ face that was almost comical. “Saw you pacing around and thought maybe you might wanna do some of that thinking out loud. Bounce some ideas off a friend.”

Sam considered it. “Yeah, maybe.” Alex led her off to a conference room where they could chat uninterrupted. “You know, even though I feel like I see you as Power Girl more often these days than I do Sam, it’s still a little weird. Like, your eyes and your voice don’t quite fit because I expect … well, just Sam, not all the red hair and fancy materials.”

“Well, then, I guess that just means we’re actually friends now.” Sam smiled softly. “Rather than just work associates. Or you know, sister’s girlfriend.”

Alex smirked, taking a seat and easing her feet up onto the table casually. “So, what’s going on in that head of yours?”

“A lot. Too much,” Sam blurted out without thinking. She had no clue where to start, so she figured she would just go full stream of consciousness and let out whatever first came to mind. “Did you know that Lena and I used to date?” The shock all over Alex’s face was all the answer Sam needed, so she continued. “Yeah. I mean … it was a long time ago. Years. We started as lovers, not friends.”

Sam resumed her pacing. “Before Kara, Lena was the only person I had ever really loved. I mean … romantic love. Obviously, I love Ruby. Lena … well, you’ve met her. I’m sure Kara has talked your ear off about her. She’s … incredible. When she was younger, she had a slightly different kind of vibe about her—she still had all the hang ups, all the tremendous problems borne out of being raised in that family, but when I met her, she was just an up and coming scientist and engineer. She was going to change the world. Lena just sort of exuded this youthful ambition that was oh so captivating.”

Blowing out an exasperated breath as her mind instantly corrected her, Sam spun and rushed to counter her own assertion. “I mean, look, when I first met her, I wouldn’t give her the time of day. Lena Luthor. I didn’t care that she was gorgeous. LutherCorp was my big chance to prove myself—you have no idea how hard I worked to get that chance without sacrificing a good childhood for Ruby. And even though we were in different departments, I was terrified that Lena was the competition. That I was going to be judged against the genius heiress whose name was on the letterhead. I wasn’t having any of that shit.”

“How did you end up dating her then?” Alex’s tone made it clear her curiosity had been piqued.

“She proved me wrong.” Sam grinned at the memory. “I think she was captivated by me from the moment we met. I mean, maybe I’m a raging narcissist, but also she was trying to covertly get into my pants almost immediately, so I can’t be entirely wrong. As much as I didn’t take her seriously, who else was I going to bond with? Things at the company were starting to change under Lex, but the place was still drowning in the vestiges of Lionel’s old boy club. And I’m stubborn, but I’m still open-minded. I realized that I was wrong about her pretty quickly.”

Sam sighed, leaning back against the glass wall of the room. “Lena wasn’t out of the closet back then, and the secrecy was incredibly sexy, at least at first. The romance was a whirlwind, like something out of a movie. Lee made me feel like I could conquer the world. She looked at me like I was a goddess, and that was before I could fly and shoot lasers from my eyes. I fell for her. Hard and fast.”

“Then … why the breakup? She wasn’t ready to be out?”
“That was a big part of it, yeah. Six months isn’t a necessarily a long time to be dating, but what we had was real. You know how it is when you just know that? And I mean … I couldn’t even tell Ruby. Not that Lena wasn’t wonderful with Ruby! She just thought that we were best friends.” Sam paused, feeling that familiar ache in her chest even after all these years. “I was so in love with her, and it broke me to keep hiding it. I felt like I would never be as important to Lena as her public appearance or her career ambitions. And also … Lena can be a really hard person to love.”

“And yet two of the most amazing women I know have both been in love with her, so …” Alex sounded a little confused, and Sam knew that her story wasn’t helping with Alex’s current frustration with Lena, kidnapping or no.

“Come now, Alex. I said Lena is a hard person to love. She’s very easy to fall in love with.” Alex rolled her eyes at the distinction. “Seriously, I gotta give insane props to Kara. I think I was a little captivated with her before I even met her. The way Lena talked about her. I … am still a little astounded that Kara broke through to her. Lena had so many walls up. Still does, in some ways. But … even beyond the coming out thing, Lena just wasn’t ready for love back then. Wasn’t ready to let me in, to share her life with me. Not like that anyway. I couldn’t … I wanted her to be a part of my life. I hadn’t made a connection that strong with anyone since my mom kicked me out at 17. And I knew that we weren’t going to work as a couple, so I broke it off. So that I could heal, and we could … reframe things. Build on a sturdier foundation.”

She glanced over at Alex, who appeared to be processing something. She glanced around, just to be sure no one was listening. “Sam, are you … still in love with Lena?”

The question was an obvious one. Sam was clearly affected deeply by Lena’s capture, and the first thing she wanted to talk about was their romantic history. Of course Alex would ask that. But it still caught her completely off guard. “No. I mean… well. I think I’ll always be a little in love with Lena. But … you know how things are now. How she treats me.”

“We can’t save her if we can’t find her. And we can’t find her. Nothing is working, and the DEO is out of large concrete blocks for me to crush.” Sam’s heart broke all over again at the fear haunting Kara’s baby blues. She had her arms around Kara before the words were fully out of her
mouth. Kara hugged her back, but her heart clearly wasn’t in it. Her body was limp, her listlessness giving away her waning hope. “I don’t know what else we can do. Winn’s got nothing. J’onn’s got nothing. I can’t … Sam, I can’t hear her.” Kara’s voice broke and fell out as she tried to get out the last sentence.

Alex stepped closer to them both, and Sam was immediately worried by the strange look in her eyes. She looked at Sam with complete and utter sympathy. Nope, Sam didn’t like that look at all. “I think I might have an idea.”

“And you’re sure I’m not going to like it. Spit it out, Alex.”

“Okay, but I’m really sorry, Sam.” She glanced back and forth between the Kryptonians, before fixing back on Sam. “How much do you remember from Reign?”

Fuck. Sam didn’t want to talk about this. Not at all. Not ever. She looked at Alex incredulously, then shook her head and walked away from the Danvers sisters, back into the conference room. She refused to look back at them, but she forced out an answer to Alex’s question. “I don’t know. Some. I work really, really hard not to remember any of it.”

Okay,” came the response from behind her. “But … again, I am really sorry, but I have a thought. Reign only killed violent criminals. We know that. Confirmed it. So … she must have been meticulous in her research. She made no mistakes. Where did she get her information? How could she be sure every time? I wonder … if maybe she had some sort of Kryptonian supercomputer working for her. Or something like that.”

Sam’s body tensed. She lost her breath for a second, as her chest grew tight. A panicked voice in her head screamed to just get out of there, burst through the ceiling at mach four, do whatever it took, just get the fuck away from this line of questioning. She could feel the shift in the air as her body prepared itself for flight.

But she controlled herself. Found her breathing. Reminded herself that Lena needed her. Kara needed her. The beast is gone. She’s gone. She’s gone. She’s gone. Kara’s hand was on her arm, and out of sheer instinct, Sam reacted by pulling her arm forcefully away. She was across the room before she realized it.

“Kara … I’m sorry.” Sam still couldn’t face either of them. “I just … please, give me some space right now.” She shook both her hands in the air, trying to wring out the stress flowing through her. “There’s a place. In the desert. It’s like … a big crystalline structure, the size of a building. Kind of a fortress. That’s where Reign would go sometimes. I … there’s something there. I—” Sam struggled with her memories.

<A dark cavernous room.>

<A conversation with a dark woman. She confirmed the misdeeds of a rapist who had escaped justice. Was convicted of assault but only sentenced to six months in jail. Got off after three for ‘good behaviour.’ The woman was … Reign could see through her as she left to enforce the justice this society failed to complete.>

<A hologram.>

<The man’s head melted in seconds as her vision burned through his skull. She impaled the remains through the middle of the back, leaving the corpse hanging on the pole holding up the intersection lights at the street corner where she found him.>
The pleasure of the kill radiated through her body. 

Sam collapsed to the floor, screaming in horror at her actions. She could smell the burning flesh and bone. She was a monster. She enjoyed that kill. It felt so good to end that little shit’s life, she could still feel how good it felt. She slammed her fist into the floor in frustration, shaking the foundations of the building and punching clean through to the next floor. “Fuck.”

Alex and Kara were beside her. She could sense that they wanted to comfort her but were trying to respect her request for space. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry,” she gasped, her breath uneven. “I killed him. He needed to die. I killed him.” I killed him. I killed her. She was in the way. I had to put her down. No Kara, no. “No. I didn’t. I did. I shouldn’t have… I’m sorry. I’m so so sorry.”

“Sweetie, it’s okay. It’s okay. What’s … tell me how to help you.” Kara’s voice was desperate. It brought Sam back to the moment, to the real world. She shook her head, trying to free herself of the horrifying memories.

“I … I’m okay. I … remember. She had some sort of hologram helping her. I’m guessing that’s your supercomputer. Maybe that heinous bitch can find Lena, but … Kara you’re gonna have to play with the Kryptonian tech in there. The hologram is one of those cultists, and she isn’t gonna fucking help us. Trust me, I’ve talked to her before, the one time I became lucid while in that place.”

“Okay. Well, we’ve got a plan at least. But … Sam, sweetie, I need to know that you’re okay.” Suddenly, Sam’s vision was filled with worried blue eyes. Her heart flooded with warmth.

“Kara … please just … I can’t. Please don’t make me. I can’t go in…” She couldn’t even finish the thought. Kara smiled at her understandingly.

“You get me there, and that’s all I need. I’ll handle the rest, I promise.”

It looked just like Kal’s fortress in the arctic, but it had taken on the sandy colour of the desert around it. As soon as it came into view, she halted. Sam settled next to her, anxiety radiating off of her. Kara wrapped one arm around Sam’s waist and lovingly stroked Sam’s cheek with the other hand. “Thank you.” Sam leaned her head into Kara’s hand, seemingly drawing strength from Kara’s touch. “I love you, so much. Thank you for being so brave. You did good, and I am so sorry to make you relive any of this. But you’ve done your part. I’ve got this now. You never have to see this place again, if you don’t want to. Go home, see if there’s anything you can do there. I’m sure there’s a cat in a tree that could use saving, at least.”

Sam chuckled, cracking a slight smile. She hugged Kara tightly, pulling back just enough to look her in the eyes when she said, “We’re going to find her. I’ll get the DEO team ready to go. You just let me know when you find her, and we’ll meet you there, Supergirl.” Kara smiled brightly, and in that moment, she had complete faith that they were going to save Lena. Sam leaned in and kissed her, then took off. Five words settled into Kara’s ears in Sam’s wake: “I love you too, Blondie.”

Kara turned to face Reign’s fortress, filled with warmth and strength. She was so inspired by her girlfriend’s bravery. If Sam could face those memories and this place, Kara could figure out how to force a cultist Kryptonian hologram to find Lena, no problem. She felt like she could tackle anything, if that’s what it took to protect the people she loved.
She was inside in a flash, not wasting time with searching the structure. She could bother with that later. As Kara entered the central chamber, which was lit in the *exactly* the sort of dark and oppressive manner that you would expect from a being called a Worldkiller, her eyes were drawn to the raised cult sigil in the center of the room. In a heartbeat, she had crushed it beneath her fists, stamping out the remnants of the monster who had left such lasting scars in her Sam. Then she found the control panel, powered by the missing crystal Sam had found in her pod. It was raised almost entirely out of the depression that housed it. Kara pressed it all the way in, so that only about three inches remained raised out of the panel. As the interface lit up, Kara quickly found the controls she was looking for.

Across the room, the hologram flickered to life. The cultist was younger than Kara expected, dressed in the heavy black cloak and gown of a priestess. As the woman turned and caught sight of the cracked remains of the sigil, her eyes flashed and her brow furrowed. “What blasphemy is this?!” She noticed Kara, her face shifted from a confused rage to a defined scowl. “Ah. Kara Zor-El, of the corrupt House of El. How did you discover this place?”

Kara snorted. *She has no idea,* Kara thought, recollections of Medusa leaping to mind unbidden. “How I got here is unimportant, cultist. Tell me what your purpose is.”

The hologram scoffed, signaling very clearly that Kara could not expect any real compliance from the construct. Nevertheless, she answered the command. “I am here to guide and support the glorious mission of our dark goddess.”

“And how do you accomplish these goals?”

“Through whatever means necessary.”

“But specifically. What use are you?”

“Do not think you can manipulate me, *Supergirl.*” She used the name derisively. “My capabilities are of no concern to you. They are for Reign alone.”

“And if I told you I was working with Reign now?”

“I know lies when I hear them.”

“Fine. We’ll have to do this the hard way.” Kara moved back to the panel and ejected the crystal, which was the primary source of power and control for the entire structure. The lights dimmed to nothing, and that’s when Kara noticed it. There was a hole in the ceiling of the structure, shining sunlight down into the dark cavern. She wondered if Sam did that. She’d have to ask later; no time to ponder it now. She flew up and out in an instant, blasting northward at her full speed.

It took Kara only about thirty minutes to return from Kal’s fortress, with a different crystal in hand. “Alright, let’s see how much of an attitude you have this time.” The crystal was the same type as the fortress’s power crystal, but this one was attuned to the members of the House of El. Kara hoped this worked, saying a silent prayer to Rao as she inserted the new crystal. The fortress came back to life around her, but this time the ominous red lighting was replaced by the clean white-blue light of Kal’s fortress. She again activated the hologram and was again met with a scowl.

“I grow tired of your feeble attempts to—”

“Shut up.” Kara said it calmly, but firmly, and the hologram immediately complied. Anger flashed across her face.
“I am a tool of the great Reign. You will not corrupt me in this way. I refuse—”

“You will refuse nothing, and you will never see Reign ever again.” Kara stalked angrily towards the hologram, her eyes orange and hot. “She is gone. Destroyed. Only Sam is left, and I swear to Rao I will never let you harm her again. She has suffered enough in the name of your lost cause. Now, you’re going to tell me what I want to know, and I’ll figure out what to do with you later.”

“Lies. Blasphemy. The Worldkillers cannot be destroyed. Reign is so far beyond you and your pathetic Samantha Ari—”

“Shut. Up,” Kara screamed. The hologram went silent again. “Samantha Arias is one of the bravest, kindest, most determined and amazing people I’ve ever met. Reign’s name doesn’t deserve to be said in the same breath as Samantha Arias. Your goddess is gone, whether you believe it or not, and she was defeated by the sheer brilliance and willpower of a human and a Coluan. She was cast out and erased by Sam’s friends. Her family. And I forbid you from insulting Sam ever again.” She glared at the cultist, who glared right back. “Now, if we’re done with the pleasantries, tell me how you procured information for Reign. How did you confirm the guilt of her victims?”

The hologram’s voice was tight with fury and resistance, but she answered. “I have full and unlimited access to nearly all public and private information on this planet.”

“Perfect. I need you to find someone.”

“I refuse.”

“Yeah sure, good luck with that. Lena Luthor is the one who defeated your Reign. She is the best of what humanity has to offer. I almost pity you and your kind, with your twisted views on perfection and superiority. Lena Luthor is more of a goddess than Reign ever could’ve been. Now, tell me where to find her, and tell me right damn now.”
Lena's Moment

Lena had no clue how her mother managed to keeping finding large enough venues to house her secret Cadmus bases while also remaining completely hidden from even the DEO. Cadmus had to have supporters inside the U.S. government, she was sure of that much. She more or less hated the woman at this point, but she couldn’t deny that Lillian was incredibly resourceful.

“Obviously, I can’t show you everything right away. We may be temporarily aligned against the Kryptonians, but I’m not about to just forget your behaviour since our dear Lex was taken from us. You’ll have to earn my trust slowly if you decide to actually join us here at Cadmus. Suffice to say, we’ve been biding our time, but we’ve certainly not been idle since the Daxamite invasion.”

Lena pretended she was considering—seriously, but not too seriously—her mother’s comments. She hadn’t decided yet whether this was to be a one-time performance or if taking down her mother might require a longer con than that. She was prepared for either—whatever it took to take her mother down once and for all. And to protect Kara and Sam.

Kara.

Lena kept her demeanor steely, but her heart broke all over again. Kara—and Alex—were going to be crushed. She stole a glance at the cyborg to her right. The second cyborg. Jeremiah’s face was still intact, as far as Lena could tell, but the rest of him was all robotics and tech. The Cadmus alterations were far more extensive than with Henshaw, and Lena honestly couldn’t tell whether Jeremiah was working for them of his own accord anymore. Or even if some part of him was still in there, really.

He hadn’t said two words to her since she arrived, and she couldn’t get a good read on him. She hadn’t trusted him before these modifications, not after how he manipulated Kara and Alex so thoroughly. Even though he had turned on Lillian to help Alex board the refugee ship, these modifications changed everything. At minimum, he was under Lillian’s control, but it was entirely possible that Cadmus had completely altered his personality, whether by turning him into an unthinking robot or a devoted Cadmus fanatic like Henshaw. Who was walking behind her and watching her every move as if she might pull a gun on her mother at any moment. Even though she was sure they had searched her before she woke from whatever gas they had deployed in the car. Lena did her best to keep a sideways glance fixed on Jeremiah—he had become her new priority. She owed that to Kara. To Alex. She hadn’t forgotten her promise to Alex that they were in this together. Then she heard a certain word come out of her mother’s mouth, instantly drawing all of her attention.

“… your stores of kryptonite, of course. Obviously, killing them is the easiest solution, but clearly I have underestimated your creativity, Lena.” She wasn’t yet sure what all Lillian had been talking about—nor did she care—but it was abundantly clear that Cadmus wanted her kryptonite. And apparently her ability to alter and adapt the kryptonite to new purposes. “That is how you tamed Reign’s more murderous tendencies, wasn’t it darling?”

“It was more complicated than that, but that is something similar to the truth of it, yes Mother. I was able to develop a strain of kryptonite that expelled the genocidal side of her personality. The substance is remarkably malleable. Maybe Lex could have discovered that if he wasn’t so single-minded and fanatical.” Lena watched her mother’s face to measure her reaction. Her lips tightened, but it was the only sign that she took offense to Lena’s casual criticism of Lex.
They had walked through a series of hallways, all dark walls and nondescript doors. Some had guards posted; others not. Lena was too distracted by her consideration of Jeremiah—who still hadn’t said a word—to even attempt any sort of casual mapping of the facility in her mind. Now they passed through a large set of doors into a much larger room. It was equal parts command center and hangar. There were no fewer than 10 or 12 vehicles housed in front of massive garage doors, ranging from a sleek Mercedes sedan to a couple of armoured Humvees. All black, because Cadmus knew how to commit to a theme. To their right was a staircase leading up to a large glass and concrete communications hub, filled with agents in dark clothes. *Is she about to let me go, just like that?*

Lillian halted, turning back to Lena. The cyborgs took up positions by the door. Her mother looked her right in the eyes, the tightness around her eyes and lips gone. “Well, that’s precisely what I meant, Lena. You have a temperament that I think I underestimated in favour of your brother. His devotion to the cause was remarkable, but it’s your creativity and patience that could end up being the difference for us. I … was wrong about you, Lena. I am sorry for underestimating you.” The fact that Lena wasn’t 100 percent sure that Lillian was saying this solely to manipulate her was a testament, perhaps, to the growth her mother had achieved. Some part of her was legitimately trying to connect with Lena, beyond simply manipulating her to serve a particular purpose. Lillian began walking again, leading their little group over to a seating area—well, more of a lounge, really—positioned near the center of the hangar, just below the command center. They took seats opposite each other, and Lillian gestured to the cyborgs to leave them. Jeremiah looked as if he would argue—Lena got the sense that he genuinely deposed Lillian and would sooner cut off his own nose than follow her every whim—but she raised an eyebrow pointedly and moved her hand threateningly to the bracelet on her right wrist. Jeremiah immediately backed off, following Henshaw up to the command center. Lena made note of the exchange—Lillian was controlling him through threat of force, it would appear. Maybe his body was programmed to feel pain at the press of a button.

Lena didn’t show any of this in her body language or expression, easing herself into the surprisingly comfortable chair. A woman appeared suddenly from a door behind her and set piping hot glasses of tea on the table between the Luthor women. “Well, well. I never expected this amount of … humility from you, Mother. I can’t quite fathom what took you so long to see that I am not the consolation prize to Lex. Maybe if you had done so sooner, we wouldn’t have been so at odds my entire life.” *We absolutely would have.* “Now, do tell. What have you done with the Danvers patriarch? Couldn’t handle having someone around who actually cares about his daughter fully?”

The jab was in character, and Lena couldn’t help it. Plus she needed to assess what was done to Jeremiah without drawing suspicion. Lillian narrowed her eyes, but Lena was sure it was in reaction to Lena’s criticism, not in suspicion.

“Don’t push it, Lena. We’re just starting to get along again.” Lena endured a lingering glower before her mother continued. “Ah yes, Jeremiah Danvers. Such promise until his daughter insisted on being such a fly in the ointment. You know, I tried to recruit Alex to Cadmus? She’s a remarkable woman, incredibly strong. Of course, that was before I knew she shared some of your … less desirable traits.” Lena bristled at the veiled comment about her sexuality.

“But that is beside the point. Yes, I grew tired of Jeremiah’s insolence. No one can say I wasn’t patient. He had over a decade to get with the program, and I truly believed he was there until the incident with Alex and the trash we were sending off planet. *The alien refugees you tried to forcibly deport, you mean?* “After that, I had a choice to make. Kill him or make him more … compliant. I chose the latter. He still has a role to play in the coming fight. And he can be of
“How so?” Lena kept her voice neutral. She was hoping that her mother’s tendency to brag and speechify would get the better of her.

“He should serve as perfectly adequate bait once we have a plan in place for destroying your … ex. Not to mention that he is quite the capable soldier now. And if he steps out of line—” she glanced down at her wrist, “—I make sure that he regrets it thoroughly.” Lena was disgusted by the pleasantness, the sheer pride, in Lillian’s voice, as she described casually torturing someone who had previously been a good man. “How delicious would it be to have him be the one to take out Supergirl. Assuming you don’t want that pleasure for yourself, of course.” Lena worked hard to hide the revulsion she felt at the increased joy in her mother’s tone at the thought of Kara’s demise by Lena’s hand. She couldn’t let her façade fall apart now.

“So … you already have a plan in mind?”

“Well, as I was saying earlier—” Lena winced, Lillian making it very clear that she knew Lena wasn’t paying attention before, “—I had hoped that you would share your kryptonite, and we could find a way to have a little fun before we destroy that awful girl and her cohorts.”

“I’m not quite sure I’m ready for that yet, Mother. I’m in this … but as I said before, I can handle it myself. I’m not entirely sure why I need you, or your pet cyborg. I’ll be perfectly sufficient bait myself, when I’m ready. I’m not entirely convinced I can trust something like kryptonite with someone who is so … emotional.” Lena didn’t bother hiding the derision in her voice—on this particular topic, she and her character were on the same page.

Lillian, to her credit, was almost successful at hiding her inner rage at Lena’s insolence. “Trust me, Lena, I’ve more to show you. Before I release you—and yes, I will release you—I intend to make it abundantly clear how many advantages there will be if you finally take your rightful place at my side.”

Lena couldn’t hide her surprise. She was playing her part better than she could’ve hoped—she never actually believed she would be able to just talk her way out of this base. Alas, Lillian wasn’t finished. “But first, I have to try to understand. Lena, how could you change the name of the company?”

Lena almost snickered. Of all things that is what Lillian was concerned with? “Really, Mother? Nearly two years, and you’re still up in arms about a name? This is exactly what I’m trying to get you to understand. The name is a tool. You’re far too emotionally invested in a symbol. Changing the name bought me tremendous public good will, and the company is more profitable than ever. Which are things that actually help me accomplish my goals. Your pride and blind stubbornness get you absolutely nothing of worth.”

Lillian looked less than inspired by Lena’s explanation, and Lena didn’t bother hiding her delight at getting under Lillian’s skin. However, her snide response was interrupted with a bang. Literally. Lillian’s mouth was still open, retort dead on her lips, as Lena’s girlfriend burst in through the roof, in all her Supergirl glory. Lena wasn’t sure Kara had ever looked any more beautiful than she did at that moment. But she kept her face locked in full Luthor mode. At least until she was sure Lillian couldn’t escape again. Taking a deep breath to steel herself, she stayed in character and offered Kara a snide, “Supergirl, welcome to our evil lair. I see your flair for destruction hasn’t waned—is it really so hard to use the front door?”

Kara’s face fell, and she looked at Lena incredulously. Lillian cackled, standing slowly before
taunting the hero. “Lena sees you for who you really are, Kryptonian. Your spell over her is broken.” Kara looked crestfallen, briefly, before a look of sheer determination took over her visage. “Oh, you don’t believe me? Tell her yourself, Lena.”

Lena’s heart fell out of her chest. She didn’t want to do this to Kara, not even for a second. But she had to keep her eyes on the prize. She followed Lillian’s lead, standing and strutting over to stand next to her, facing down Kara with a look of pure disdain. “Mother is right. The jig is up, Kara. I know that you betrayed me. I know that you’ve been cheating on me with Reign—” Lena hoped Kara would take note of her pointed use of the wrong name, “—and I finally see now. I see the truth. That you Kryptonians are incapable of real love.”

Kara’s entire body shrunk, and her brow her furrowed in pain and confusion. Fortunately, Lena was saved from Kara’s devastated face by the sudden appearance of Power Girl at her side. Lillian smirked. “Speak of the devil—” She was interrupted by the very loud entrance of an entire squadron of DEO agents blowing up the hangar door and rushing in to surround them, led by J’onn and Alex. Henshaw leapt down from above, taking a protective stance at Lillian’s side, and Lena could hear a number of the agents above them pointing guns at the heavily armed intruders.

“Oh, the other Danvers, well isn’t this a pleasant surprise.” Lena cringed inwardly. Lillian was enjoying this game, and Lena knew what came next. She didn’t want the sisters to have to find out this way. She kept the tears out of her eyes but could feel her resolve cracking. She wanted nothing more than to run to Kara, to wrap her hand around her waist and support her through this. “I guess it is the perfect time for a family reunion.” Lillian gestured dramatically, and Jeremiah leapt down, settling in on the other side of Henshaw. Lena thought she read pain and regret on his face, but she didn’t know the man well enough to be sure.

“Dad!” Alex jumped to run to him, but J’onn caught her by the arm.

“Alex, no. Look at him.”

“Alex, honey, I am so—” Jeremiah’s heartfelt apology was interrupted as he leaned forward, grimacing in pain. Lena’s eyes immediately fell to Lillian’s wrist, and sure enough, her left thumb was pressed into the bracelet.

“That’s quite enough, Jeremiah; I thought you had gotten better about not speaking unless spoken to.” Lillian turned her attention back to Alex, malevolence glittering in her eyes. “As the Martian has so astutely noticed, we have made certain improvements to your dear ole dad. I think you’ll be quite impressed with them. Cadmus is happy to welcome you into our ranks, Agent Danvers, if you would like to finally take your rightful place at your father’s side. Look at how much happier Lena is now that she’s come to her senses.” Lena knew she should affect some sort of smirk, to play along with her mother’s game, but she couldn’t bring herself to look at Alex with anything other than genuine remorse. She was unsurprised by Alex’s reaction.

If looks could kill, Alex would have just murdered both Luthor women. Lena’s heart broke for the woman who had become like a sister to her. She didn’t deserve this pain. Alex threatened, “I’ll kill you for this.” Lena wasn’t sure the comment was directed solely at Lillian. “Dad! Please, Dad, please, tell me you’re alright.” Jeremiah didn’t move at all, but regret painted every feature of his face.

“You know, Lena, I suppose you were right about emotions. Taking them out of the equation has certainly made Mr. Danvers here a more loyal soldier.” Kara’s eyes glowed orange, and Lena felt her icy façade come undone. She worried that if she wasn’t standing so close to Lillian, Kara would have already pulled a Reign and melted her face off. Lillian certainly deserved it, but cold-
blooded murder would have destroyed Kara. Lena reacted, her love for Kara overriding any desire to continue the charade.

She took a forceful step forward and shouted, “Kara, no! You’re better than this.” Orange gave way to blue again, and Kara breathed in deeply. A flash of relief crossed her face. Lena avoided looking back at her mother but could feel the anger radiating off of her. **Guess she was really buying the spurned lover routine.**

“Enough of this. Power Girl, get Lena out of here. Keep her safe!” Sam hesitated for only a moment—Lena was sure she wanted to be here to support Kara and Alex, but she also couldn’t risk giving away her identity, especially around Lillian.

As Sam moved to grab her, Lena shouted to her hero, “Kara, be careful! I don’t think she has kryptonite, but do **not** underestimate her! And I’m sorry, love, but you can’t trust Jeremiah! I don’t think he’s in there anymore.” Then she was out of the building and into the air, Sam’s superpowered arm the only thing separating her from the chilly twilight of the evening sky.

“Sam!” Lena shouted over the roar of the wind. “We have to go back! We have to help them!” The response was immediate and emphatic.

“No! You’re the priority. Kara will be distracted enough by Jeremiah; she needs to know you’re safe. **I** need to know you’re safe.”

Lena’s eyes widened at the admission. She could feel her heart pounding in her chest. Lena was grateful they had come for her so quickly, but she was terrified for Kara. Even if she, J’onn, and the DEO were capable of taking down the cyborgs and Cadmus agents, Kara and Alex were up against an impossible emotional battle. Yet, Lena also envied them in a way—part of her still very much wanted to be back there, to be the one to decide her mother’s fate. To end her.

And then there were her feelings about the woman holding her aloft right then. Sam’s arm held Lena tight to her side. It was so similar to flying with Kara—on the few occasions Kara didn’t carry her bridal-style—and yet so different. If she closed her eyes, she could almost imagine it was Kara carrying her home. But Sam’s scent was so distinctive, so familiar after all these years. It was so strange.

Part of her was amazed that Sam even came. Lena felt tears well up in her eyes as she remembered the awful things she had said, but here Sam was, saving her life. Holding her tight as if she was precious cargo. Lena felt her breathing increase, syncing up with her racing heartbeat. She knew she was hyperventilating, but she couldn’t stop herself.

“Lena! Hold on. We’re almost to the DEO! Please, just hold on.” Sam’s other hand came to rest on Lena’s chest, trying to calm her. That was when the first sob wracked Lena’s body. She heard Sam whisper, “fuck it,” and then they were descending. Sam set her down, and she crumpled to the ground. Sam was immediately right there in front of her, cowl and wig gone, and Lena was wrapped up in her arms in an instant, giving into the sobs that overtook her body.

She felt Sam’s hand on her back, rubbing soothingly. It did nothing to assuage her guilt, and she only cried that much harder. “Lena, it’s okay. We found you. We got you.” Her other hand moved to Lena’s hair, holding her head firmly. “I got you.”

Lena couldn’t take it anymore. She tried to get the words out. “I— S-S-Sam, I …” Another sob choked off her words. She tried to catch her breath, tried to calm down enough to admit it. Lena didn’t know if she had ever felt this out of control. “Sam, I a-a-am s-s-so—” she took a deep breath, steadying herself but only slightly, “so s-sorry.” Sam’s eyebrows raised in surprise, then
her whole face fell.

She moved back from Lena, as if suddenly worried she might break her. Sam’s fists tightened, and she took a moment before she said anything. “I’m not sure you have anything to apologize about. I see that now. I see everything clearly.” She wouldn’t meet Lena’s gaze, and her voice was so soft. So defeated. “I know… I know that you don’t see me as your friend anymore. When you look at me … all you see is her.” No, Sam, no that isn’t true. You’re not! Lena couldn’t get the words out; she could only listen in horror as Sam drowned in her own self-hatred.

“You were right. I know that now. Know that I’m a monster.” Her voice cracked, and now they were both crying. “But I’m trying to be w-worthy of her love. To do as much good as possible—” she shook her head angrily, “—as if it is even possible to cleanse my hands of the gallons of blood they’re stained with. You’re right not to trust me.” Lena’s heart felt as though it shattered into a million pieces. She reached out and took Sam’s hand.

“You’re not a monster. This is on me. I made you feel this way, at the worst possible time. When I should have been there for you most.” Sam allowed Lena to pull her closer, and Lena put a hand on her cheek, lifting her face so that brown eyes met green ones. Neither of them could stop crying. “Samantha Arias, you are incredible. You are not Reign. You are not a monster. You’re the most resilient person I have ever met, love.”

Sam’s watery eyes stayed fixed on Lena’s. She was listening at least. This was all Lena’s fault; she had to get through to her. “That’s what bonds all three of us, you, me, and Kara. We’ve been through so much, each of us—so much loss, pain, and devastation. But we always get back up. We grow stronger for it. We all come out the other side, but we can only do it together.” Lena smiled through her tears, and Sam’s eyes brightened, even as her face continued to hold its doubtful expression. “But look, my struggles are nothing compared to yours and Kara’s. You hear me, Samantha? You are both so so strong.” She grinned wistfully. “And now you’re literally strong, and you’re this gorgeous, amazing superhero couple. And you can understand her in ways I can’t —“ Lena knew she was rambling, but she was on a roll now, “—and why do either of you even want me in your life when you’ve got each other?”

Lena broke again. She looked away, her face drowning in tears. She hated herself. Her shame and insecurity. And jealousy. “I know, I know, that I am being absurd. I am so sorry for how awful I have been to you. How terrible I have made your life, and Kara’s. I am the monster for putting you through this, but I just …” Lena took in a deep breath but wasn’t able to halt her tears. “I don’t … I don’t understand where I fit anymore. You two don’t need me anymore.”

Superspeed was a crazy thing. She found herself in Sam’s arms again before she could breathe. Her hand was firm on Lena’s cheek, and there was maybe an inch of space between them now. Sam’s eyes were fervent. “Lee. Of course we need you. Is that really what this was all about?!?” Sam’s voice was passionate and insistent. “You don’t need powers. And our powers don’t define us. Babe, you are the best of us.”

Lena felt the warmth permeate her body. The adrenaline continued to course roughly through her, and suddenly she could feel all the energy barely contained by the tiny space between them. All of her insecurities, all of her doubt and fear and out of control emotion, had been off base—but it was all still there, and it threatened to overwhelm the both of them. Maybe it wasn’t jealousy or insecurity, not at the core of it. Maybe …

Before Lena could think about it, her lips were on Sam’s. It was as if the only gravity that existed in that moment was the force between their two bodies. The kiss was desperate and passionate, as
if all the emotions that had been tearing them apart from each other were now sewing them together in the best possible way. A low growl escaped her throat as her body screamed for Sam. The taste of her lips. The scent of her hair all around Lena. The feel of her hand in Lena’s hair, and her other wrapped tightly around her lower back. Her body struggling to press itself as tightly to Lena’s as possible. Their tongue tracing agonizingly incredible shapes together.

Her hands roamed across Sam’s body, and it all felt so familiar. So right. The electricity between them was overpowering, feeding off the storm of raw emotions that had so nearly consumed them. Then Lena’s hands froze.

_Kara._

She pushed herself back from Sam, needing the distance to keep their lips from succumbing to gravity again. “Sam, we can’t. Not yet. We have to talk to Kara, before we can … do any of this.” The events of the past day came flooding back. “Kara!”

“I need to go check on her!” Sam’s cheeks were flushed, and her lips were raw and swollen. But her voice was every bit as concerned as Lena’s. They had let their emotion consume them, but now wasn’t the time. Kara needed them.

“Drop me off at the DEO. I’ll jump on the comms there, and you can trust that I’ll be safe. And you can go get our girl.” The cowl was back in place, and they were in the air again before Lena could even catch her breath. “Just … be careful. You can’t underestimate Lillian. And you have to protect Kara and Alex. She will absolutely use Jeremiah against them.”

They landed in the DEO, and Sam was all Power Girl. Lena guessed that the majority of the DEO didn’t know her secret identity. But her eyes were all Sam. They exchanged a meaningful look, one that was all promise and desire. Then Power Girl turned to take off. “Go get our girl!”
Assured that Lena was safe now, Kara could focus fully on the horror show before her. Lillian, standing there in front of her, smug as ever. Henshaw, now moved to her right, bristling with antagonism, especially towards J’onn. Jeremiah, or what used to be Jeremiah, hunched robotically on Lillian’s left, avoiding her gaze. J’onn, standing straight, but to Kara’s eye, clearly poised to attack at a moment’s notice. Alex, gun pointed, barely containing her fury as a bundle of emotions threatened to overwhelm and consume her.

Kara said a silent prayer to Rao, thanking him for Lena. Kara’s rage had been so close to boiling over into action, before Lena finally broke out of the role she was playing and reminded Kara of who she was. What she stood for. Even now, even here, with the stakes so high, Lena wouldn’t let anything push Kara into something she would later regret, something that might destroy her.

So now, when Kara turned back to face Lillian, she was in full control of herself. Her rage would be useful in the inevitable fight, but it would be her fuel, not her master. “What have you done to our father, Lillian?”

Lillian’s face split into a wide, shit-eating grin, and Kara heard Alex’s finger tighten the tiniest possible amount on the trigger of her gun. “As our last encounter with Agent Danvers confirmed, Jeremiah proved himself to be far too independent in his thinking to be a good Cadmus soldier. So, I took away his independence—”

“You turned him into a robot with no free will?! Why bother, you pathetic psychopath? Why not just put him out of his misery?!” Alex’s voice was fiery and cutting, but Lillian reacted with nothing more than a sly smirk.

“Well, I could point out that he has classified knowledge of the workings of the DEO that continues to be helpful to our mission, but if I’m being truly honest, the look on your face right now, Agent Danvers, and that of your adopted alien, is all the reason I needed.”

That’s when all hell broke loose. Henshaw intercepted the blazing blue blast of Alex’s favourite gun, aimed directly at Lillian’s head. Whatever metal comprised his arm, it was strong—he sustained some damage from the blast, but not enough to render the arm unusable. He then moved towards Alex, only to be intercepted himself by J’onn. At the same time, a hail of gunfire erupted in the hangar between the two opposing military forces.

Kara’s first concern was Lillian, followed closely by Jeremiah. As the battle began, Lillian immediately retreated away from the gunfire, with Jeremiah serving as her shield. Kara sped to cut off Lillian’s exit, and the woman’s eyes flashed with hatred for her. “Supergirl, always in the way, aren’t you? Even when you’re caught red-handed, betraying my daughter, somehow she remains solidly under your spell. What have you done to her?”

Kara scoffed. Lillian couldn’t possibly understand what she and Lena shared. “It’s over, Lillian. You won’t get away this time. You’re a danger to Lena, to me and my loved ones, and to the world at large. But no longer. It ends here. I’m taking you in.”

“Oh, I don’t think so.” She stepped back. “Jeremiah, please take care of this pesky alien invader.”

Jeremiah maintained his defensive stance in front of Lillian but made no move to attack Kara. Their eyes locked, and she could read the deep anguish that tortured Jeremiah’s soul. “No,” he said, just loud enough to be heard over the sounds of the violence around them. He then braced
himself, just in time for the wave of pain that brought him to his knees and forced a scream of agony from his throat.

“Dad!” Alex shouted, rushing towards them as she fired off shot after shot at Lillian. Jeremiah’s arm acted of its own accord, blocking the shots, even as he continued to shout. Kara moved towards Lillian at full speed, and while Jeremiah’s body moved to intercept her, he wasn’t nearly as fast as she was. Kara was behind Lillian in an instant, catching her in a headlock.

“Release him! It’s over.” Kara tightened her arms enough to prove a point. Lillian winced in pain but did not release Jeremiah from his torment, and despite the pain written across his face, his body was pointing no fewer than six visible weapons at Kara and Alex, who had come to a stop with her gun leveled at Lillian. “Lillian!”

The head of Cadmus cackled. “He is programmed to defend me with his life, so you’re playing with fire here, girls. He clearly doesn’t want to hurt you, but if you continue to threaten me, he will have no choice in the matter.” She turned her head slightly in Kara’s chokehold so she could look at Alex, just to prove that the pain would not stop her. “And lest you get any ideas, know that if I die, your father is programmed with a self-destruct sequence that will go off and will absolutely level this whole structure. Supergirl might survive, but you and your father certainly won’t, Agent Danvers.”

Kara gasped, releasing Lillian and taking a step back. Alex didn’t move a muscle, but Lillian released Jeremiah from his torture. When Kara stepped away from Lillian, his body was on Kara in an instantly, punching her right in the gut, hard enough that it both hurt and sent her stumbling backwards. Then he was back into a defensive position, shielding Lillian behind him. Kara wasn’t injured—she immediately recovered and stood her ground—but the shock of Jeremiah actually attacking her shook her to her core.

“Dad, you have to fight this.” Alex’s gun lowered slightly when Jeremiah stepped in between her and Lillian. Her voice was tight with emotion, and Kara could read the emotion in her overly tight body language as if there was a neon sign above her head.

Jeremiah grimaced. “I can’t, honey. My body isn’t my own anymore.” He looked back and forth between his daughters, and Kara just wanted to wrap him up and protect him. He looked so defeated. Lillian had finally broken him after all these years. “Kara you have to get your sister out of here. I can’t stop myself if you come after Lillian, and I don’t want to put you in that position. I’m a danger to you both. Please, Kara.”

Kara felt bad, but there was no way she was going to let Lillian escape. She had no problem with detaining Jeremiah by force until Winn or Lena could figure out how to deprogram him. He might be stronger now, but he wasn’t Supergirl strong. Her fists tightened as she made the decision, but then Alex grabbed her arm. “Kara, we can’t risk it.”

She looked back at Alex, dumbfounded, as the agent continued her plea. “If he has a self-destruct, there’s no chance that she can’t activate it remotely herself. Besides, you don’t know what kind of weaponry she has equipped this new body with. There’s no way to guarantee you could contain him without hurting him—or him hurting one of us.” Kara’s brow furrowed. Sure there was—I just have to get him out of the hangar, up into the air. Alex can handle Lillian herself.

But Alex’s eyes were too much for her. She was pleading to Kara with everything she had—Jeremiah was so important to her. Kara took a moment to survey the situation around them. The DEO had suffered some casualties, but had nearly defeated the Cadmus agents in the room. J’onn had incapacitated—or possible killed, for all Kara knew—Henshaw and was helping the DEO agents turn the tide against the remaining Cadmus agents. Kara could hear the telltale sounds of a
helicopter approaching, but she honestly had no idea if it was Cadmus or DEO. She didn’t know if Sam was coming back, but she didn’t have time to wait. She had to make a decision.

Except that Lillian Luthor was quite happy to make it for her. “I have a better idea, girls. I’m leaving. Right now. You can either stop me, or deal with the self-destruct sequence I just activated in your father’s new body.” Red LED indicators across his metallic limbs suddenly lit up, pulsing slowly. “You’ve got maybe five minutes to try to see if you can defuse the bomb. You can either chase me, or deal with him. And make no mistake, if either of you so much as touches me, I’ll blow us all to hell right now.” She started walking backwards towards a nearby door. “Time to make a decision, Supergirl.”

As she moved, she pulled a gun seemingly out of nowhere, pointing it menacingly at Jeremiah’s head. A small contingency of Cadmus agents moved into formation around Lillian and escorted her out. Kara glowered at her, but she had already made her decision. Alex was right. She turned from Lillian and shouted, “J’onn! Get over here!” She turned her x-ray vision on Jeremiah, hoping to locate whatever explosive device was contained within, but his cybernetics were lined with a thin layer of lead. Lillian had thought of everything.

In a flash, she had moved Jeremiah to a nearby seat, and J’onn knelt down beside his old friend. “Lillian planted a bomb inside Jeremiah—we have only a few minutes to defuse it.” J’onn shot her a look of concern, and when she glanced at Alex there was nothing but fear and rage contained in her eyes. “J’onn, I thought you could phase through him and remove it, but his body is lined with lead. I can’t locate the device.”

Jeremiah placed a hand on her forearm. “Kara, there is no device. I’m the bomb. It isn’t something you can remove, and I doubt you have a bombs or cybernetics expert here to figure out how to deactivate the sequence before it goes off.”

“No,” Alex whispered, tears welling in her eyes.

“I’m sorry, sweetie, but you’ve all got to get to safety right now. Lillian doesn’t make idle threats. This … this is goodbye, girls.” He stood up. “I am so so sorry for everything I’ve done in the past year. If I could have found a way to come home to you, I would have. But I did everything I could to protect you from the inside. I failed you.”

Alex rushed to him, throwing her arms around his neck and hugging him tightly. J’onn gestured with his head to indicate that he needed to evacuate his troops and their prisoners. Jeremiah nodded, without letting go of Alex. “Do what you have to do, old friend—just always remember your promise to protect my girls.”

“The DEO will remember you as you were, Jeremiah.” J’onn was gone immediately, leaving Kara standing there with her adopted family. She felt completely frozen by the shock and horror of the moment. She couldn’t believe after all this, they were about to lose him for good., Alex was sobbing violently, shouting, “I won’t let you go,” over and over. Jeremiah rubbed her back soothingly, then pushed her away.

The pulsing of the lights was increasing in speed, and that broke Kara from her daze. “Alex! You have to evacuate, right now! I’ll stay with him to the end, I promise.”

Alex shook her head forcefully. “I’m not leaving him Kara. We have to find a way to save him. It c-can’t. Can’t end this way.”

Jeremiah put his hands on Alex’s shoulders. “Alex, I am so very proud of you. You’ve grown so much. You’re the DEO’s top agent, and I’m sure you’ll be running the place before too long. You
know who you are, and you’ve always protected your sister. You found an amazing woman who loves and supports you.” He cracked a grin. “And I love what you’ve done with your hair. Purple looks great on you.” Tears continued to paint Alex’s cheeks, but she stood there, listening to Jeremiah’s final words to her. “I love you, Alex Danvers. A father couldn’t ask for a better daughter. But you have to go now. My time is over. Yours is just beginning. Kara needs you. Maggie needs you. The world needs you. Go make me proud.”

He wrapped her in a fierce hug, and at the same time, Kara caught J’onn’s attention. The last agents were escaping the building now. As the hug broke, the pulsing increased again, and Kara shouted, “Alex you have to go now!” When she didn’t move, J’onn moved quickly to take her away.

“NO! No no, Dad!! No, please!” Alex’s cries were loud and anguished, cutting through her family members still in the room. “I love you! I’m sorry, Dad. I’m sorry. I love you!” And then she and J’onn were gone, leaving Kara alone with her adopted father.

“I know,” he whispered after her. Then he turned to Kara and hugged her tightly. “You sure you can handle this, kiddo?” In his dying moments, his only concern was for Kara’s safety. She smiled through her tears and hugged him back that much more tightly.

“I can handle a little explosion, Jeremiah. I’m not leaving you.” She pulled back and looked him in the eyes. “I need you to know that I’ll take care of them.” She didn’t have to explain that she meant Eliza and Alex. “I just want to thank you. I came here a lost, broken girl, and you gave me a home. You gave me Alex. You have sacrificed so much for me, and I just wish I could do something to pay it all back. I wish I could save you.” Her voice broke as her emotions overwhelmed her.

He reached up and wiped the tears from her eyes. “You’ve already done that, Kara. You have become a fine young woman, and a symbol of hope for my entire people. I know that Eliza and Alex are safe with you. I’m so sorry for what I’ve done with Cadmus, regardless of my good intentions.” The pulsing was nearly constant now, and Kara knew they probably had less than a minute left. “I just want to know that you’re happy, Kara.”

She smiled brightly. “I am, Jeremiah. I really am. I never could have imagined the family that I have now, but it is wonderful. They are wonderful. I just wish you could’ve been a part of it.”

“Me too, kiddo. Me too.” A single tear escaped, tracing a path down his rugged face. “I love you, Kara Zor-El Danvers. I am proud that I was able to call you my daughter.”

Kara broke down, wrapping him up tightly, ready for the end. “I love you too, Jeremiah. Thank you for everything.” She held him tight for a few more seconds, and then it happened. The explosion was sudden and severe, and it plunged Kara into darkness.

The first thing Sam noticed as she approached the Cadmus base was the helicopter fleeing the scene. The second thing she noticed was the DEO agents flooding out of the building and into their parked vehicles. She decided she should check out the helicopter, just in case it was Lillian trying to escape again. And that was how she happened to be flying directly over the building just as the explosion erupted beneath her.

The shockwave threw her, but she caught herself before she hit the ground or any nearby building. Only one thought occupied her mind. **Kara!** She threw herself into the flames without thinking. The heat was powerful and the smoke was overpowering, but it wasn’t nearly enough to hamper
Power Girl, much less prevent her from finding her girlfriend. She still had a vague sense of where the hangar had been before the explosion, and that’s where she went first. She immediately found the source of the blast, which made her feel a little sick. Amidst the raging fire, there was a clear crater where the blast had started, and she could make out still-flaming bits of flesh and bone along with twisted scraps of broken and melted metal. She hoped that hadn’t been someone she knew.

Sam found Kara on the other side of what may have formerly been a wall. The force of the explosion had knocked her out. Her suit was charred nearly black, and bits of it were torn and tattered. Sam had her out of the flames and into the cool night air in a heartbeat, and immediately tore off for the DEO at full speed. Kara probably wasn’t in any danger, but Sam wanted her under the sun lamps as soon as possible, just to be sure. She was back to the DEO before any of the strike team, and she had Kara changed into a DEO issue tank top and shorts and under the yellow sun lamps before anyone could even register her presence.

Then she found Lena, who jumped a little when Power Girl just appeared from nowhere. “She’s under the sun lamps. Looks like she was in the epicenter of a huge explosion at the base, but I didn’t register any kryptonite there. She should be fine, and awake, in less than an hour I would guess.” She hugged Lena briefly, struggling between her emotions still running on high and the logical part of her brain screaming at her to maintain her cover. “I don’t know about Lillian yet, but I’m going to head back and check if anyone else needs rescuing. Go to Kara, and I’ll meet you soon, okay?”

Lena nodded and smiled softly at her. Her gorgeous green eyes shimmered with joy and appreciation. “Be careful S—Power Girl.” They both giggled slightly at her slip up. Sam nodded firmly, then took off. She was back at the Cadmus site in only a couple of minutes and immediately set about putting out the fire. It was under control before the fire department arrived, and that gave her time to fly around and check for anyone who remained injured or trapped. She guessed that there had been some warning of the explosion, because there weren’t any injured survivors. She couldn’t confirm that the charred remains left on site were all dead before the explosion, but there were no signs of anyone who was hurt trying to escape.

Sam hoped by the time she got back to the DEO, Kara would be awake, or that Alex and J’onn would have arrived. She found herself desperately curious about what happened. When she arrived, she found that a dark curtain had been drawn around the inside of the glass walls of the medical room where Kara’s yellow sun bed was located. Her heart briefly fell out of her chest, before she told herself that it was impossible for anything to have happened to Kara. Then she stepped into the room, closing the curtain behind her.

Kara was still asleep, but Lena and Alex were on the floor, with Alex sobbing uncontrollably in Lena’s arms. In a heartbeat, Sam had her cowl and wig off and was down on the floor with them. “Alex! What happened?”

Alex couldn’t get control of herself enough to answer, so while Sam rubbed her back, Lena explained. “The explosion … was Jeremiah. My mother turned him into a cyborg, like Henshaw, but she included a self-destruct program. She used it to escape.” Sam’s heart fell. She understood the wave of nausea she felt at the sight of what she now knew were Jeremiah Danvers’ remains. Some part of her had known, she guessed. And that must have been Lillian on the helicopter. *Fuck. If only I had gotten there a few minutes faster.* Images and sensations of kissing Lena flashed through her brain. *Goddammit. We shouldn’t have let ourselves get carried away. This is my fault. It’s always my fault.*

She startled out of her spiral of self-doubt when Lena put a hand on hers. “Sam, this isn’t your fault. You got back as quickly as you could. This is on Lillian, not you. Please don’t do this to
yourself.” Lena always could see the core of things so clearly, when she wasn’t hampered by her own insecurities. Sam nodded before squeezing Lena’s hand affectionately. “Kara let Lillian go in exchange for the time to evacuate the DEO agents. Alex had time to say goodbye, and Kara stayed with Jeremiah until the end.” Alex sobbed even louder, and her body shook with the force of the emotional torment she was feeling.

“Is—”

“Yeah, Maggie’s on her way.” If not for the somber occasion, Sam would have been overjoyed at the speed with which she and Lena had synced up again. For now, they would have to use that to their advantage as they cared for the Danvers girls together. Whatever was going on between them could wait. Sam moved in closer to wrap Alex up in a warm hug.

“Alex, I’m so so sorry.” Alex seemed to settle a little, nestled between Sam and Lena. Then they were joined by a fourth warm presence. Kara had woken at some point during the conversation and joined the group comfort session. Alex and Kara quickly found each other, and Lena and Sam gave them a little space, poised to offer comfort and support where needed.

Time sort of lost all meaning for a while. It was just Lena and Sam and the Danvers—and eventually Maggie too—alone with their grief. For a long while, no one spoke. Alex and Kara just held each other, crying and living in their emotions. At some point, Sam, Lena, and Maggie surrounded them, protecting them with the warmth of their love. But eventually, Kara and Alex were all cried out.

They were all still sitting on the floor, except for Lena. Alex and Maggie were cuddled against each other, backs to Kara’s bed. Lena was sitting in the room’s chair, with Kara and Sam each leaning against one of her legs. There was some small talk, some reminiscing, but before long, they all needed to crash. Kara had been up since the previous day, and Sam had been up for nearly as long, and the emotions of the day weighed heavily on all of them.

Maggie took Alex home, and Sam insisted Kara and Lena both come stay the night with her. Kara seemed pleasantly surprised that Sam and Lena were getting along again, but she was too exhausted and distraught to question it beyond that. Sam was grateful. She wanted for both she and Lena to be able to be there for Kara, but she didn’t want to make this about her and Lena. Kara took Lena in her arms, and the three of them flew straight to Sam’s place.

Ruby was already in bed, thankfully. Sam wasn’t afraid of trying to explain the situation to her, but things had been pretty traumatic lately, and Sam wasn’t looking to burden Ruby with any more just yet. They all changed into PJs—Kara kept plenty at Sam’s place at this point, and Lena borrowed some of hers—then settled into bed. Kara nestled in comfortably between Lena and Sam and almost immediately fell asleep.

Neither Sam nor Lena were quite ready to sleep, apparently. They each cuddled close to Kara, and as a result, there were glancing touches between them. They got comfortable with each of them resting a leg on top of Kara’s, so that their toes could intermingle in a delightfully ticklish way. Sam felt a little bad at the almost teenage-like glee she felt at the casual contact with Lena, but she wasn’t about to deny how she felt. Sam’s eyes would rest on Kara’s troubled face, then drift up to catch Lena’s gaze, only to find Lena doing the same.

Sam stifled a giggle. Lena whispered, “How are we going to tell her?”

“Lee, I have no idea, but now isn’t the time. This is a lot to process, and Kara has enough on her plate right now.” She rubbed her big toe against the top of Lena’s foot. “This is a completely surprise to me, and it’s fucking amazing, but there’s no rush. And there’s still a lot for you and me
to process. You were kind of a huge dick to me.” Lena’s face fell a little, but she knew Sam well enough to know when she said something in good humour.

“I’m going to make that up to you, Sam. I promise. I am so so sorry.” Lena’s finger hooked around Sam’s.

“I know you will. I’m just saying, there’s no rush. And Kara comes first.”

“On that, we agree. And I have an idea already—Maggie and I were texting about it. How do you feeling about Ruby meeting Eliza?” Sam grinned wildly, picking up immediately on what Lena was suggesting.

“I think they’d hit it off pretty quickly, don’t you?” Sam raised an eyebrow playfully.

“I do, indeed, Samantha. And I think it’s about time you experienced Midvale for yourself. But we’ll talk about it in the morning. You’re nearly as exhausted as our girl. Get some sleep, love.” Sam smiled softly, stifling a yawn. Then she blew Lena a kiss before snuggling into Kara’s body and immediately passing out.
The trip hadn’t taken very long to set up, not with Lena planning it and arranging everything. The five of them had arranged for some time off—plus a couple days off school for Ruby—and just like that, they were off to Midvale. For the second time in a year, which was a record for Kara and Alex. Only this time, four had become six.

Kara had handled breaking the news to Eliza and coordinating with her. Alex couldn’t handle that burden yet. She was barely holding herself together, and only then with the love and support of Maggie, Kara, and to a lesser extent, Sam and Lena. Rather than call, Kara flew out to Midvale herself to break the news, the morning after everything had gone down. Unburdened by a plane, luggage, or a human passenger, it barely took Kara two hours to fly across the country. Fortunately, Eliza had been home, and the two had shared a quiet lunch together.

Eliza’s reaction was stoic, as Kara had expected. She couldn’t pretend to know about the long history of love and trust between her adoptive parents, but she knew that in the nearly fifteen years since Jeremiah was taken by Cadmus, Eliza had taken her time accepting, mourning, and moving past his death. Even when he returned last year, Eliza had kept him at a distance, just a bit—he wasn’t her Jeremiah anymore, and she felt closer to his memory than she did to his person at that point. After confirming that Eliza was going to be okay, and planning out the family trip to Midvale, Kara had come back to National City.

Only a couple of days had passed, and here she was again. As they all began getting out of the car Lena had rented, Kara’s eyes stayed firmly fixed on Alex. Eliza was waiting for them in the driveway as they pulled up, and Maggie had barely put the SUV into park before Alex was out of the vehicle.

Her casual attire—sunglasses, a denim button-up, black jeans—hid a broken person underneath, in desperate need of healing. Alex’s wayfarer sunglasses hid the redness of her eyes, the bags under them. She carried herself stiffly, as if her body had forgotten how to walk normally. Then she folded into Eliza’s waiting arms, and immediately relaxed. Kara smiled softly. Coming home was exactly what Alex needed.

She got out of the car and helped Sam and Maggie with the bags. With Ruby along, everything took a bit longer, since Kara and Sam couldn’t noticeably use their powers. But somehow, that felt right too. Kara led everyone to where they would be staying. She and Lena were sharing a room, Alex and Maggie had a room, and Sam and Ruby had a room. With bags settled, they all met Eliza and Alex back in the dining room, where Eliza had already brought out some hot tea and cucumber water for everyone.

Eliza stood as Kara approached, Sam and Ruby just behind her. She smiled and said, “Eliza, you’ve met my girlfriend, Sam.” They hugged briefly, and Eliza’s voice was light and friendly as she welcomed Sam into her home. “And this—” Kara’s hand on Ruby’s shoulder gently encouraged her forward. “—is her daughter, Ruby. Ruby, this is Eliza Danvers.”

Ruby extended her hand nervously, not feeling comfortable enough to go for a hug right away. Sam and Kara had talked to her about what was going on, but this was the first time Ruby had ever been around anyone grieving the loss of a loved one. She was understandably tentative. Fortunately, this sort of thing was exactly Eliza’s forte.

She took Ruby’s hand warmly. “So very nice to meet you, Ruby. I’ve heard so many things about you, I feel as though I already know you a bit. Welcome to Midvale.”
Ruby smiled shyly, responding softly, “It’s nice to meet you too, Eliza. I’m really sorry for your loss.” Her smile gave way to a slight frown, along with a look of genuine sadness. “I didn’t know Jeremiah, but Kara told me he was a good man, and a hero.”

Eliza smiled sadly. “He was, in his way. I’m sorry you never got to meet him, but I’m excited to get to know you.” During the introductions, Lena and Maggie had settled in on either side of Alex, Maggie wrapping her arm around her girlfriend. The rest of them took seats around the table, and Eliza cheerfully served them all. Ruby had never had tea before, and she was very curious about it. Kara and Sam shared a look of utter adoration at how Eliza and Ruby hit it off immediately.

In that moment, Kara had an epiphany. Eliza was so wonderful about taking in strays and making them feel at home. Kara had been the first, and since their little family in National City had been growing, Eliza had been just as warm and kind in her welcoming of Maggie, then Lena, and now Sam and Ruby. But … Eliza wasn’t just Eliza. She was a woman who had shared and built a life together with a man who was now gone. Kara’s final words to Jeremiah sprung to mind—you gave me a home—and she wondered how much of Eliza’s welcoming nature was innate and how much was learned from her life partner.

Kara realized she had never really appreciated the sort of team he and Eliza were. She had barely been around for a year when he was taken away to go work for the DEO, and her history with Eliza was so much more about her as an individual than her partnership with Jeremiah. But in those early days, they really had been such an incredible team.

Back then, they had worked so effortlessly in tandem, and Kara had been too broken to really understand or appreciate it. But as she thought about those early days, she saw it. Jeremiah mentoring her, and Eliza comforting her. Constant lessons in culture and behaviour. Patient work on wrangling and understanding Kara’s powers. The many looks the two of them had shared. The ways in which they so effortlessly worked as a unit in all the small everyday things that really made this place feel like a home. It was only now, being back in this house but now with her own partners—her own team—that she began to realize and truly appreciate the example set by the Danvers’ marriage, even if Kara had only been around it briefly.

Speaking of her team, Kara turned her gaze from Eliza and Ruby to glance at both Lena and Sam, only to catch them smiling at each other. Kara bit her lip, chewing on it slightly as she pondered this new curiosity. Then, almost simultaneously, Lena and Sam both looked away from each other and at Kara, and she smiled brightly at them both, only the slight tilt of her head and a raised eyebrow giving away the curiosity with which she was watching them both. She was fully aware of the monumental shift in their dynamic after they saved Lena from Cadmus, but there hadn’t been time yet to really discuss it. So far, all they had told her was that they had finally opened up about what was going on between them and that they had buried the hatchet. They had realized how stupid they—or more specifically Lena, as they both jokingly pointed out—had been.

But there was more to it than that, and it was very obvious, at least to Kara. Her girlfriends didn’t deny it either, but they had all three agreed that it wasn’t immediately important. There would be time for them to all talk about their feelings later. Kara was dealing with her own complicated feelings for Jeremiah, and all of them wanted to be here for Alex in whatever she needed.

They were having the memorial for Jeremiah that evening, around sunset. Without a body or ashes, the Danvers had all agreed that they would each write out a letter to Jeremiah, full of memories and things left unsaid and whatever loving goodbye they wanted to give him. These letters, once read at the service, would be burned, realizing their sentiments out into the universe in at least some form of finality.
Kara led the way for their short processional. Alex was already crying again, and Kara and Eliza held her firmly from both sides, giving her the strength to keep moving forward. The rest of their found family followed in wake as they walked around the block and off the path towards the raised cliff that oversaw the nearby beach. Kara had already set up the small bonfire that would light their ceremony. The three Danvers came to a stop maybe a foot in front of the bonfire, facing out towards the ocean. The sun had just begun to set, lighting the evening skies with such incredible pinks and purples among the usual oranges and blues. Kara held Alex while Eliza moved forward to light the fire, and the rest of the group settled into a shallow semicircle behind them.

Once the fire was going strong (Sam helped a little, moving fast enough that only Kara would notice her quick use of heat vision), Eliza stood to the left of the flames and faced the gathered crowd as she pulled out the envelope holding her final letter to her husband. Her voice was thin and wavered at times but was strong throughout.

“Jeremiah. It feels strange to find myself having to let go of you again, but here we are. When I lost you the first time, it was as if my soul had been torn to shreds. I lost pieces of myself that I was never able to get back. But over time, I was able to sew myself back together. You died protecting our girls, and I did my best to live up to that sacrifice. I raised them and protected them and supported them, and I knew you would be so very proud of them.”

She smiled widely at Kara and Alex. “Then you came back to us, a decade later. I’m so sorry that I failed you in that moment. There was a version of my Jeremiah in there, but you were like a stranger to me. And so I missed all the obvious signs. I didn’t protect our girls in that moment. And maybe if I had, we could have gotten you back.”

Eliza’s voice broke, and the tears began to flow. Kara could feel Alex trembling beside her. That’s all Alex had wanted, to get Jeremiah back. And they had failed. They had all failed. But that included Jeremiah. This wasn’t Eliza’s fault. Fortunately, she seemed to know that.

“I couldn’t save you. I can’t imagine what you went through in all that time—what you had to endure and how it changed you. But I believe that you never stopped trying to protect Kara and Alex, even if you lost sight of why they needed protection. What kind of world we always wanted for them. So I choose to remember you as my Jeremiah. Whoever you became, I didn’t know that man, and I am sorry, but I cannot mourn that man. Today, I say goodbye instead to you, my darling husband.”

“You were my dearest friend. You were there as I grew from a shy girl with her head in the clouds to an accomplished scientist and mother. You were my boldness, unlocking my passion and bringing me out of my shell.” She giggled, and Kara could almost see her as a young woman in her 20s, still finding herself. “I can still remember the ambitious, too brash by far jerk you were when I first met you. And the kind, gentle protector you grew up to be.”

She glanced at Alex. “I see so much of you in our dear Alex. Your endless well of strength. Your loyalty and stubbornness. But most of all your protectiveness. You died protecting her, but I worry that she might’ve died trying to save you. So alike.” Her gaze shifted to Kara. “And yet, our adopted little girl took after you as well. Even though she only knew you for a year. It’s remarkable really. But I see in Kara your earnestness, your kindness. You mentored her through all her loss and pain, and I am so proud to see that same spirit in her as she does the same for countless others.”

“Today I say goodbye to you, my love. But you live on, in a way, through our daughters. Through the countless accomplishments you made in your field. Through the many ways in which you shaped me as we grew together over the years. You live on in all of us.” She turned away from
them, facing the crashing waves and the brilliant sunset as she folded the letter and placed it back in its envelope.

“I love you, Jeremiah Danvers. You were my beating heart, my bold protector, my trusted partner. I hope you have found peace.” She dropped the envelope into the fire without turning her gaze from the horizon, and the crisp paper quickly went up in smoke. Then she released a heavy breath, wiped the tears from her eyes, and turned to walk back to her girls. The three of them hugged, tightly, and then it was Kara’s turn.

She stepped forward, pulling her own letter from its envelope as she took her place beside the fire, right where Eliza had stood. She caught the eyes of Lena and Sam, standing side-by-side, and felt their love flow through her, giving her strength. Kara was nervous. She had said her goodbye to Jeremiah already, and for her, this was more about processing the complicated grief she felt for the man. She was worried that her words might hurt Alex further, but she needed to tell her truth.

“Jeremiah. You gave me a home when mine was destroyed. You and Eliza. But … that isn’t the only you that I knew. I can’t pretend that the last fifteen years didn’t happen. That my memory of you is only that of the kind man who taught me how to overcome my loss, how to fit in here. You are also the man who betrayed Alex. Betrayed me. You worked for an evil woman, for an evil cause, and I cannot say goodbye to you without addressing that.”

She caught Sam and Lena’s eyes again, avoiding Alex’s. Lena’s eyes were wide with surprise, but supportive. Sam gave her the slightest nod of encouragement. They were both here with her in this moment.

“We could have worked together, when we first got you back. You could have stayed with us. We could have figured it out. But you decided instead to lie. To put Alex and Eliza through more heartache and continue to work for an organization that stands against everything you always taught us was right. Someday, I hope I’ll be able to forgive you for that, but I’m not there yet.”

Kara finally looked at Alex, who was sobbing in Eliza’s arms. Eliza gave her a sorrowful but understanding look, but Alex’s face was pure anguish. “I’m sorry, Alex. I know this is hard to hear right now, but it would dishonour Jeremiah to ignore the last fifteen years of his life.” She turned her attention back to the letter. “I have to believe that some part of you knew better. I know your intentions remained pure to the end. Maybe you hoped to bring Cadmus down from inside, or at least to soften their impact. Maybe you really did believe it was the only way you could protect Alex and me from them. At this point, your reasons no longer matter. You chose your path, and because of that choice, we lost you forever.”

Her voice broke as the emotions became too much. Tears began to dot her letter to Jeremiah, which she handwrote in Kryptonese. “But we still love you. I am who I am because of the kindness you showed me. The lessons you taught me. My only wish is that you had remembered those lessons yourself. You were a good man, once. You raised my absolute favourite person in the whole world. Eliza was right—Alex will carry on all the best parts of you. She is a remarkable person, and she learned that, in part, from you, Jeremiah. So, thank you for that.”

She folded the letter up, turning away from her family. She could get through the last paragraph without reading it. “We met at a formative point in my life, and I will carry you with me forever, Jeremiah Danvers. Because of you, I was able to turn my trauma into strength. I was able to find a new life for myself when mine was taken from me. I will always love you for that.”

Kara tossed the letter into the fire. Still facing the ocean, she recited the prayer in whispered Kryptonian that she was sure only Sam could hear. “You have been the sun of our lives. Our
prayers will be the sun that lights your way on your journey home. We will remember you in every dawn and await the night we join you in the sky. Rao's will be done.” Her eyes traced the smoke from the burning letter as it curled upward. She imagined that Jeremiah’s soul went with it, to find Rao—whatever that truly meant.

Alex pulled away from Eliza to meet Kara, wrapping her in a surprising hug. “Thank you,” she whispered, crying into Kara’s hair as she held her tight. “You told it true. He would be so proud of you.” Kara pulled back, holding Alex’s face in her hands and pressing a wet kiss to her forehead.

“I’m still sorry.” Alex pressed her forehead to Kara’s, then let go of her, taking her spot by the fire. Her finger traced along the lip of the envelope in her hand, then she stood up straight, as if having made a decision, and tossed the letter into the flames unopened. She turned 90 degrees, her eyes fixed firmly on the fire.

“I … I’m sorry. To all of you. I … Dad’s death broke me.” She breathed deeply, exhaling slowly. “I couldn’t read that.” She looked up at the swiftly darkening sky. “You wouldn’t have wanted my scattered ramblings anyway. Instead, I’ll speak from the heart.”

Alex turned to face them. Her face was still wet with tears, her eyes red, but she was in control of herself again. She was Alex again. “My father was a complicated man. He never really did anything halfway. Mom and Kara are right, at least a little. I’m just like him in that, at least when I get emotional. Maybe that’s why I’ve fought so hard the past few years on learning to control my emotions.” Maggie chuckled, and Alex shot her a look.

“After Dad left, and especially after we thought he was dead, I lost myself to my emotions. Kara talks about being lost, and in those years, I learned a little about being lost myself. And once I found new purpose with the DEO, I gained some perspective on my emotions. I didn’t really connect all that with my feelings towards Dad until J’onn told me the true story about his death. My father worked for the DEO, too—walked the same halls as me, received the same training, probably even worked with some of the same agents. But the DEO he worked for was very different than the one I am so proud to be a part of.”

Alex looked right at Kara, and she nodded at her sister, urging her on. “That DEO was little better than Cadmus, and Dad worked with them to try and protect us. He died the first time because he realized that he couldn’t be a part of what that organization was trying to accomplish. I guess it makes sense that his true death would mirror that first one.” Her voice broke again.

“D-Dad never quite learned that lesson I guess. About when emotions can help you, and when they can cripple you. When to fight for those you love, and when—” she broke off, sobs overtaking her. Kara and Eliza rushed to her side, each of them taking a hand. She took a few deep breaths, collecting herself. “When to fight for those you love, and when to accept their help. That was the mistake that killed my father. He thought he had to go it alone. He bore it all because he hoped that we wouldn’t have to. But here we are, bearing it anyway.”

Alex caught Kara’s eyes. “Stronger together. That’s a lesson you taught me, Kara. It’s one that I wish Dad had been around to learn.” She released Kara and Eliza’s hands, nodding for them to return to where they were standing. “It’s okay, Mom. I’m okay.” Eliza squeezed her hand, then followed Kara away from the fire.

“The night he died … I felt like I failed him. I couldn’t save him. And that’s true. I couldn’t. But it wasn’t just Cadmus he needed saving from. Ultimately, I couldn’t save Dad from himself. From his need to protect his family above all else. I think, ultimately, that was the last lesson he taught
me. That none of us can do it alone. That protecting your loved ones means trusting them every bit as much as it does shielding them from danger.”

Alex turned towards the cliff, walking forward a few steps. “Thank you for that, Dad. I hate that this lesson cost you your life. I hate that you won’t be around for all the firsts we have left in our lives. For all the big moments to come. I love you, Dad. And I will carry on your mission. I will protect this family. Just not the way you did. We are all stronger together. I wish you could’ve seen that. I wish …” She exhaled loudly. “I wish I could’ve saved you, Dad.”

She turned and walked back, whispering “goodbye” softly enough that Kara wasn’t sure anyone else heard her. The Danvers women wrapped each other in a tight embrace, and Kara wasn’t sure how long they all stood there, crying and holding each other.

The memorial site was close to the house, so they spent the rest of the evening there. They enjoyed the warm fire until it finally died out, eating food that Lena and Sam had prepared, reminiscing about Jeremiah and childhood Danvers stories, and in the case of Sam and Ruby and Eliza, getting to know each other better. Even with all the sadness, and despite the relative newcomers to the family, the night was warm, comfortable, and safe. Kara wasn’t sure they could’ve prepared a more fitting tribute to Jeremiah. After all, he had died for his family.
Love is a Many Splendid Thing

Sam was a little blown away by how right Lena had been about this place. She wondered how her life might’ve been different if her pod had landed in a place like this. Midvale was idyllic in a way that would normally earn her ire and derision, but she honestly found it refreshing, at least here in Eliza Danvers’ corner of the sleepy coastal town. It was like the home she had always yearned for, but never really experienced. It was a sort of embodiment of everything she had ever sought to provide for Ruby, from a certain point of view.

Lena and Sam had let Eliza know that they needed some time to talk about something serious with Kara, and she took Ruby for ice cream. Sam gathered from the knowing look between Lena and Eliza that this was something of a rite of passage. Ruby had been hitting it off with Eliza ever since they arrived, so she was completely unopposed to the plan. And Maggie was very emphatic that she and Alex had plans of their own down by the beach, so everything was in order.

Kara called out from the kitchen, “Hey secretive girlfriends of mine! Is this a wine sort of talk or what?” Sam grinned. She was like Kara now, her metabolism too powerful for normal alcohol to affect her like it used to, but she still appreciated the taste of a quality chianti. And she knew for a fact that Lena had brought a couple of bottles specifically for this occasion.

Lena didn’t bother shouting back from the restroom, explaining in her normal speaking voice that the bottles were still in the trunk of the SUV they had arrived in. She was fully aware both the other women could hear her without any issue. Sam had the bottles and was opening them in the kitchen before Kara could finish the cupcake in her hand. “I got it, babe.” Sam licked a bit of frosting off Kara’s finger, savouring the taste of her girlfriend as much as the taste of the sugary dessert. Then she got three glasses out and poured their wine, as Lena came down the stairs. “There you are.”

“Let’s go out on the balcony patio. It’s a nice night, and I love the view of the stars out here.” Kara grabbed her glass and Lena’s, handing it to the brunette as they all walked back up the stairs and then out onto the balcony. They each took a seat at the round table on the right side of the balcony, the one that came with a detachable umbrella for the summer sun. This allowed the three of them to all sit equidistant from each other.

Lena took a sip of the wine, then launched straight into it. “So, I’ve been a massive bitch the past couple of months. I already apologized quite a lot to Sam, but before anything else, I want to apologize again to you both. Individually and as a couple.” Lena’s eyes grew watery, but she kept herself under control. “I could explain about how I couldn’t get the image of Sam’s body tossing Kara off a building so casually, beaten and broken, and maybe that was it at first. But I’m not so sure anymore. Perhaps some lizard part of my brain was frightened of Sam’s … resemblance with Reign, but I think we can all tell at this point, the core of my difficulty was that I felt threatened.”

She took another sip of her wine, and Sam wanted to reach out and take her hand. She was mostly healed of her resentment towards Lena, her anger about the cold shoulder she had received. Lena was genuinely sorrowful and wanted to begin anew, and the gravity between them was too much for Sam to resist. Not that she wanted to. Not anymore. But not yet.

“You are such a beautiful couple. And instead of appreciating your love for each other, I let myself get threatened by it. Threatened by Sam’s alien heritage. Her powers. I thought … well, I thought that you were a couple of destiny, in a way. That you are so obviously meant to be that inevitably, I could never fit nearly as well as you fit each other. I let all of my lurking insecurities
get the better of me, and I tried to force the issue by cutting Sam from life. Not openly, but that’s clearly what I was trying to do.”

“Lena! You didn’t, you—” Lena put a hand on Kara’s, halting her protest.

“It’s okay, Kara. Please, let me get this out, in full, then we can discuss.” Those sad green eyes flickered back and forth between Sam and Kara. “We all knew things would eventually come to a head with the way I was behaving. Even if we all did our best to ignore it.” She gave Sam a meaningful look. “Sam, I said it already, but I am so sorry. I should have trusted you. I should have trusted my love for you, all our years together. I freaked out. I listened to my own darker voices, and I am so very very sorry.”

Sam took her hand. “I forgive you, Lena. I’m glad you came to your senses. I just wish we hadn’t had to get your mother involved.” She winced a little, realizing immediately that the joke went too far, at least so soon after Jeremiah’s memorial. Still … Sam wondered if Lena would have reached her epiphany if not for that traumatic experience.

Lena turned to Kara. “Kara, I’m sorry to you too. I made your life hell. I put you in an impossible situation, trying to split yourself between two people you love. I was awful to someone you love, and I’m sure I haven’t been easy to love of late. I … I’m so angry with myself for putting that strain on our relationship. On you personally. I’m sorry I let my fears control me. I’m sorry I didn’t figure it out sooner. And I’m sorry that I didn’t talk to you about my feelings. I’m sorry … for everything, darling.”

Kara was crying again. Sam and Lena were immediately up and over to Kara, dropping to their knees to wrap her up in hugs. Sam wondered if she had been waiting for the other shoe to drop. It had been a few days, and she believed Sam and Lena when they said their differences were behind them. But it was another thing to hear Lena say it. To hear the anguish in her voice as she discussed how she had felt and admitted her own guilt in causing emotional harm to those she loved. Now it was real.

But that also meant they needed to tell Kara about the kiss. Kara calmed down a bit, and Lena and Sam took their seats again. “Lena, I’m just glad that you realized what you were doing—and why—before it was too late. I … yeah, the last couple of months have been really rough, and I wish you had just talked to me. Especially since we all promised that we would keep the lines of communication open, back when Sam and I started dating.”

“But the point here is that she’s communicating now,” Sam reassured Kara. “And she’s not going to shut us out ever again, right Lena?” Sam hit her with her most withering glare, and Lena actually shrank a little.

“Yes, quite. I’ve learned my lesson, and …” Lena paused, clearly giving her next words careful consideration. “And I hope that when I inevitably fuck up again, because of the years of psychological trauma otherwise known as a Luthor childhood—neither of you will let me get away with it this time. Remind me of this experience, and this conversation, and don’t get off my ass until I open up about my insecurities.”

“I’m sure Kara would love to … stay on your ass all you want, Lee,” Sam quipped slyly. Kara immediately got flustered, giggling and blushing wildly. Just as Sam intended.

“I … yes, but … ugh, Saaaaaaam why do you always do this to me?” Lena and Sam laughed in unison, and with that, all three of them were so much more relaxed than before. So, Sam just decided to go for it.
“Well, babe, if you liked that, you’re gonna love what Lena and I have to tell you.” Kara’s eyes got wide, and Lena eyed Sam nervously. Sam patted her hand reassuringly, and Kara’s eyes got a little wider. “Soooo … umm, in the heat of the emotion after I got Lena out of there and she was apologizing and … ah fuck it, I’m just gonna come out and say it, we kissed.”

Sam was unaware that Kara’s eyes were even capable of getting that wide. Her head shifted rapidly, back and forth between Sam and Lena. Lena winced a little, waiting for a more obviously positive or negative response. Finally, Kara sputtered out a response.

“So you—” she pointed at Sam almost comically, “—kissed you—” her finger moved over to Lena, “—and you kissed her back, and …” Kara’s eyes continued getting even more impossibly wide, and then she bit her lip and took a deep breath. Her next words were so quiet that Sam worried Lena wouldn’t be able to hear her. “Umm… and … just uhhh … how was it?”

Lena breathed a sigh of relief, and Sam chuckled. “Well, Kara dearest, I can only speak for myself, but I thought it was, you know, stupid hot.” Kara looked like she might fall out of her chair. “Just like … intensely sexy.” Kara’s cheeks turned a different shade of red. “And that’s why Lena cut it off, because it definitely meant something, and neither of us wanted to act on it further until we talked to you about it.”

Kara cleared her throat dramatically, clearly struggling to maintain her composure. “Okay. So … you kissed each other?” Sam and Lena nodded. “And enjoyed it?” Sam’s face was slowly breaking into a grin, but she nodded again. “And now we’re all three of us having a big serious conversation because it means something possibly serious and involves all of us and that is what is going on right now, yes?” She glanced at Lena, who was now smiling as openly as Sam was, and they both nodded a third time. “Okay. … okay okay. So, yeah. Ummm…. I’m going to need a minute. Okay? Just a minute? I’ll be right back.”

Kara disappeared, and a bit of doubt crept back into Sam’s gut. She exchanged a look with Lena. “Shit, did we screw up somehow? Where is she going? What—” Her questions were interrupted by the sudden reappearance of Kara, followed immediately by a literal cloud of confetti raining down upon them. Sam couldn’t really see anything, but she could definitely hear Kara’s excited celebrations.

“Yayayayay! I am so happy for you both!! My girlfriends like each other! Or … like kissing each other! Sorry! I don’t want to assume anything! We can figure out what it all means in a minute! I just! Ahhhhhh! I’m so happy for you!”

As the confetti settled around them, Lena’s smile was beautiful to behold. “Christ, Kara. Be more adorable. I dare you. Were you … have you been carrying confetti with you everywhere just in case Sam and I decided we wanted to start making out on a whim?”

Kara froze, then laughed happily before pushing Lena’s seat back far enough away from the table so that she could sit lightly in Lena’s lap. “No, silly! I really didn’t imagine you two still had those sorts of feelings for each other. I just made the confetti just now, that’s why I needed a minute.” Sam’s face hurt from smiling already. Kara was so adorable---she didn’t know why she had been worried about this conversation in the least. Her body filled with warmth at the sweet picture in front of her.

As a couple, Kara and Lena were all perfectly complementary contrasts. The thin pale pink and black stripes of Kara’s sweater contrasted nicely with the deep plum of Lena’s. Half up, wavy golden locks shining beside the flowing dark curtain of Lena’s straight raven hair. (Sam loved the rare occasions when Lena wore it down.) Kara’s smile was all rosy cheeks and soft pink lips
whereas Lena’s was full and dark, sultry even in moments of joy. But the look of sheer adoration, true love, that flowed between green and blue eyes—that was universal. If Sam had to guess, she would assume she had a similar look on her own face.

Kara looked up at Sam suddenly. “So, what’s next then? Are you two dating? When should we tell people? How … ummm, wow I can’t think of a good way of phrasing this, but like … how involved do you two want me to be?” Sam snickered, mind immediately going to a delightfully sexual place.

“We can discuss——” Sam raised an eyebrow, then winked at Lena, “logistics later.” Kara immediately blushed, and Lena looked like she was already getting some of the same ideas that were swirling in the back of Sam’s mind. “For now … I think Lena and I will need a little time to figure out this new aspect of our relationship. And to heal from the last couple of months. I’d be surprised if things end up being all that much different, in the long run. But once Lena and I figure out what we’re doing, then we can talk about … how exactly we want to—how did you phrase it? —fit you in?” Sam heard her voice lower of its own accord, filling with a husky desire and playfulness.

Kara sputtered again. “Uhhh… uh hahaha umm. Okay? Sounds good?” Lena giggled, pulling Kara’s hair away from her neck enough to plant a series of soft kisses there. Sam could see her face relax, as her eyes closed and she gave into the feel of Lena’s lips on her neck, but then Kara’s eyes snapped open again. She floated easily off of Lena’s lap, landing lightly as she reached and pulled Lena to her feet. Then Kara was in Lena’s seat, grinning like a jackal, and Lena was confidently strutting towards Sam, after the gentlest shove by Kara.

Lena raised an eyebrow, trying to fight the smile that insisted on breaking across her face so that she could keep a sort of sultry look there. The result was terrifyingly adorable. “Is there room for two in this seat?” Sam pursed her lips, also fighting a grin. Her only response was to pat her thighs lightly, and Lena slipped down onto them, sliding an arm around Sam as Sam slid one around her back to support her weight. *Fuck, she smells so good.*

Meanwhile, Kara couldn’t have possibly looked more pleased with the outcome of this conversation. If Sam didn’t know any better, she would’ve felt almost like a piece of meat at the way Kara was gazing … *appreciatively* at the two of them. Lena asked, “You’re really completely okay with this, aren’t you?”

Kara shot Lena a look like she was completely insane for even asking. “Of course, I am! This is a dream come true. And it’ll probably make things that much easier, at least eventually!” Kara looked down for a moment, pensively. Her voice softened just the tiniest bit. “But really, I just want you both to be happy, and this is the happiest I’ve seen either of you since Reign happened.”

Sam startled slightly. Kara was absolutely right, but the idea of it caught her off guard. She hadn’t quite realized all the weight she had been carrying the last couple of months, even with all the joy that Kara and Ruby brought to her life. The guilt and shame of what Reign had done with her body, compounded by the loss of Lena’s steadying presence in her life, had been a lot for Sam to process. She was still processing it, she supposed.

But Lena’s weight in her lap felt real. Reliable. There was a lot to work out, but she felt genuinely hopeful that they would figure it out. *Together.*

Lena caught her gaze, and the gravity sprung to life again between them. Some part of the back of her brain felt a little self-conscious still, kissing Lena in front of Kara. But she couldn’t have stopped herself from leaning in if she tried. Her biggest concern was that she didn’t want anything
to feel performative. Whatever was going on between Lena and herself wasn’t something for Kara’s consumption, anymore than Kara and Sam’s affection had been for Lena’s. But … this wasn’t that. This was something more.

As Lena’s tongue slipped tentatively against her lip, seeking entry, it just felt right. Good. Sam smiled into it as she opened her mouth just a little wider, allowing Lena’s tongue in and moving her own to meet it. It felt sweet and sincere, and with her heightened senses it was like she could feel Kara’s sheer joy right alongside the warmth of her desire for Lena in the moment. Kara’s interest was appreciative and supportive—not leering. Pure compersion.

Sam pulled out of the kiss still smiling, but Lena was struck wordless. Kara giggled, and Sam joked, “Well, I guess that settles that.” She kissed Lena’s cheek, and in a moment of contentment, turned her attention briefly towards the pleasant sound of the waves crashing softly against the beach nearby. It was a complete accident that she heard what she heard, but it also kinda felt like fate, all things considered. She smiled her biggest smile of the night and caught Kara’s eye. Nodding towards the beach, she could pinpoint the exact moment when Kara turned her superhearing on and figured out what they were witnessing.

“AHHHHHH oh my Rao, yessssss.”

Lena felt as if her heart had grown three sizes. Not only had Kara and Sam forgiven her for her absolutely shitty behaviour—or at least, they were in the process of forgiving her—but Kara had been so enthusiastic about the potential … whatever … that was brewing between her and Sam. Her emotions bubbled up and threatened to overwhelm her, and on a whim, she reached her hand up and brushed Kara’s hair aside, exposing her neck. Lena smiled as she felt herself press warm kisses to Kara’s neck, tracing a line up towards her ear.

She felt Kara shudder then relax into it, but then she tensed again and pulled away. Suddenly Lena found herself on her feet, and Kara was nudging her towards Sam, who was just sitting there, coyly enjoying the proceedings. Lena felt her heart pounding nervously in her chest, and she hated that both of them could hear it so easily. Fucking superhearing. Still … she was Lena fucking Luthor, and she wasn’t going to let her nerves get to her.

Lena took a breath and held herself with her sexiest poise. Then she strutted straight over to Sam and asked if there was room for two in her seat. She was happy to see that Sam was struggling just as much as she was to keep a goofy ass grin off her face. She was doing her best to play cool and sexy, but she was just so excited by how well everything was going.

Planting herself down onto Sam’s lap, she smiled. Her nerves were gone, and maybe now the three of them could just hang out and enjoy a night of wine and flirting and … whatever else that might lead to. Then her eyes met Sam’s, and all rational thought went out the window. Her lips were on Sam’s in a heartbeat. She hadn’t leaned in for the kiss consciously, and she almost got nervous again until Sam’s lips opened to her tongue. After that, there was nothing going on in her mind but pure passion and desire. It was just like the night Sam rescued her from Cadmus—her body practically screamed for Sam.

When Sam pulled away and smiled at her, her body felt the loss. It was as if the world around her had faded away and then come rushing back into focus. Lena felt her eyes grow wide as she realized that she had just so thoroughly lost herself to the kiss. And Kara was just sitting there grinning at them. Lena felt so unusually out of control of her emotions right then. But it was okay, because she was with Kara and Sam. The two women she absolutely trusted with her life. And
Sam was acting odd, though. Her eyes focused off in the distance—if Lena had to guess, towards the beach. Lena watched as Sam’s already brilliant smile brightened even further, and she wondered what those overpowered ears were hearing right at that moment. Sam turned her smile towards Kara and nodded towards the beach, and suddenly Kara was captivated too. Kara squealed, then shouted in what could only be described as pure delight. Lena felt a slight pang of jealousy but squashed it. No … she couldn’t share in their immediate, superpowered experience, but they would share soon enough. They want me. They value me. That’s what matters.

Lena was so distracted with her internal struggle that she hadn’t noticed Sam turning back towards her. But her whispered voice was in Lena’s ear, and instantly her insecurities faded into the background. “Okay, so guess what is going on right fucking now?” Her words tickled Lena’s ear in the best way, and Sam very intentionally stroked a finger along Lena’s side seductively. “So … Alex and Maggie are down by the beach, and apparently—” Kara was watching them now, smiling softly at the casual intimacy, “—yup, Maggie and Ale are engaged now.”

Lena’s face broke into a smile again, and she turned and kissed Sam. As she pulled away, Kara was right there with them, and all three of them were exchanging excited kisses. As they all calmed down a little and pulled out of the kissing, Lena laughed. Kara and Sam looked at her expectantly.

“So, I have a secret to share. I’ve known about this for a while now. I took Maggie ring shopping.” Lena shrugged shyly, playing innocent. “She’s had the ring for a couple of weeks now, and I mean, I didn’t know she’d pull out the plan here in Midvale, but also … you know how Maggs can be. She may have just said fuck it and planned an impromptu beach proposal earlier today. She’s fiery like that.”

Sam just grinned at her, but Kara reacted exactly the way she predicted she would. “Leeeeeeeenaaaaaaaaa, how could you keep this from me? Alex is my sister. My sestra!” Lena grinned at the reference, since Orphan Black was the most recent show they had binged together. “And we live together! How did you keep this a secret??”

Lena kept her arms wrapped around Sam for support, but her attention was fully on Kara as she leveled her absolute best smirk at the blonde. “Well, I am a Luthor. I haven’t exactly forgotten how to keep a secret, darling.” She shrugged dramatically, to show that keeping such a monumentally wonderful secret was nothing to her, and Sam burst out laughing as Kara pouted. Lena leaned into her best friend’s body as the laughter worked its way through her system, enjoying the feel of being in her arms.

“Darlings?” Lena had to admit to herself that she rather liked calling them that, in the plural. “Let’s put something together for when they get home. Sam, check in with Eliza and Ruby, see how far off they are. Kara, do your Supergirl thing and put together some decorations and maybe some light desserts? Samantha can help you when she’s off the phone.”

Kara nodded enthusiastically. “So, what will you be doing, creampuff?”

“I will be dutifully admiring you and Sam at work, in the most heroic lesbian fashion, of course.” Inside, Lena felt like she was practically squealing in delight at her joke, but on the outside she kept herself at her full levels of sexy, unbothered calm. She raised an eyebrow to sell it, as if to say ‘of course I intend to laze about and simply enjoy the pleasure of watching you two gorgeous women getting shit done.’

Sam rolled her eyes and kissed Lena lightly on the lips. “You’re lucky you’re cute, Lee.” Then
she pulled out her phone to call Ruby.

Kara mimicked Sam, kissing her lightly and adding, “Ditto,” before literally sweeping Lena off her feet. In a blink, she was deposited at the kitchen table, before Kara turned into a party-making blur. It was right as a second blur joined Kara that Lena realized they would need a cover story. Ruby didn’t know about anyone’s secret identities after all, so they would need an alternative explanation for how they knew about the engagement and were able to prepare a small celebratory party in no time at all.

“Lovely beautiful superfast ladies of mine, please stop for a second and listen.” They did so, appearing in front of her with adorably expectant looks on their faces. “Ruby and Eliza are on their —” she heard the sound of a car pulling into the driveway, “—fuck, they are here. So. Quickly. I already knew about the engagement, and we stayed behind to put together this little celebration, not to have some big serious conversation about my lips on Sam’s lips or anything of that sort—because neither of you has super powers at all, you catch my drift?”

That is when Lena noticed the decorations, which were a literal rainbow of colour, though blue and purple were the primary colours. Someone had disappeared to find (or purchase) a large ‘Congratulations’ banner, and several bottles of champagne were on ice, with flutes lined up on the counter. There were balloons and streamers and almost certainly more confetti somewhere. Everything was perfect.

The bright smile across Eliza’s face as she and Ruby walked in told Lena that she thought so too. “Girls, this is lovely. I’m sure Alex and Maggie will love it.”

“Well, we’re about to find out! Everyone spread out, and when they walk in, we’ll all shout ‘congratulations.’” Kara could barely control her enthusiasm, and Lena loved it. She took her place by Kara’s side, with Sam on the other. Just as it seemed like they were about to walk in, there was a hard thump against the door. Then … rustling? Oh. Lena giggled, and Kara, who was obviously hearing a lot more than Lena was, produced a very loud fake cough. An audible “oh shit,” came from the other side of the door.

As Maggie led a visibly embarrassed Alex into the house, embarrassment gave way to surprise and joy as everyone shouted, “SURPRISE!” Maggie and Alex made their rounds, accepting hugs and showing off Alex’s ring. Maggie had been so right—it was perfect. It sat on her finger like it had always belonged there.

There was a glint in her eyes as Alex teased, “You know, Luthor, I’m still mad at you. But I hear you had a hand in this—” she held up her left hand theatrically, “—and I’ll give you major props for that. It is perfect. You’re still in the doghouse, but keep it up, maybe I’ll let you back into the family after all.” That was music to Lena’s ears, and more than she honestly expected.

“Thank you, Alex. Don’t worry—I won’t let you down again. I’m just … so happy to see you and Maggs this happy. Congrats, darling.” They hugged briefly, before Maggie wrapped her up in the biggest hug of the night.

“Thank you,” she whispered into Lena’s ear. “I totally could’ve done this on my own, but it’s so much better having my best gal pal by my side. Don’t worry about Alex; I’ll wear her down.” Lena chuckled, smiling brightly.

Sam popped up from behind Alex, handing champagne to the happy couple. Once everyone had a flute, she said, “Alright alright, story time. Tell us about the proposal!”

Maggie grinned at Alex, gesturing as if it were her story to tell. And honestly, the way Alex told
it, Lena was sure Maggie was right. Alex’s account of the proposal was so vivid, so heartfelt, that Lena felt as though she could actually see it. Almost as if she was actually there.

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They were walking down the beach. After Eliza took Ruby for ice cream, Maggie had insisted they go for a stroll, and Alex was happy to comply. It was a gorgeous night—the moon was full and bright, with not a cloud in the sky. There was a gentle breeze on the cool salty air. And Maggie’s hand felt so good in her own. They had walked for probably a good thirty minutes, just talking and smiling and enjoying each other. Eventually, Maggie asked Alex to sit down on the beach and to close her eyes.

She sat there, dutifully blind, for a good chunk of time. Three, maybe five, minutes passed, and she could hear the noises of Maggie doing something in the sand behind her. She giggled, trying to imagine what her tiny detective was up to. Then, finally, she felt Maggie’s arms around her forearms as she pulled Alex gently to her feet.

“Open your eyes, gorgeous.” Maggie was standing in front of her, the waves softly breaking against the beach behind her and the moonlight illuminating her in a silky blue-white light. Alex looked at her quizzically, and Maggie just winked, before taking her hands.

“You know, you had me from the moment you put on your ‘scary Agent Danvers’ face and told me that my jurisdiction ended where you said it did. I guess it still does, if you think about it.” Maggie cracked the most beautiful grin. “Even though you were pretending you were straight or whatever, it was pretty obvious that everything had changed in that moment. I can’t pretend that I realized it then—I was pretty wary of falling for you, as you well know. I really didn’t want to be the one to drag your oblivious ass out of the closet, but I knew I was fucked when you showed up in that dress at the fight club and did your whole ‘flustered at the sight of a pretty girl thing.’ Sorry it took me a while to get over myself.”

Alex’s heart fluttered. This trip down memory lane was clearly leading somewhere. Some part of her knew exactly where it was headed, but Alex was damn sure going to enjoy the journey. She smirked, thinking about how rarely she was able to get Maggie monologuing like this.

“But from the moment you came into my life, you’ve been making it even more of a mess than usual, and that’s saying something. I mean, we’ve each been kidnapped, and then saved each other. Fight clubs. Rogue aliens. Family squabbles. Couple of alien invasions. And yet … the most terrifying, exhilarating, absolutely amazing thing in my life this whole time—actually, ever—has been falling in love with you, Danvers.” Maggie couldn’t contain her smile, and Alex could feel the tears welling up in her eyes.

“I’m so proud that I’ve gotten to be here by your side as you’ve grown into yourself, into this brave, powerful, utterly compassionate woman who is just as capable of handling the hardest of emotional battles as easily as an alien invasion. You’re a lover and a fighter, and that’s what I love about you. You’re the most incredible person I’ve ever known, Danvers. You’re my ride or die. I told you once that we should always kiss the girls we want to kiss, and if there’s one thing I know for sure, it’s that you’re the girl I want to kiss. Each and every day. Forever.” Maggie gently spun Alex around, and her eyes lit up.

There, in the sand, Maggie had delicately traced out the words ‘Alex Danvers will you marry me?’ The word ‘Alex’ was smaller, written diagonally above the ‘Da’ of ‘Danvers’ and a bit more haphazardly than the rest of the words, as if Maggie added it at the last minute on a whim. So Maggie. The warm tears were falling slowly down her cheeks towards her almost painfully large
smile, and Alex turns back to face her soon-to-be-fiancée. Maggie wasn’t on a knee or anything, but she had the ring out and a huge smile on her face, dimples in full affect. “Well?”

Alex threw her arms around Maggie, careful not to knock the ring out of her hand, lifting her into the air and spinning her around like it was a movie. They were both laughing giddily. She sat Maggie back down on the beach and kissed her passionately. Then she pulled back and raised an eyebrow, snarking, “So does this mean you love me?” Maggie immediately punched her in the arm, and just stood there stubbornly waiting for an answer. “Yes, dummy! Yes! I will marry you!” Maggie put the ring on her finger, and Alex was blown away by how perfect it was. The silver of the band reflected the moonlight delicately, displaying the antique pattern carved into the band around the alternating amethysts and smaller diamonds. It was … Alex exhaled. It was just a piece of jewelry, but it fit her so perfectly. It was a symbol, of just how Maggie got her. It was a beautiful symbol of their bond. Alex loved it.

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By the end of the story, there wasn’t a dry eye in the room. Even Ruby had shed a couple of tears at the beautiful tale. Lena shared a tender look with Sam and Kara, and all three of them were clearly thinking about their earlier conversation. Love was in the air, and it was beautiful. Lena sighed—it was remarkable how quickly grief could give way to joy, and maybe the darkest of moments needed to be followed by the brightest sometimes. They spent the rest of the night toasting Sanvers (Sam was in on the portmanteau now, so all three of them kept trying to convince the couple that they absolutely had to change their last names), telling stories, and throwing out wedding ideas. The ideas got progressively more outrageous the more champagne was consumed. For Lena, it was almost magical. It was family.
A healthy amount of cloud coverage had moved in overnight, but it was still a beautiful day for a hike in Midvale. Sam was grateful that she and Kara had the same size in shoes, though she supposed she didn’t exactly need boots for hiking, since her feet were literally invulnerable. Still, she had already caught Lena checking her long, exposed legs out at least three times, and that was totally worth the tiny bit of extra effort she had put into her Tomb Raider-esque hiking attire. Lena, whose human body didn’t have the same sort of tolerance for the cool that Sam’s did, was wearing dark skinny jeans and a form-fitting, bright blue, heathered jogging half-zip top that made Sam really want to grab it and pull it off of her. And speaking of pulling, Lena’s perfect ponytail looked perfectly grabbable. Maybe Sam would give that a test later.

Lena had taken her to this forest that Kara adored, and they were just wandering through it, no particular destination in mind. It was an opportunity for them to just spend time together, the two of them, for the first time in months. And Sam could see that they really needed it. It was so refreshing getting to know Lena again. Between all of Sam’s alien issues and her new relationship with Kara—which also involved Lena working hard to keep things from changing too much in her own relationship with Kara—the two formerly best friends had started drifting apart even before everything blew up with Reign. Before Lena got all distant. This was the first time in years that Sam felt as though Lena could actually surprise her.

It was both refreshing and disheartening, to be perfectly honest. It hadn’t been that long ago that Lena and Sam had been so close it was almost like they could read each other’s thoughts. They had been each other’s person for years now. Lena was not just the Carol to her Abby; she was the Meredith to her Cristina. And now, through a perfect storm of tragedy, trauma, and pure insanity, they were in an entirely novel position, relationship-wise. Everything was both familiar and foreign.

“Okay but she really said ‘I flew here on a bus’ and then—what?—you just both pretended she didn’t say it?”

“I shit you not. Sam, it was the most precious thing ever. She froze, like a bespectacled deer in the headlights, after she said ‘flew here’ … like her brain was still processing that she had just dropped that information casually, then she stuttered her way into that ridiculous cover. She didn’t even bother disguising her grimace as she said it! I can’t believe she thought she just got away with it.” Lena’s voice was pure affection and joy.

“I’ve never really known Kara to let herself mess up that blatantly before—did your presence simply put her at ease or was it the opposite?” Sam had been walking a couple of paces ahead of Lena, and turned back to raise a teasing eyebrow as she asked the question.

“Well you know, Samantha, I’d like to think that our souls just recognized their mates in each other from day one, but we both know how intimidating I can be. And I was wearing a very stylish dress that day.” There was a hint of deviousness to Lena’s tone, and holy shit it was an incredible turn on. Sam wondered how it was possible that her intense sexual attraction to Lena had laid dormant for so long. Was it just something that her mind blocked out after the pain of their break up? Sam was suddenly intensely curious about it.

“Hey Lee?”

“Yes, Sam?” Lena picked up her pace until she was walking side by side with Sam again, and while she didn’t go for Sam’s hand, she was close enough that their hands kept swiping against
“When did you first start to realize that you were attracted to me again?” Sam tentatively let the intense vulnerability she felt inside seep out into her voice, just a little. Testing the waters of letting Lena in again, trusting her with her feelings.

Lena’s hesitation spoke to her own vulnerability on this topic. “I ... Sam, I never, umm, never stopped? Being attracted to you, that is.” She glanced over at Sam nervously, and she could hear Lena’s heartbeat speed up a tick. “I’m guessing that means … you stopped? At some point?”

Sam winced. She hadn’t meant it like that. “I … Lee, when we broke up, it hurt. I … shit, I just shut it all off, honestly. Buried all my feelings for you. Those feelings anyway. That’s probably part of the reason I never let myself fall for anyone else after that. Although … I don’t know, maybe I just hadn’t met the right person. I opened up pretty immediately to Kara after all, despite the fact that she had this amazing girlfriend already, who I happened to also have this terribly complicated history with.” Sam grinned impishly at Lena, trying to lighten the mood just slightly.

“This girlfriend sounds like a bitch, if you ask me.” Lena grinned back.

“Ohhh she can be, trust me. But she’s not so bad when she actually opens up and lets herself be vulnerable with the people who love her.” She elbowed Lena playfully in the ribs, careful not to use any of her considerable strength.

“Thanks, jerk.” Lena chuckled. “So … when did you start getting all hot and bothered for me again?” Sam’s head jerked sideways, eyes narrowed and lips pursed—Lena’s brashness had surprised her in the best way.

“Careful, Lee. Keep being saucy like that, and I might just tackle you right here in the woods.”

Lena snorted. “Oh no, that sounds just oh so terrible.”

Sam rolled her eyes and considered actually doing it but decided to at least answer Lena’s question first. “I could tell there was something different about you, something oh so intriguing, from the first moment I saw you again in National City. Kara changed you, awoke something in you, and yeah, I think seeing this new version of you definitely awakened something in me too. But I was distracted enough by Kara that I didn’t really think about it too much.”

Movement in her periphery distracted her, and she turned her head in time to see a small grey animal scamper away. At first, she guessed it was a cat, but it was definitely a small fox. Adorable little creature. She glanced over. Lena had missed it, her senses and reflexes much too slow. The two of them stopped, and Sam found herself captivated by the features of Lena’s face.

The warm sunlight, filtered through the still-growing canopy of the forest in the early spring, gave Lena’s delicate skin a warm, almost dewy appearance. Lena’s lips were every bit as full as ever, but their natural pink was unvarnished by any of the various shade of red lipstick she so regularly adorned them with. Sam’s alien eyes could detect the faint hint of the chapstick she had applied that morning. Her gaze traced a path from Lena’s lips across her wide jawline, past the slightest hint of pink in her cheeks to the piercing pale green of her eyes. Lena was wearing nothing but a bit of mascara, maybe a hint of eyeliner, and the green of her eyes almost appeared blue in the light of the forest. Her eyebrows were raised slightly, and her eyes searched Sam’s, as if to ask ‘do you like what you see?’ The left side of Sam’s lips tipped upwards in just a bit of a crooked grin, and she winked at the gorgeous woman in front of her.

That was when she noticed the tiny bird perched on the low-hanging tree limb just behind Lena.
It’s head was a striking yellow, with scattered black markings making their way down its plumage as yellow gave way to the white of its wings and tail feathers. It fluttered its wings slightly, and it almost looked as if it was performing the bird equivalent of making a silly face. Sam giggled, causing Lena to raise an eyebrow in question. “Has Kara ever told you what our nickname for you is, just between the two of us?”

Lena’s narrowed eyes said no. Sam grinned, then walked away, finding a nice shady spot under a tree to sit down. Lena followed her but refused to sit, apparently waiting to hear about the nickname. Sam patted the ground next to her.

“Come come, sit by me, and I’ll tell you everything you want to know.” Lena faked as though she were thinking it over, then sighed and took a seat, pressing herself against Sam’s side much more closely than was necessary. Sam grinned wider.

“So, you remember when you basically told me I should date your girlfriend then you tricked us both into meeting in the park?”

“I remember it a bit differently than that, but the story sounds vaguely familiar, yes.”

“Well, when Kara first came up to me in the park, she asked me if a little bird told me that she was going to be there. And the image of you in my head, as a tiny cartoon bird, was so hilarious it stayed with me. We’ve been calling you ‘little bird’ ever since.”

“That’s almost cute. I’ll allow it. But what made you think of it just now?” Lena’s fingers playfully tapped out patterns on Sam’s thigh. Sam could smell Lena’s shampoo now, mixed with the slightly more earthy scent of the light sweat she had worked up on their hike. She felt a warm spark tingle down her spine and settle low in her gut.

“Oh nothing. There was a little bird making faces at me behind you.” Sam’s arm was between their thighs, and she raised up her thumb casually, sneakily, so that Lena’s wrist would graze against it every now and again as she continued playing her light beats on Sam’s thigh. Then she took a deep, grounding breath.

“As for your other question … I let myself feel my attraction for you again when you saved my life.” Lena’s hand froze as her whole body tensed. “Sorry. The past months have been sort of a rollercoaster. When you freed me of her, it felt like we had all made it out on the other side. Things were so good with me and Kara, and yet you, Lena, you were the one who saved me. And I let myself wonder, just a little, what the future may hold for all three of us. Then …”

“Then I systematically pushed you away and cut you out.” Lena’s guilt saturated her tone, and Sam immediately took her hand, trying to ground her friend. They were both still feeling the pain of that wound, but Sam knew they could heal from it, together.

“Yeah,” she confirmed, softly and without any accusation in her voice. “But we’re here now, Lee. This time, we really are on the other side of it. We’re friends again, and … whatever else we might end up being.” Lena turned her head to meet Sam’s gaze, and the sudden proximity of their faces brought back flashes of that moment together on the roof of that building. The warm spark that had settled in her gut moved a little lower, pooling as all her senses heightened in anticipation. Lena’s nose grazed against hers as their lips moved to meet, softly at first and then with increased fervor.

Sam’s hand wrapped around Lena’s neck, pulling her face in closer as Sam’s tongue traced Lena’s teeth on its way to her tongue. Lena responded passionately, sliding her weight over until she was straddling Sam, pressing down into her hungrily. Sam remembered her thought from earlier, and
her hand moved upwards, grasping Lena’s ponytail firmly and pulling just enough to elicit a deep, “mmmmmm” from Lena’s throat.

Lena pulled back, hissing pleasantly. “I’m assuming you haven’t been intimate with a human since getting your powers, so just … be careful with me, okay?” The fact that Lena couldn’t keep her hands off of Sam as she asked the question told Sam that Lena trusted her not hurt to hurt her. And Lena’s eyes flashed brightly with pure desire as she leaned back into their kiss. It sent a terrific shudder down Sam’s body, and she gasped into Lena’s mouth as her hands tightened around Lena’s fragile form.

Lena’s hand came to rest on Sam’s chest, but it was not content to stay still. She traced a breathtaking line across Sam’s breast and down her side, slipping the tip of a finger under the fabric of Sam’s shorts and sliding sideways until her hand found the button, delicately unclasping it. Lena didn’t stop kissing Sam at all, if anything her tongue and lips grew even more hungry as her hand worked the zipper of Sam’s shorts down and drew a teasing line up the now damp fabric of her underwear. Lena turned her hand and slipped her fingers in slowly under the elastic band of the underwear, drawing a tingling hum through Sam’s throat.

Lena’s hand never stopped its downward motion, but she managed to move it so agonizingly slow through Sam’s slick curls that it felt like Lena would never reach her destination. Sam’s body tensed and jumped at each new sensation as Lena’s hand grew warmer and warmer. The only reason she hadn’t already demanded that Lena hurry the fuck up was that she was focusing on making sure that her body’s responses weren’t too enthusiastic. Her fingers traced sharp, but not too sharp, patterns against Lena’s back, and just as Lena’s fingers split teasing around her clit to slide instead softly down her now very wet folds, Sam’s hips arched up against Lena’s weight. She could feel the desire, hot and wet, coursing through her entire body.

Lena’s other arm left Sam’s collarbone and moved against the tree. She pushed them gently away, and Sam, catching on to what she was going for, used a brief bit of superstrength and flight to maneuver them away from the tree and onto the ground. Lena moved slightly so that she was firmly on top of Sam, and she continued kissing her passionately while her hand found a more stimulating angle to work from. Sam couldn’t take the teasing anymore, and she whimpered, “Lee, I’m not going to hurt you, now please please please just fuck me.”

Lena chuckled but complied. Two thoroughly lubricated fingers found their way gently inside of Sam, and she gasped again as Lena pressed into her, the heel of her hand making firm contact against Sam’s clit. “Mmmmm,” she moaned, and Lena fed off of the pleasure radiating through Sam’s body language. She could feel that same gravity between them again, but it finally felt as though their bodies were almost close enough. Sam’s head tilted back unintentionally in a groan of pleasure, but Lena wasn’t about to let up. She felt her friend’s lips and tongue pressed roughly against her collarbone and then up her neck, flicking, sucking, and kissing in an enticingly electric pattern that only increased the heat now surrounding Lena’s hand between her legs.

Sam could barely think straight, and her willpower was evenly divided between enjoying the things Lena was doing to her and making sure that her enjoyment didn’t crush the delicate limbs currently giving her such pleasure. Her back arched, and her efforts to control herself pushed them softly up into the air as Lena’s hand brought Sam closer and closer to the edge.

She managed to gasp, “I’m so close, I’m so close,” as Lena’s lips found their way up to her ear lobe. Lena sighed into her ear as she caught the lobe between her teeth, and that did it. Sam cried out in pleasure as the heat spread through her thighs and torso, tingling out into her limbs as her body rocked with the movement of Lena’s hand. She almost felt like her whole body was vibrating with the waves of her climax.
As she released a labored final breath of ecstasy, she accidentally dropped them the half a foot or so that they were floating, her whole body releasing as she unwound. Then her mind snapped to full attention, and her eyes popped open. She grabbed at Lena’s hand. “Lee, are you okay?! Please tell me I didn’t hurt you.”

Lena’s hand was soft and warm and still wet from being inside her. But there were no broken bones. Lena laughed, and Sam blushed. “My hand feels pretty great, actually. You felt kinda incredible as you came, darling.”

“Sorry! You just … wow, it felt so good I got lost in it, just for a second, and I was afraid …”

“You didn’t hurt me, Sam. You did good. But don’t worry, I think we can find some time to practice plenty, get you used to sex with someone as—” she leaned in, whispering the words seductively, “soft and delicate as me.” She planted the faintest ghost of a kiss on Sam’s lips, sending an aftershock shuddering through her body. It drove Sam wild, and she had Lena on her back in an instant.

“Alright, my turn. I’ve picked up a few new tricks since the last time you and I had a good roll in the hay, so to speak. Let me show you.”

“Quixotic,” Kara recited gleefully. “With the double-word score, that’s 52 points.”

“That’s impossible! Kara, promise me you’re not cheating!” Ruby was incredulous. Kara shot Ruby her most offended look.

“Ruby! You know me better than that! I would never cheat. I swear on R—on, on … ummm, potstickers.” Ruby and Eliza both grinned, knowing that Kara would never betray the sacred nature of her favourite snack food. The three of them were playing a casual game of Scrabble in the living room, with Parks and Recreation episodes streaming quietly in the background. Maggie and Alex were upstairs in their room, and Kara very much did not want to know what they were actually doing instead of catching up on Into the Badlands episodes like they had claimed. She had gladly turned a blind super ear to the goings on in that room.

Kara struggled a bit more with not eavesdropping on Sam and Lena’s hike, even though that was a little bit more of a challenge for her to hear from so far away. A couple of times she heard their heartbeats speeding up almost in unison, and it took a tremendous amount of control not to listen in more intently and to keep the silly grin off of her face. She had promised to give them their space together—when they wanted to involve her, she trusted that they would.

Fortunately, she was very much enjoying the bonding time she was getting with Ruby and Eliza. They had been lazing about in PJs all day, and it was oh so relaxing. Kara was particularly impressed by Eliza’s ability, when Ruby asked many, many questions about Kara at her age, to answer them warmly and genuinely without at all giving away that she was obfuscating, and at times outright lying, to protect Kara’s secret.

Ruby had an odd look on her face, one that Kara hadn’t seen before. It was like she was puzzled but didn’t want to show that she was puzzled. Maybe? Kara raised an eyebrow, hoping the girl would open up to her. Ruby sighed, then asked, so quietly that Kara was sure Eliza didn’t hear her, “What’s quixotic mean?”

Kara beamed at the girl. Ruby was such a smart kid, and she was maybe just a smidge too proud about that fact. Of course she didn’t want to admit she didn’t know what the word meant. The fact
that she was willing to ask Kara rather than sneakily look it up on her phone told Kara that the girl was really starting to trust her.

“Great question, Ruby! Okay so it’s like … really overly idealistic. Like … naively or impractically so.” Ruby considered her words.

“So … like when Mom tells me I can be anything I want to be if I just put my mind to it?”

“Yeah! Wait … no!” Kara winced. “That’s … more of a … I mean, sure, it’s idealistic, but not … you can …”

“What Kara is trying to say is that your mom is right, in a way. Once you figure out what you’re really meant to be, what your heart really wants from life … as long as you work your hardest, you can absolutely accomplish your goals and be whoever you want to be.” Kara sighed. Thank Rao for Eliza. “I think quixotic is more like … if we thought that every city having a Supergirl would automatically solve all the world’s problems.”

“Yeah! Like that,” Kara agreed. “As hard as Supergirl works, she is just a person after all, and some problems are beyond even her.” Kara had no problems admitting her own limitations, especially as she got older and wiser.

“I guess it’s a good thing Supergirl has Power Girl watching her back then, huh?” Ruby’s comment was so insightful that Kara almost worried she suspected something.

“You’re a fan of Power Girl, huh, Ruby?” Eliza sounded genuinely curious. She had been genuinely worried when Kara and Lena first explained the whole Power Girl née Reign thing. But she had softened the more Kara explained how much Sam had been through. How traumatic it had been for her. Eliza was ever the nurturer, and by the time they had decided that Sam would take her place as a hero alongside Supergirl, Eliza had become one of her biggest supporters. Kara thought that she was really happy that Kara had someone in her life—her everyday life, unlike Kal—who could understand her, in a way that Alex and Lena couldn’t. “You aren’t concerned with all the negative things people have to say?”

“Nope! People are stupid and mean. I mean … some people. Lots of people. But not all people.” Ruby frowned. “Power Girl very obviously isn’t Reign. You can see it in the photos she and Supergirl took together, in the way she talks about Supergirl. She cares about Supergirl, wants to protect her. She admires Supergirl as much as the rest of us. She couldn’t …” Ruby’s frown deepened.

“It’s okay, sweetie. We get it. And we agree, don’t we Kara?” Eliza glanced over, and Kara smiled brightly at Ruby.

“Of course, we do! Alex says Power Girl is really cool, actually.” Ruby looked up at her hesitantly, a smile forming on the edges of her lips.

“Really? I knew she worked with Supergirl, but Power Girl too?”

“Yeah, apparently they’ve become pretty good work friends lately! She worries about Power Girl, though. Apparently she still feels really guilty about the things that Reign did, and all she wants to do is prove to the world that she just wants to help. I think things have been pretty hard for her lately. So it’s good to know that she has fans!”

Ruby laughed. “Well I’m definitely a fan. Supergirl’s still my first love, but Power Girl is awesome. And Kara?” She leaned in closer, voice quieting. “Can I tell you a secret?”
The girl whispered, “I think Power Girl’s suit is way cooler. Black and red just … I mean it’s a great colour scheme. And that mask is smart. I worry someone is going to figure out who Supergirl is one of these days, she doesn’t even bother hiding her identity.”

“Your secret is safe with me.” Kara tried not to laugh. It was adorable that Ruby’s affections were so divided between her mom and her mom’s girlfriend, even though she didn’t know it. *Or did she?* The way that Ruby worried after Supergirl’s identity made Kara wonder, so she slyly defended Supergirl in order to gauge Ruby’s reaction. “I think it’s important to her that people not think she has anything to hide. Supergirl is proud of who she is.”

Ruby didn’t look like she was trying to insinuate anything, not really. In fact, she seemed genuinely to be struggling with that idea. “So … you think Power Girl has something to hide?”

Kara hadn’t thought about it that way. “Ummm, no, not exactly. I mean … she was human for most of her life, right? She probably has a life and people she cares about—maybe she’s just not used to the whole superhero life, and wearing a mask made more sense for her? Maybe she and Supergirl just see it differently, you know?”

“Yeah, I think that makes sense. And maybe Supergirl doesn’t really have a secret identity or anything… maybe she’s just Supergirl all the time?” Ruby seemed to convince herself, thinking that that made the most sense.

“Maybe so, dear. That would certainly explain why she doesn’t bother wearing a mask.” Eliza’s voice almost sounded sincere, despite the many conversations she and Alex had had with Kara over the years about the inevitability that she would be found out eventually. She played the word ‘tonic.’

Ruby’s attention was fully away from the game at this point, however. “Hey Kara?”

“Hello, Ruby?”

“Are you excited about Alex and Maggie’s engagement?” Kara narrowed her eyes suspiciously.

“Yeahhhh? Of course I am. Why do you ask?”

“Welllll … I was just wondering if you were gonna get engaged to my mom someday? Or to Lena?” Ruby put a hand to her chin, pondering. “Or both? Can you do that?”

Kara nearly fell out of her chair. She was absolutely not prepared for this line of questioning. Eliza laughed out loud. Meanwhile, Ruby was looking over at her expectantly.

“Ummm. Wow. Okay. Well … let me ask you, Ruby? Is that something you would be okay with, I mean, someday?”

Ruby considered it. “I mean, yeah, as long as you don’t scare Lena off. You make Mom really happy, and you’re really cool and nice and fun to hang out with. Plus your mom is really cool. If you and Mom got married could we come back to Midvale all the time?!” Her voice was full of excitement now.

“Sweetie, you and your mom are always welcome here, regardless of any future, uhh, nuptials.” Ruby smiled back at her.

“And … you know, I don’t know what the future holds, Ruby. I’m beyond happy for Alex and
Maggie, but marriage isn’t necessarily for everyone. And it’s definitely more complicated when more than two people are involved, kiddo.” Ruby frowned again, maybe confused as to why that would make a difference. “In the United States, it’s illegal to be married to more than one person,” Kara clarified. “There are a lot of good historical reasons for that, but it is maybe kind of an unnecessary and outdated law these days. But regardless, whatever happens with me and your mom and Lena in the future, all you need to worry about is that I love your mom a whole lot. And we’ll always keep you in the loop on our plans, okay?”

“Yeah, that sounds good.”

Kara pulled her into a fierce hug. “Yeah, I think so, too.”
The sound of her alarm going off pulled Sam from the most blissful dream, and she was tempted to reach out and crush her phone as punishment for its insolence. Fortunately, the now rousing blonde curled into her side reminded her that real life was every bit as blissful now as any dream, and so she simply reached over and turned off the alarm, then shifted until she and Kara were face to face.

“Morning, sleepy Blondie.” Kara nuzzled her nose to Sam’s without opening her eyes.

“Five more minutes,” she plead softly, eliciting a chuckle from her girlfriend.

“No can do, babe. We’ve gotta get ready for work, and we’ve also gotta make sure Ruby gets to school.”

Kara made a low noise in her throat in complaint. “But we have superspeeede.”

“Which my daughter cannot find out about for at least another three years.”

“You know I respect that, but what happens in the privacy of your bedroom is off limits to your daughter. Five more minutes.” Sam was almost tempted to give in. Her and Kara’s legs were comfortably entwined, and the warmth of her body was so inviting. Plus Kara never looked more angelic than when she was half asleep and refusing to get out of bed in the morning. A petulant angel, but an angel nonetheless.

Sam leaned in and kissed Kara’s forehead, earning a smile even if Kara still refused to open her eyes. “Well, I’m going to get completely naked and hop under the deliciously hot water of my shower right now. But if you want to stay here in bed—” Sam used her speed and flight to spring from bed and drag the comforter and sheet off of Kara’s body, “—without any covers, that is your prerogative.”

Kara groaned loudly, but she was only a couple of seconds behind Sam getting into the shower. Sam screeched when Kara pinched her ass. “Kara, what the fuck?”

“That was for tempting me out of bed with all of your sexiness. Now kiss me.” Neither of them had brushed their teeth yet this morning, but Sam didn’t even care. The shower was exactly nineteen minutes longer than strictly necessary. Sam was a big fan of Kara’s concept of punishment. And she was definitely awake now.

As Sam was adding a bit of wave to her freshly dried hair, she heard Kara’s voice from inside the closet. “Hey Sam, how are things going with Lena?”

Sam wasn’t quite sure how to answer that question. They had spent another day in Midvale before coming home yesterday, and things felt really great between her and Lena. But they hadn’t really had time to talk yet about the nature of their relationship or what either of them was expecting going forward.
“I’m not really sure how to answer that, babe. I need to talk to Lena first.” Kara was suddenly in the bathroom, wearing trousers and a white button-up she hadn’t had time to button yet. A concerned look clouded her face. “There there, calm down, weirdo. Things are good!” Kara breathed a sigh of relief, then buttoned up her shirt in a flash. “I just don’t quite know what we’re doing yet. And that’s fine—we’re not in any rush to go defining things.”

“Really?” Kara’s concern had been replaced with confusion. She had returned to the bathroom with a sweater over her top, and now they were putting on their makeup together. Sam wasn’t sure how it managed to work out this way, but the morning routine when Kara was over always somehow found them doing their makeup at the same time. If Sam didn’t know any better, she would think Kara planned it purposely, but it always felt natural, never forced.

“Like I said, I should really talk to Lena—I’m pretty sure that she’s fine with all three of us sharing info about our individual relationships, but it isn’t something we’ve talked about specifically yet.”

“So, you guys went on a long hike together and an ice cream date in Midvale, and never once had a talk about defining the relationship?”

“That’s exactly what I’m telling you, Kara. I don’t know, our relationship is just … different than what either of us have with you. Like I said, I don’t think either of us really feels the need to rush to label it or anything. We’re just … we’re in a good place now, and we’re still healing. Suffice to say, I’m just happy to explore it. So far, it’s just ummm, really sexy. And that’s all I’ll say about it for now. Let me talk to Lena first, okay?”

Kara had already finished her makeup (she wore a little less than Sam did, unless she was in Supergirl mode—she still wouldn’t admit the obvious truth that she threw on additional makeup and added some volume to her hair when she changed, but that was the only explanation that made sense to Sam). She gave Sam a kiss on the cheek, as if to say ‘fine, you do you,’ then she walked at human speed down the hall towards the kitchen to make breakfast for Ruby.

Sam finished up her mascara and grabbed her blazer and heels on the way out of the bedroom. A smile remained, seemingly permanent, across her face as she walked into the living area, where Ruby and Kara were currently having a heated argument about the Season 2 finale of *The Good Place*. The mornings when Kara was here were Sam’s favourites. She loved how quickly Kara had become a part of their little family.

“Kara! Chidi was speaking English, in a perfect American accent. Sure, he was in Australia, so it makes sense that he would speak English. But if it were real life, he’d have a French accent.”

Kara stuck her tongue out at Ruby as she slid the final couple of pancakes onto the serving plate. “You’re too smart for your own good, Rubes. I know that I can’t explain Chidi’s accent, but I still want to believe that Michael brought them back to life for real. Another simulation just feels too cheap. It doesn’t have the same emotional and moral resonance. And that’s what the show is really about!”

“Okay okay, enough fighting you two. I swear this is the tenth time you’ve had this argument, and it’s the same every time. How did you even get onto this topic?” She grabbed a plate and a couple of pancakes, and Ruby passed the butter and syrup.

“Ruby thought it would be funny to answer a question with a snarky *The Good Place* gif, and things sorta spiraled from there. You know how we get.”

Sam rolled her eyes, grinning the entire time. “Oh yes, I do. You’re both the worst.”
“That’s just rude, Mom. You just don’t understand the bond that Kara and I share.” Ruby elbowed her playfully, and Sam responded with her best ‘careful girl, I’m still your mom’ look.

“Ruby, did you catch up on all your homework last night?”

Ruby rolled her eyes. “Yeeees, Mom. And yes, I made sure it’s all in my backpack.”

“Good girl.” Sam caught Kara smiling at them and raised an eyebrow in question.

“Sorry!” Kara blushed. “You’re just such a cute mom is all. I love Mom Sam.”

“You know that I’m always Mom Sam, right babe?”

“Pssh, you know what I mean, dork.” Kara leaned across the bar and kissed Sam. Her lips tasted of syrup, and Sam resisted the urge to deepen the kiss. She knew Ruby didn’t love it when they were too affectionate in front of her.

Sure enough, Ruby couldn’t stop herself from weighing in. “You guys are so cute it’s gross, you know that?”

Kara fixed Ruby with her best Kara Danvers puppy dog pout and asked, “Come on, Ruby, don’t you love how happy I make your mom?”

Ruby rolled her eyes, finishing off her breakfast and standing up to put her plate in the dishwasher. “Ugh, fine. I like that Mom’s happy. But that doesn’t mean I have to like it when you guys make out all over the place.”

“Hey!” Kara and Sam exclaimed in unison.

“We do not ‘make out all over the place.’ I would say that we’re very discrete around you, kiddo. You would die if you knew the kinds of things we got up to when you’re not around.” Sam winked at Kara, drawing a wild blush to her cheeks and a loud groan from Ruby.

Mom! T. M. I.”

“Hey, that’s what you get for shaming me for kissing my girlfriend. There are always consequences for your actions, girlie.” Ruby made a petulant face, and Sam stuck her tongue out playfully. Kara rather awkwardly kept her eyes down as she grabbed Sam’s plate and fork, as if she was going to put them away. “Now, are you ready to go?”

“Yeah, just let me grab my jacket.” Ruby took off up the stairs, and Kara quickly pulled out the extra two dozen pancakes she had made for their Kryptonian dietary needs. The two of them scarfed down the additional food at full speed, as they did every morning they had breakfast with Ruby. As the heard the sounds of Ruby’s footsteps approaching the stairs again, Kara quickly polished off the syrup on her plate and placed the remaining dishware in the dishwasher. As Ruby reentered the room, Sam turned back to Kara, wrapping her arms around her lower back and pulling her close.

“Have a great day at work, sweetheart.” She kissed her softly but slowly, enjoying the sweet taste of her lips almost as much as the additional dramatic groan she earned from Ruby somewhere behind them. “Lock the door on your way out?”

Kara nodded, smiling brightly. Then she looked over Sam’s shoulder to tell Ruby goodbye. “Have a great day at school, Rubes! Remember, it’s a big day at work for your mom and Lena, so if you need anything give me a call unless it’s something you absolutely need Sam for, okay?”
Sam pulled away from her to grab her briefcase and purse. Ruby answered, “Sure thing, Kara. Will you be back tonight?”

“I don’t think so. I’ve got plans with Alex, and I don’t know how long that’ll take. But I’ll be back home with Lena tonight, I think.”

“Oh okay! Tell her I said hi! She should come for dinner sometime this week.”

Sam jumped in, corralling Ruby towards the garage. “I’m sure she would love to Rubes. Now, we gotta get going. Bye, babe!”

“Bye Kara!”

“Bye!”

Sam strolled into her office looking hot as hell. Lena felt herself blink several times as she took in the vision before her. She was wearing a perfectly tailored, two-piece, dark blue suit with a shimmery pale green top and matching heels. And she had clearly noticed the slight uptick in Lena’s heartbeat because suddenly her gait, already confident as usual, turned into a legitimate strut as she approached Lena’s desk.

“See something you like, boss?”

“Someone’s feeling saucy this morning.” Lena grinned, and Sam’s face mimicked hers. “I supposed we should discuss ground rules for workplace behaviour?”

“Well then, add that to the agenda, boss. Should we start there?” They took a seat together on the couch.

“We shall. Rule the first: stop calling me boss.” Lena smirked. “At least … at work, anyway.” Lena could tell by the increased warmth of Sam’s cheeks and her subtle lip bite that she caught Lena’s meaning. “Just give me one second, please.” She pulled out her phone and shot Kara a quick text message.

[8:21 a.m.] Next time you send your girlfriend to work looking this hot, please at least give me a warning. I nearly fell out of my chair, darling. It would’ve been so embarrassing, and highly unprofessional ;)

She quickly turned her phone over and set it down, so that Sam couldn’t see. Then she cleared her throat dramatically. “Now then, I suppose we should have a ‘no affection in the workplace’ rule, at least … outside of one-on-one meetings in this office.”

Sam smirked, eyes still glancing back and forth between Lena and her phone. “Probably add ‘flirting’ to that rule also, as difficult as that will be. We wouldn’t want anyone who works for us to get the wrong idea.”

“No, we wouldn’t,” Lena agreed, wryly.

“Speaking of which … what exactly would be the right idea, so to speak?” Lena felt her head tilt slightly in confusion. “Kara … this morning she was asking how you and I are doing, and I didn’t really have an answer for her. We haven’t exactly talked about us yet, you know?”

Us. That still sounded so alien to Lena. Maybe because she had no idea what it meant. What does
Sam want us to be? What does she expect from me? Lena’s stomach churned a little as her nerves got the better of her.

“Woah woah woah, Lee, settle down there.” Sam put a hand on her knee. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you. I’m not ... I’m not trying to rush into anything, okay? We don’t have to put any labels on this that we don’t want to.” Lena moved her hand down her own leg, creeping it under and into Sam’s. She felt embarrassed that she freaked out a little.

“Sorry, love. You’re absolutely right. I’m just being silly.” She glanced up at Sam. “But then ...”

“Why even ask?” Sam quirked an eyebrow cheekily. “Because I was curious how you would react. Also ... because no matter what, it’s important that we talk to each other and that we’re honest. But just to be clear—I don’t have any expectations here. I just wanna see where this takes us, find whatever the comfortable place is for our relationship. What we have doesn’t have to be like what you and Kara have or what Kara and I have.”

Lena smiled. “Of course not. I mean ... maybe, but you’re right. We’ll figure that out together. And there’s no rush. For now ... friends? With the possibility of more?”

“I think we’re already well into the ‘more’ territory, Lee, but yes. Friends is a fine label for now. And it’s a hell of a step up from what we were a week ago.”

They had apparently made enough progress in Midvale that Lena’s mouth didn’t mind retorting, “You’re never gonna let me live that down, are you?” before her brain could even think about not saying it. Sam chuckled in response, and that’s when a soft noise from her phone told Lena that Kara had responded. Lena shouldn’t have been surprised that the only response she got was a string of a good ten or twelve laughing emojis. Typical Kara.

[8:25 a.m.] Oh sure, laugh at my plight. I might have to rethink this whole polyamory thing if we can’t work as a team on this, love.

“I’m not letting it go anytime soon anyway.” Sam pulled Lena’s hand, clearly going for her phone, but when Lena opened her mouth to protest, Sam instead brought the hand to her lips and kissed it, seductively rather than sweetly. “So. If you’re done sending silly texts to our girlfriend—” Lena blushed, cursing that in her comfort and joy she had allowed her face to betray the emotions she felt, “--let’s assess where we’re at. Professional behaviour at work. More than friends who are figuring out what we are to each other. I think the only thing left for us to discuss is my job title.”

Lena’s heart dropped out of her chest. The pain of all the awful things she had said to Sam the last time they discussed this topic ate away at her. “Sam, I can never take back the things I said to you, but I will do everything in my power to atone for them.” Sam made as if to interrupt, but Lena raised her hand, silently asking not to be interrupted. “I know that you’ve forgiven me, but ... I just want you to know that I know what I said was wrong. It was my insecurity speaking. I know that you believe in me and in what we’re doing here at L-Corp. I know that your desire to take a step back, to let Kaziah take over the reins, it’s not ... I know you’re not abandoning me or our goals. I know that you just want to be able to contribute to L-Corp, to Power Girl, and to Ruby, without failing any of us. I know that it’s all important to you. And I know that you wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t the right thing.”

Sam’s eyes were just a bit watery, Lena thought, and so maybe what she said hit home. “Lena. I know—” She stopped, thinking. “No, you know what? Thank you. I needed to hear that. Deep down, I knew it. I knew that you didn’t really think all those things about me. But I feel a lot better hearing it.” She looked over at Lena almost shyly. “So ... you’re really okay with me
Lena squeezed her hand. “I’m more than okay with it, Sam. I’m going to do everything I can to make this work, and to protect your identity while I’m at it. We’ll get you an office right by a stairwell that leads to the roof.” Lena paused, a question on her tongue that she was fairly sure she knew the answer to already. “Umm, does Kaziah?”

“Know that I’m Power Girl? Yeah. I mean, I didn’t even have to tell her. She knew about Reign, and she put two and two together even before the Cat Grant article. She’ll protect my secret even more vociferously than she has Kara’s, don’t worry.” Sam grinned enthusiastically, then glanced down at her own phone, which had made the adorable little noise it did when Kara texted a bit earlier in the conversation. Sam chuckled, then scolded Lena. “Kara says you’re being a big baby, but if you insist, she’ll warn you next time. Do I wanna know?”

“Oh, I just told her that it was rude not to warn me how hot you look today, no big deal. I’m certainly not being a big baby.” Lena made a dramatic face, earning a fake exasperated look from Sam.

“Oh hey, that reminds me, is there anything between us that should stay between us, in terms of what I talk to Kara about when it’s just me and her?”

Lena pondered the question, thinking it over seriously. “I really don’t think so. If there is ever anything, we can discuss it, but I’m all for Kara being as involved as possible. I’m not looking to keep anything from her. What about you?”

“I feel the same. But yeah, we’ll talk about it if we need to.”

“Great! Going back to Kaziah, I trust her too.” A random thought leapt to mind. “Wait a second … Are you and Kaziah still, ummm, fooling around?” Lena felt a little awkward asking and a little more awkward that the question hadn’t occurred to her until just now.

Sam chuckled, then explained, “No, not since I’ve been with Kara. I’m not saying never again, because wow Ziah is, you know, just like stupid good at sex, but for now… I just wanted to focus on things with Kara. New relationships are challenging enough as it is, and we already had the complications of me being a mom and her being in a long-term relationship with my best friend. Ziah understood. Understands.”

“But I’m guessing she doesn’t know about you and me yet. Is that going to be a problem, you think?”

“Nah. She’s not the jealous type. Plus she knows about our history and how close we are. She’ll be fine.”

“Okay. Then I won’t hide anything from her when we discuss the transition. We’ll tell her why you and she are swapping roles, even though I will make sure she understands that I believe in her fully. I don’t want her to think she’s less than worthy of the promotion. I’ll also make it very clear that it’s up to her to cover any slack left by your duties as Power Girl, and to protect your identity at all costs. We’re going to make this work, okay?”

“That means a lot, Lena. I have no doubt that we can trust Kaziah, but I also don’t want to burden her beyond what she is comfortable with. I don’t mind asking her to help cover for me, but I won’t let you make it seem like an order, okay? She deserves to have that choice.” Sam’s voice was firm and insistent. Lena had no doubt that she would have forced Kaziah if that’s what was necessary to protect Sam, but she respected Kaziah too much to do so unless it was a last resort.
And she knew that the best ally was the willing one.

“Agreed. She’ll also have a voice in how much publicity we want to give to the first alien CFO in the country. As much as I would love to shout it from every rooftop, I want Ziah to be absolutely comfortable in her new role.”

Sam leaned back, resting both arms across the back of Lena’s couch. “Glad that we are so thoroughly on the same page, Lee. That makes everything so much easier.” Lena mimicked her posture, and as a result, the toe of her heel just happened to find its way just under the perfectly hemmed seam of Sam’s pantleg. She slid her toe casually upwards, maybe an inch, before sliding it ever so softly back down Sam’s leg. Sam’s eyes sparkled with restrained desire. “Before we get on with our workday, tell me when I can take you out for drinks this week.”

“I’ll have to check with Jess, but I’m pretty sure I could go for a nightcap after work on Wednesday, if that works for you.” Sam leaned in close but left her leg in place so that Lena didn’t have to stop teasing her with her foot.

She whispered, “That works for me,” before leaning in all the way and kissing Lena firmly. Then she stood up and held out a hand. “Now. To business?”
“Danvers, welcome back.” Kara froze, did a double take, and then turned around slowly to face Snapper Carr. Who just (1) used her real name and (2) was friendly to her. A deep sense of dread filled her chest. What is going on? Snapper looked normal; it wasn’t like he was smiling or anything. Seriously, what the heck is going on?

“Uhh, thanks Mr. Carr.”

“Don’t look so shocked. Come on, I need to talk to you in my office.” He didn’t give her time to question him, turning and heading through the nearby door. Kara followed reluctantly, standing awkwardly just inside the door as Snapper took a seat at his desk. He looked up at her curiously, then sighed. “Danvers, take a seat. Stop being weird.”

Kara hesitated, but took one of the two seats across the desk from Snapper. “What ummm … what is—”

“Look, first of all, I just wanna offer my condolences. Losing a parent is hard, especially at your age.” He said it like he was speaking from experience, and Kara’s heart softened a little. Snapper Carr was being sincere and just the tiniest bit vulnerable with her. This was officially the strangest day of her life.

“Thanks. It’s been tough, but we got through it as a family. I really appreciated the days off.” Kara had been really nervous she would have gotten pushback on her request, but now she could see why it hadn’t been an issue.

“Of course.” Snapper grunted, clearly having grown uncomfortable with the pleasantries. “Now. I called you into my office for a reason.” He fixed her with a sort of skeptical, assessing look over the glasses that rested lower on his nose. It wasn’t intimidating exactly, but it certainly wasn’t encouraging. “Your investigation of that alien trafficking ring. I know you’ve been away, but have you been keeping up with the reception? I assume you’re tracking how things are going on the justice side of things?”

She had. The NCPD had worked with the FBI (the actual FBI, not the DEO posing as FBI) to take down the ring after Kara exposed them. She had worked with Maggie on the timing of the piece so that there was no opportunity for them to go to ground. All but one of its leaders were in custody, and now that Supergirl and Power Girl were back in town, she was confident that they would track down the last guy soon. A gang of humans had been abducting unregistered aliens, preying on refugees who were too scared or too paranoid to try to come out of the shadows and join human society. These aliens were then sold into slavery or servitude of various sorts, depending on their particular abilities or skills (or lack thereof). It was horrifying, and it had been one of the most difficult experiences of Kara’s life. The investigation had taken her a month and a half, and it had been heartbreaking and blood-boiling in equal measures. Kara was tremendously proud of the work she put in on that story.
She hadn’t really paid much attention to what, if any, reception her article had received though. “Detective Sawyer has been keeping me informed of the legal proceedings. Apparently there are some jurisdictional issues to resolve, but they’ve got all but one of the ringleaders in custody. But otherwise, I haven’t really paid much attention to—”

“The article was your best work. I hate to admit it, but you may very well be an honest to god reporter, Danvers.” The praise almost seemed to physically hurt Snapper. “Doubt you’ve got what it takes to actually challenge the competition for a Pulitzer, but you’ve proven you belong here, kid.”

Kara couldn’t hide her smile any longer. Snapper had always been her biggest critic, often unfairly so, and hearing him tell her that she belonged there felt like a career milestone. He was an ass, sure, but he was also a damn good reporter, and his opinion meant a lot to Kara. Even though she kind of hated him.

“Ugh. Don’t let it go to your head, Danvers. And don’t think I’m gonna start taking it easier on you. I actually have expectations for you now, so if anything, this job is about to get even more difficult. But like I said, you’ve proven yourself. And in doing so, you’ve earned a promotion.” A promotion?! “From here on out, you’re officially a beat reporter for the National City Tribune. You’ll be covering all things alien. Congrats.”

“Thank you, Mr. Carr. You won’t regret this.” She knew better than to let herself ramble around the overly gruff editor-in-chief.

“I better not. And don’t think you’re untouchable just because you’re Cat’s golden child. Now, you’re an employee of my paper, under my supervision, so it was damn well gonna be my choice to promote you and my conversation to have with you. But. Cat wants to see you in her office when we’re done here. Which we are, so you can move along now.” He waved her out dismissively, but just before she walked out, he stopped her. “Oh, and one last thing. You’re a reporter now, not some worthless stringer. ‘Bout time you started calling me Snapper.”

She didn’t have a clue how to acknowledge that, so she just kept walking. As soon as she cleared his door, she hopped excitedly before pulling out her phone and shooting off a text to her group chat with Lena and Sam.

*Sunny D*: [8:41 a.m.] **Your girlfriend is officially the Trib’s newest alien issues beat reporter!!!**

Their responses were nearly immediate and instantaneous.

*Sam Bam Thank You Ma’am*: [8:41 a.m.] **A PROMOTION?!?! CONGRATS BABE!!!**

*Little Bird*: [8:42 a.m.] **Snapper finally got his head out of his ass. This is wonderful news, darling. Well deserved!! Celebratory dinner tonight?**

Kara thought it over before typing out a quick response.

*Sunny D*: [8:43 a.m.] **I’ve got plans with Alex, but let me check with her. Maybe we can meet up with everyone for dinner or at least drinks. We’ll figure it out, or if not, we can all go out tomorrow, okay?**

*Sam Bam Thank You Ma’am*: [8:43 a.m.] **Sure thing, Blondie. Just let us know!**

Suddenly, Kara remembered that Cat wanted to see her, so she sprung back into motion, hitting the
stairs. On her way, she typed out a quick text to Alex.

[8:46 a.m.] 2 things. 1) I got a promotion! Full-time alien issues beat reporter!! And 2) how long is ring shopping gonna take, do you think? Sam & Lena wanna celebrate by taking me out for dinner. Any chance we could meet them (+ Ruby & Maggie?) after we’re done?

She exited the stairs but waited for Alex’s response before heading into Cat’s office. She could see Alex typing for a good two minutes before the response finally came.

[8:49 a.m.] Kara! I am so proud of you. We should absolutely celebrate. Tell Lena to make plans for whatever restaurant you want, at 7. I’ll come grab you from CatCo a little earlier than planned, and we should be fine.

Kara grinned, typing out her thanks and then messaging Lena to get them a table for six, somewhere Lena knew she would love. Sometimes Kara enjoyed being surprised. Then she strode confidently towards Cat’s office. Eve grinned at her and waved her in, apparently having already been told to expect her. As she walked in, Cat stood up from her very comfortable chair, a pleased look on her face. Then she extended her arms dramatically in front of her and applauded Kara. She may have had a devious grin on her face, but Kara knew the sentiment was genuine.

She tried, and failed, to avoid blushing. “Ah. Please stop, Ms.—err, umm Cat.”

“No, Kara, I don’t think I will. You’ve done tremendous work in your short career, and this promotion has been a long time coming. If it were solely up to me, you’d have been a permanent beat reporter long ago. And as I’m sure Lucas didn’t give you the pomp and circumstance you’re due, I’m forced to yet again step to the plate and clean up after the incompetence of an employee.” Kara grinned. She loved Cat’s refusal to use any name other than Snapper’s given one, and she loved her little jabs at him even more. “So, Kara Danvers, star beat reporter for the vaunted National City Tribune, please have a drink with me on the balcony.”

“Cat! It’s 10:00 a.m.” Cat’s eyes narrowed, brow furrowing as she removed her glasses. Kara wilted. “Not uhhh, not that I’m judging!” She gulped. “Well, I mean … I can’t imagine it would be a good idea to deny such a lovely request from the owner of my newspaper.” Cat grabbed a bottle of what Kara—thanks to Lena’s influence—knew to be very nice scotch and two glasses. Kara held the door to the balcony open for her, and they both took a seat. Cat poured them both a drink.

“So, how did your girls react to the news? I’m sure you texted them the minute you left Lucas’ office.” Cat gave her a saucy look as she took a sip of her scotch. Kara rolled her eyes. Cat was a bit overly fascinated with the dynamics of Kara’s relationship, even if she was polite enough not to pry.

“They’re both super excited for me! We’re all going out for dinner tonight, the whole family.”

“Including the little one and the sister and her fiancé?” Kara nodded enthusiastically. “You know, Kara, it might be unorthodox, but you should be very proud of the family you’ve built for yourself. God knows, I’ve made my fair share of mistakes in that arena, but it’s been a genuine pleasure watching you grow these past few years.”

Kara giggled. “Betcha never guessed you’d be having drinks on your balcony with your 10:15 appointment back when I first applied to be your assistant.”

“Well, I could claim that I saw something in you, even back then, but I think we’re past that, you
and I. I’m not so vain that I can’t admit I was wrong in my initial impression.” She took another sip of her whiskey, leaning back in her chair. Cat Grant shared at least one peculiar skill with Lena, and that was that both women could make any chair seem like a throne simply by sitting in it. “I know it will stay between us when I tell you that you’re one of the most extraordinary people I know, Kara Zor-El.”

Kara choked a little on her scotch. “That’s hard to believe, Cat. I mean, I know I’m Supergirl, but —”

“No, Kara. Not Supergirl. You. And you don’t get to question my judgment, Kara. You are extraordinary, and it has nothing to do with your extracurricular activities. You’ve overcome more loss and trauma than I can even fathom, dropped onto an alien world with an alien culture, and despite all of that, you’ve blossomed here. You managed to convince me to hire you as my assistant, you stuck around over two years in a job where the previous average shelf life was two months, and you climbed from there to the position of beat reporter in only a year, without a journalism degree or any prior experience. You did all this on your own merits, through sheer determination and hard work. And a certain amount of pluck, if it can even be called that.” She shook her head dismissively, eying Kara’s attire in judgment. “And to top it all off, you built yourself a new family that loves and supports you, including not one, but two, gorgeous girlfriends who both happen to be high-powered executives for a major multinational corporation.”

Warm tears began to well up in Kara’s eyes. Cat had always supported her. Had trained her and mentored her and made her into the woman she was today. But she hadn’t realized that Cat felt this way about her. “Thank you, Cat. But I wouldn’t be half the woman I am today without your guidance. You’ve been the best mentor a girl could have hoped for, human or not.”

Cat smiled and shrugged lightly, clearly pleased to hear Kara say aloud what Cat already knew to be true. “You’re damn right. And don’t you forget it.” She stood and walked to the balcony. Kara knew that her sudden relocation included a tacit command to follow her, so she did. Cat’s gazed out over the city, and Kara leaned forward on the balcony beside her. It was a beautiful sunny morning in National City. Cat’s eyes stayed firmly focused on the view as she said softly, “So, you never gave me the full story on what happened with your adopted father. I got the sense that there was a lot more to it than you could share with CatCo.”

Kara took another sip of scotch, suddenly quite cognizant of the fact that it had no effect on her, even if Lena had taught her to appreciate the taste. Midvale had been healing, and her family had coalesced there in a beautiful way that Kara couldn’t have imagined. But that didn’t mean that Lena’s kidnapping and Jeremiah’s death weren’t still fresh wounds. “I trust that this is off the record?” Cat waved her hand dismissively. “Okay. So … Lena was kidnapped by her mother the night before.” Cat reacted viscerally, her eyes wide with shock as she turned to Kara. “Yeah.” Kara frowned, a hint of the panic she had felt that night springing back into her chest. “Sam and I spent the entire night and into the morning searching the city for her, unsuccessfully. I was out of my mind with worry.”

“Kara, forgive me for interrupting, but what does Lillian Luthor have to do with your father?”

“Oh Rao! Yeah, I guess you don’t really know about that backstory either. Jeremiah had been a prisoner of Cadmus for over a decade. We thought he was dead for most of that, but the DEO has come close to getting him back twice. Anyways, when we finally tracked down the Cadmus base where Lillian had taken Lena, he was there. But Lillian had replaced most of his body with cyber parts, and she was able to control him. Sam was able to get Lena to safety, but Lillian used Jeremiah against us. We defeated Cadmus and even captured a number of their agents, but Lillian
“...” Kara drew in a deep, steadying breath, holding back tears. She looked away from Cat, back over the city she had sworn to protect.

Kara felt Cat’s hand on her back, rubbing soft and soothing patterns that did wonders for calming Kara’s mind. “She rigged him with explosives. Alex and I had time to say our goodbyes, but we couldn’t save him. I ... I s-stayed with him until the end.” The tears finally became too much for her to hold back. Cat set her glass down and pulled Kara into a hug. She didn’t cry long, but it felt refreshing to get the story off of her chest with someone who hadn’t lived it.

“How is Alex handling it?”

Kara felt her face break out into a wide smile. “Surprisingly well. I think she was able to come to terms with all her conflicted feelings about Jeremiah at his memorial service. And she got engaged the next day, so there’s that.” Kara chuckled.

“Well well, isn’t that nice? Her fiancée is the cop, right?”

“Detective, yes.”

“That’s quite the pairing then. Have they set a date? I assume I can expect my save the date sometime soon?” Kara shot her an exasperated look.

“Caaaat. They haven’t set a date yet, and while there hasn’t been any real planning yet, I’m pretty sure it’s going to be a pretty small affair. Which means no celebrity guests.” Kara knew it would soften the blow a little for Cat to know that Kara still thought of her as a celebrity.

“That is quite the disappointment. I trust that when you and my favourite Luthor tie the knot, I’ll have a front row seat?” Kara’s words caught in her throat, a blush rising to her cheeks. “Ooooo, we haven’t had any conversations about possible nuptials, have we?”

“Noo,” Kara replied, almost petulantly. “It’s not ... I mean, it’s not like I wouldn’t. But things are complicated by Sam, you know?”

“Ahh yes, I suppose bigamy is still illegal in the state of California.”

Kara’s brow furrowed in confusion. “Bigamy?”

“That’s legalese for marriage to more than one person.” Cat finished off her scotch, and Kara followed suit. “Well, dear, congrats to your sister, but trust me, marriage isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. You and your girlfriends should make your own lives, and I’m sure those Luthor lawyers can make sure the girl is plenty protected. Just ...” Cat paused, as if concerned about whether she should say what she was thinking. Kara tilted her head in question.

“Be careful, is all. Your secret identity is a precious thing, and I’m sure you’re aware of how precarious a disguise glasses and a ponytail are. I’m not aware of any members of the press who have discovered your ... controversial lifestyle, but that could change at any moment. And ... the world figuring out that Supergirl is secretly Kara Danvers, star reporter is one thing. The world figuring out that Supergirl is a gay—”

“Pansexual,” Kara corrected.

Cat rolled her eyes and continued, “Queer, polyamorous woman with a quasi-step-daughter and a married lesbian sister, that’s a whole different ballgame. And that’s without even getting into the complication that is the Luthor name.”
Kara wanted to be angry, but Cat was just trying to look out for her. She hated the idea that her love and happiness could be a detriment in any way, especially to her mission as Supergirl. Still … Cat had a point. Kara could already imagine the hate that she would get. That her family would have to suffer through. “I’ll think about it. And talk to Sam and Lena… and Alex, about it.”

“It’s disgusting that you even have to worry about it, but trust me, public image can be a powerful thing. And like it or not, Supergirl is a massive celebrity in her own right. I’m sorry, Kara. But you have to be careful.” She gave her a sympathetic look, then smiled her brightest Cat Grant smile. Something few people were lucky enough to see outside of a televised interview. “But today is a day for celebration, not concern. I’ve got high hopes for you, Kara Danvers. You have earned this, and I trust that you will continue to show that cur of a boss you work for how wrong he was about you. Don’t let me down.”

Cat led her back into the office. “You know I won’t, Cat.” And then Kara strolled out of the office confidently, and she could picture the look of pride that was surely on Cat’s face at such a bold exit.

The rest of her day was pretty uneventful, other than the occasional coworker coming by to congratulate her as the news spread around the office. Alex showed up around four, armed with a bright smile, chocolates, and a cupcake. “Knock knock, I’m looking for Beat Reporter Kara Danvers.”

“Get in here, dummy. Gimme those chocolates.” Kara made grabby hands, and Alex set the sweets on her desk. Kara got to work enjoying her cupcake.

“Seriously, Kar, I’m so damn proud of you. I know how hard you’ve worked for this.”

Kara finished off the sweets in record time, then grabbed her purse and stood up. “Thanks Alex. But from now until we get to dinner, everything is all about you now. Let’s get going!”

“Okay, Lena gave you the address for that ring shop?”

“Oh Alex. I don’t need the address. The jewelry store’s owner, Dana, is an old friend of Lena’s. I know where the store is.” The were the only ones in the elevator on the way down.

“Sorry, sorry. I forgot you and your girlfriend are all fancy now, with all your connections all over town.” Alex’s tone was mocking, but only jokingly so.

“Rude! I’ll have you know, Dana is awesome, as is her wife Lara, and the store specializes in queer clientele, and she is a friend not a ‘connection,’ and I will not stand for this sort of nonsense talk—”

“Kara!” She had kept talking as they left the elevator and well into the lobby. “Breathe! I was wrong, clearly. So let’s go see your super cool friend Dana, so she can get me a ring for Maggie to match mine.” They hopped on Alex’s motorcycle, which was often the fastest form of non-flying transportation in the traffic of National City. They were at the jewelry store in no time, and Dana greeted them at the door. (Kara had called ahead to let her know they were coming.)

“Alex! So nice to meet you! Your fiancée is so lovely.”

“Thanks, Dana! Yeah, I like her just fine.”

“Oh, I bet you do.” Dana wasn’t fazed by Alex’s sarcasm in the least. “So! Are you sure that you want Maggie’s to match yours? Kara said that was the plan, but there are plenty of other options if
“You’re feeling feisty.”

Alex and Kara exchanged a look, and Kara could sense the hesitation. It was amazing how Alex could be scarily confident and brave in a fight, but when it came to everyday activities she wasn’t used to, she could be such a baby. But Kara had anticipated this and was ready to push as necessary. “Alex, the nice lady asked you a question.”

“Sorry. Yes, umm, Dana. I’m pretty sure. It’s just that I really love Maggie, and I had kinda thought that I would be the one to propose, and I already had part of a plan together when Maggie sprung hers on me. And so now, I just feel a little bit of pressure to make sure everything is perfect, because Maggie deserves perfect, you know?” From the look on Dana’s face, Kara could tell her heart was warmed just as much as Kara’s was.

“Sweetie, of course she does. And don’t worry about it. You are in good hands. It is literally my business to help people find their perfect. So, for starters, before Maggie proposed, when you were thinking about your own proposal, what sort of ring did you imagine?”

Alex paused, thinking. “Well… actually, I really didn’t think about the ring too much. It was more about the plan of action.” Kara narrowed her eyes, curious about Alex’s peculiar choice of words. But Dana didn’t flinch.

“Even better. Let’s try this: think about you and Maggie on your wedding day, holding hands as you say your vows. Do your engagement rings match?”

“Yeah! I think they do! Except for the stones.” Alex was grinning, as if she could really picture it. “Maggie’s are blue.”

“Blue we can do. Are you thinking of a lighter blue or a darker blue?”

“I think lighter, but not too light. Really umm… vivid? I don’t want them to blend in with the diamonds.”

“I feel ya. Let me grab a few different options for you, and we’ll see what you think.” Dana got to work, and Alex turned to Kara.

“You’re absolutely sure that Lena doesn’t mind paying for our rings?” Alex had balked at the idea when Maggie told her. She didn’t love depending on people, especially financially.

“Alex, come on. How many times do we have to have this argument? Lena has so much money, and you are family. She loves you and Maggie, and she wants your engagement and marriage to be perfect. This is how she can help. Please don’t feel bad about letting her.”

“Okay. If you’re sure.” There was still a bit of concern in Alex’s eyes, but she conceded the point. Dana came up with a tray of loose gems.

“I’ve got an assortment of sapphires and blue diamonds, as well as a couple of aquamarines.” Alex immediately pointed to one near the center of the tray. It was a sort of cobalt blue, somewhere between royal and cerulean, and apparently every bit as vivid as Alex had imagined.

“That is absolutely the right one. Get me four of those and stick them in a ring.” Alex was so enthusiastic, and it was adorable.

“You’re in luck. Or it’s fate. Take your pick. But I happen to have four of these sapphires in stock right now. If you give me about an hour, I can get these set in the ring and ready for you tonight.” Kara shouldn’t have been surprised; Dana was a consummate professional and incredible at her
Alex was dumbfounded though.

“How did you—”

“Have the setting ready already?” Dana smiled knowingly. “Lena gave me the heads up on Maggie’s ring size, and Kara had already told me you would probably want a matching setting, so I had it ready to go. I’m very good at what I do.”

“Yes, you are.” Alex glanced at her watch. “Kar, we’ve still got plenty of time before dinner, you mind waiting?”

“I told you, this is your time. We will absolutely wait.”

Dana interjected. “You are more than welcome to hang out here, but you absolutely don’t have to. I can shoot Kara a text when the ring is ready if you want to roam about for a while. There’s a great coffee place down the street and a tiny chic little art gallery next door. My neighbors are all pretty awesome, really."

“Coffee and art? I’m in if you are.” Alex grinned in response.

“Let’s do it!” She turned to Dana. “Thank you so much. You really are incredible. I see now why Kara and Lena love you. I was pretty nervous about this, and you made it so simple.”

“It was my pleasure, Alex. Now, you two go enjoy yourselves, and Maggie’s ring will be ready in no time.” She shooed them towards the door.

“We’re going, we’re going. But you and Lara are coming over for dinner next week, right? Lena is super nervous.” That was actually underselling it a little. Lena dabbled in cooking, but she was flat out terrifying of cooking for a professional chef like Lara.

“We’ll be there! And tell Lena not to worry; Lara is not one of those judgy chefs. Plus we’re stoked to see the penthouse finally.” Alex was pulling her towards the door now.

“Okay great! Thanks Dana! See ya soooooon!” Then they were out the door and into the warm sunlight.
Lena had outdone herself yet again. Kara’s face when the hostess walked them back to the private dining room Lena had reserved was absolutely priceless. The mere sight of Kara’s joy was outrageously contagious, at least as far as Sam was concerned. As asked, Lena had found somewhere where Kara hadn’t been yet, but that she knew Kara would love. They were in a fancy Japanese place west of downtown that featured Zashiki-style seating and what Sam had to assume was exorbitantly priced sushi. But fuck it; they were celebrating.

The long, low table featured three seats on each side, and through some quirk of how they had entered the room, Sam found herself between Lena and Ruby, facing Kara, Alex, and Maggie on the other side of the table. They were all seated on the floor, in these adorable legless padded chairs. Under the table, the floor dropped about six inches, in two shallow steps, allowing them to actually extend their legs under the table if they so desired. Needless to say, Kara was very impressed, and that was before the food arrived.

“Lee, this was a hell of a choice. I’m not normally a sake girl, but this stuff is great.” She took another sip of the sake glass that the waiters were diligently making sure was never empty.

“Ditto on that, Li’l Luthor. This shit is dope!” Sam rolled her eyes at Maggie, whose phrasing was always oh so delicate. “Sorry, Sam, should I not be saying ‘shit’ around the kiddo?”

“I’ve heard people say ‘shit’ before, Maggie,” Ruby was swift to correct. “It’s just a word, right Mom?”

“Right, but it’s all about context.”

“Shoulda known you’d be the cool mom type, Sam.” Maggie smiled that bright dimpled smile that was so very captivating, even to an outside observer.

“Hear that, Rubes? At least one person thinks I’m a cool mom.”

“That’s because Maggie hasn’t seen you trying to sing and dance in nothing but a towel.” Sam choked on her sake, face heating up as she blushed wildly.

“Wait wait wait, hold on,” Kara sputtered. “How come I haven’t seen this routine? Sam, have you been holding out on me?”

Normally, Sam was quite comfortable being the center of attention, but this was another thing entirely. She didn’t love everyone picturing her in nothing but a towel, singing and dancing. Which she was well aware she was, you know, not great at. “Uhhh, I think one terrible drunken duet with your overly intimidating angelic voice was enough for me, babe. Not looking for a repeat performance. But you’re welcome to come over and sing and dance for us in a towel anytime you want.”

“Sam, stop leering at my sister, at least while I’m around, okay?”

“Alex, I can’t help that I am insanely attracted to your gorgeous, incredible, insanely sexy sister. You’re just gonna have to deal.” Sam stuck her tongue out at Alex, who responded by flipping her off.

“Alex Danvers! There are children present!” Maggie scolded, winking at Sam and Ruby.
“Maggie, we are supposed to be a team here. Or does this ring mean nothing to you?” Alex wiggled her left hand theatrically.

“Sorry, babe, but Sam’s got a point. She’s not my type, but anyone with eyes can tell that Li’l Danvers is a total hottie. I still love you, though. 100 percent Team Danvers over here.”

Lena cleared her throat dramatically. “Well, if everyone is done objectifying Kara, I believe I invited you all here for a reason. Which is to celebrate Kara’s career achievement, not her remarkable good looks.” Kara’s face lit up, and the smile she directed at Lena was so full of love and affection. The way Kara and Lena loved each other filled Sam with such warmth and joy.

Lena raised her sake glass, looking around the table as she waited for the rest of the group to join her. “To Kara Danvers, whose hard work, diligence, and absolutely brilliant instincts and empathy have finally been rewarded with a promotion she has long deserved. Kara you are almost as incredible a reporter as you are a partner, and that’s saying really a lot, actually. I love you so much—we all do, in our own ways—and I have no doubt that this is just the beginning for you. So, congratulations on this accomplishment. To Kara!”

“To Kara!” came the unified response, and they all drank together. Then the food arrived. The experience of a waiter’s shock at the sheer amount of food Kara ordered was always entertaining as hell. It also helped distract from the fact that Sam was ordering more food than ever herself, even if she restrained herself a bit when Ruby was around.

As they all dug in, Ruby asked across the table, “So Kara, what’s different about your new job?”

Kara finished scarfing down the braised kakuni she was chewing on, then replied, “Well, it’s not really that different, not really. I have a little more freedom to track down my own stories and trust my instincts, but really the biggest difference is that my focus will now be solely on alien issues. Which is great, because that’s really where my passion is anyway.”

“She also has a bit more job security, I would imagine,” Sam added.

“Pssssh,” Alex teased. “The only job security Kara has ever needed is Cat Grant.”

“Aleeex! That’s so not true. Snapper has final say on hiring and firing decisions at the Tribune.”

“Oh yeah, suuuure. Because Cat Grant’s not an egotistical control freak at all.” Kara glared, and Alex winced just a little. “Not that I mean that as a criticism! I’m just saying … if Cat wants to overrule Snapper she will, and you know it.”

Lena weighed in. “Plus, I’m pretty sure she has a giant crush on Kara, so her job was always safe, let’s be honest.” Alex and Maggie chuckled knowingly, but Sam gasped in surprise. This was new information. “I mean, honestly, her primary response to finding out that we’re poly is to try her best to throw her own hat in the ring, so to speak.”

“Wait, what? Cat Grant has a crush on our girlfriend, and neither of you thought to tell me?”

Kara sighed, and Sam could sense the heat rising into her cheeks. “Sam. It. Is. Embarrassing. Okay?”

“It’s still information you should share with me, dummy.” Sam wasn’t really scolding Kara, though it hurt a little she had kept this from her. “Especially when it comes to someone as hot as Cat Grant.”
Maggie chuckled. “Not that I disagree, but Sam, it’s starting to sound like you think every lady is pretty hot, if we’re being honest here.”

“This is the thing you must know about Samantha; she is quite thirsty.”

“Hey!” Sam exclaimed, as she shoved Lena playfully.

Lena’s eyes glittered playfully as she jabbed a finger into Sam’s side in retaliation. “Don’t deny what you know to be true, darling.”

Maggie interrupted, a curious look on her face. “Aaanyway, Kara you didn’t take Cat up on her, uhhh, offer? Two girlfriends are your limit?”

Kara giggled awkwardly. “I guess so?” As the conversation continued, Lena snuck a casual touch, sliding the backs of her fingers lightly against the side of Sam’s thigh. She managed to keep a neutral expression on her face, despite the tiny touch sending disproportionately strong shocks of pleasant feelings up and down her leg.

Alex grinned mischievously. “Well, I know for a fact that Kara used to have a huge crush on Cat, so I guess I’m just curious what changed.”

Lena raised an eyebrow. “Well this is new information to me. Darling, aren’t you going to answer Alex’s question?”

“Really, Lena?”

Sam couldn’t resist piling on. “It’s a fair question, Blondie. Don’t hold out on us.”

Her sly rejoinder drew laughter from Maggie, but then the voice to her right came to Kara’s defense. “Mom, leave Kara alone. It’s her night, not her night to be teased relentlessly.”

Kara’s smile to Ruby was almost blinding in its brilliance. Sam threw an arm around Ruby. “Rubes, I didn’t know you cared. I’m kind of a fan of you defending my girlfriend. Does this mean you mean wanna keep her around?”

“Yeah, Ruby, are we besties now?” Kara shouted from across the table, probably just a little too loudly.

“Ugh. Both of you need to calm down. I was just making a point about the reason for this dinner, not arguing you guys should get married or anything.”

The word ‘married’ instantly struck Sam, Kara, and Lena completely silent, so Alex took it upon herself to avoid the awkwardness. “I think Ruby makes an excellent point. Sorry for bringing it up, Kar. Tonight is about your accomplishments, not your crushes.”

“Here here!” agreed Lena, the impish tone in her voice not lost on Kara, who crinkled her forehead in that adorable way she did when she was frustrated, but not too frustrated. Sam decided this was the perfect time to fuck with Lena, when she was trying to play it all cool and mess with Kara. She cautiously placed a hand, after checking to be sure no one could notice, on Lena’s leg, found that spot that tickled Lena so, and squeezed, subtly but firmly. Lena jumped, just a little, before getting control of herself. Sam didn’t relent though, and she could see the strain that Lena tried to hide.

Kara eyed them suspiciously, clearly aware there was something going on. Sam found this delicious. Lena, in an effort to covertly beg that she stop, glanced over at her and bit her lip. Just a little. Her eyes shone with a very clear plea for mercy. Sam grinned wickedly, then withdrew her
hand and turned casually back to her plate, as if nothing had happened. She tuned back into what Maggie was saying.

“Babe, tell them about what Winn **made** you for an engagement present.” Her emphasis on ‘made,’ as opposed to ‘bought’ or ‘gave,’ was a curious choice in verbiage, and Alex’s face lit up in a way Sam had only seen maybe a couple of time. Instantly, Sam was captivated. So of course, that’s precisely when Lena’s retaliation came. As Alex began to explain, Lena’s hand found its way onto the inside of Sam’s thigh. She could sense Lena glance over at Ruby at the same time Sam did, checking to be sure she was just as captivated by Alex’s story. Sam didn’t move to stop Lena but did rest her right arm on her leg so as to hide Lena’s hand from Ruby’s view.

“So, Winn took me aside right before we were about to deploy for a mission I was leading. Said he had finally finished it, and I nearly punched him because he was kind of ranting on and on vaguely, without telling me what ‘it’ was.” Sam was legitimately curious about this gift, but Lena’s hand was slowly and surely making its way up Sam’s leg in the most amazing way. Dividing her attention between listening to Alex, enjoying Lena’s torture, and keeping a straight face was a tremendous challenge.

“And just as I’m about to snap at him, he calls me the best, most badass DEO agent, and I’m sure I’m gonna have to punch him or something. Then he opens this big ole metal briefcase and pulls out a new suit.” Lena’s hand was now as far up her thigh as it would go, the side of it resting firmly against the heat between Sam’s legs. “This thing is gorgeous, on the same level as Supergirl and Power Girl.”

“Does it have a cape?” Ruby asked, voice filled with enthusiasm.

“Nope! But I’m not a flyer, so no need for one. It’s all black, with plenty of leather accents, and gloves with this fancy system of magnets that I can use to summon my guns if they ever get knocked from my grip.” Alex’s smile was as wide as Sam had ever seen it. It was a sight so wonderful it could almost distract from the fact that Lena was now moving her hand in slow, firm rocking motions between Sam’s thighs. “And the guns! Winn worked with a couple of the guys in munitions to create two new guns for me, based on some of the alien tech we’ve acquired this past year. They’re small, but sexy as hell. And they pack one hell of a punch.”

Alex never seemed happier than when she was talking about guns. It was almost scary. Sam admired how terrifying Alex could be, even in moments of sheer joy. She clamped down on the wave of pleasure that threatened to shudder through her body. “And so he told me that he had always thought I was deserving of a cool suit, which I mean, duh. I’m certainly more deserving than James fucking Olsen. Sorry Ruby! That was rude of me.”

“I’ve heard worse from Mom and Lena, don’t worry.” Lena’s hand stopped its movements as they both reacted dramatically to Ruby’s accusation. She was right, but they couldn’t just ignore Sam’s darling girl. That wouldn’t be any fun.

“Oh. Well I suppose that’s not surprising.” Alex leveled an oddly skeptical, almost questioning look at Sam and Lena. Then she continued. “But you guys, I have never felt so badass and powerful than I did in this suit. That tiny wonderful little man gave me the best present I could’ve ever imagined.”

Lena was back to work, and now Kara was staring intently at Lena’s hand, **through** the table. Sam almost grabbed Lena’s hand to make her stop, but Lena just grinned mischievously at Kara and winked. Kara’s eyes told Sam she was intrigued, and a little turned on, by the brazen display, and so Sam allowed it to keep going. On a whim, she whispered, so softly that no one but Kara could
possible hear, “Baby, I am trying so hard to keep my cool here, but Lena is driving me wild with
desire right now.”

Kara’s eyes went wide, only for the briefest of moments. Sam was terrified of coming in front of
everyone. She didn’t trust her ability to control herself. She glanced over at Lena, eyes pleading
that she stop. Sam was the most powerful person on the planet, and yet she couldn’t bring herself
to stop Lena. She wanted Lena to grant her mercy. To release her of her own volition. She
whispered again, “Kara, I’m about to come in front of everyone, and I am so not ready to try and
hide that. Please.”

Kara immediately put a hand on Lena’s and said, “I’ve got to run to the ladies’ room. Lena, will
you come with me?” Lena’s hand stopped immediately. Sam was sure the conversation had
continued around her this entire time, but she had focused on her food and her sake, so she didn’t
have to maintain the focus that participation in such conversation would require. Lena gave one
last casual flick against Sam’s center with her pinky, then stood with Kara.

“Of course, darling.” She walked around the table to link arms with Kara as they left the room,
turning her head as she left to raise the most enticing eyebrow ever at Sam, sending an additional
lingering thrill through her body. They left the room, but Sam’s superhearing followed them.

“Lena, you can’t just do that to her in public, around our entire family. What did you think would
happen if you had taken that to its logical conclusion?”

“Honestly, darling, I was just kind of acting on impulse there. I didn’t really think it through.
Probably good that you stopped me. I’m terribly sorry. This is your night. I shouldn’t have done
that. I just—” Lena sighed. “Lately I just get so carried away when it comes to Sam. There’s this
… there’s no other word for it but gravity between us, and it is so difficult to resist. I got carried
away. I’m so sorry.”

“Lena, it’s fine. I was actually really enjoying the show. But you have to pay more attention to
how Sam is feeling. She was terrified that you were going to humiliate her in front of our entire
family, but she was too—I don’t know—captivated or aroused or something to stop you.” Kara
paused, but Lena didn’t respond. “Just … I’m beyond happy that something is developing between
you two, even if it is as sexy as it is confusing, but you need to stay in touch with each other’s
feelings, okay? You’ve both been through a lot the past few months, and it doesn’t help either of
you to get lost in this new sexual connection without being open about your feelings.”

“You’re right, of course. I’ll try to be better. But you have to admit, she was entirely too hot
today, right?”

Kara giggled. “Yes, Sam is beyond gorgeous in that suit. But that’s no excuse. If you want to
torment her, in a way that she clearly enjoys, wait until you’re in private. And if you wanted to
invite me at some point, I of course would not say no.” Sam couldn’t keep the smile off of her
face, even as she made the effort to get back into conversation with the people still seated at the
table.

“Ruby, did you tell Alex and Maggie about your recent accomplishments?” She smiled at her
daughter, whose face instantly lit up as she literally bounced in excitement. Alex and Maggie
turned their gaze to her expectantly.

“I made all-region in my choir tryouts! Now I get to try out for all-state!!” Ruby could barely
contain her excitement.
“That’s incredible, kiddo!” Alex responded immediately. “Your mom must be so proud.”

“What can I say, my girl is an incredible singer. I have no clue how that happened, as you both learned at the holiday party.”

“Oh come on, Sammy, you’re not that bad,” Maggie consoled. “Anyone could sound bad compared to Li’l Danvers.”

“Anyways,” Alex cajoled. “Ruby, that’s great. Congratulations! So when are all-state tryouts?”

“They’re in early April! Fortunately, they’re in National City, so I don’t have to travel or anything.” Kara and Lena returned just as Ruby was finishing.

“What’s in National City?” Lena asked, taking her seat beside Sam. As she turned to listen to Ruby’s answer, she casually placed a hand on Sam’s back, rubbing it gently in what was very clearly an apology for getting carried away. Sam smiled warmly at her, then Ruby explained for Kara and Lena.

“The all-state choir try outs.” Ruby had already told Kara, who had told Lena, so this wasn’t news to them. Nevertheless, Lena leaned over Sam’s plate to look Ruby right in the eyes when she responded.

“Kara told me about your recent success, young Ruby. She was quite impressed with you, as am I. How are you feeling about the competition?”

Ruby grinned. She loved being treated like an adult, ‘young’ comment aside, since it was a term of endearment only Lena used. “I really don’t know. I’m only a freshman, so I’m lucky to have even qualified. I don’t expect to make all-state, not this year, anyway.”

“Well, there’s nothing wrong with being realistic, but I believe in you.” Kara’s voice was pure sunshine. “You and I are both kicking butt lately, huh?”

“Kara, you’re like the only person at this table who would use the phrase ‘kicking butt,’ but that’s pretty cool, I guess.” Sam was so happy about how well her girls got along.

Kara glanced down at her empty plates and looked around the room questioningly. “Lena, where’s the waiter? Shouldn’t they have brought the dessert menu by now?” The entire table was completely unsurprised, but nevertheless burst into uproarious laughter.

Lena got the text right as she and Kara were walking into the door of the penthouse. She stopped to read it, but Kara—who was beyond tired from a very wonderful, but long, day—continued on to the bedroom at faster than human speed. Lena raised an eyebrow at the text, which was from Maggie.

[9:31 p.m.] **Holy shit Lena wtf is going on with you and Sam? Does Kara know? You were NOT subtle tonight, just fyi.**

Lena blushed, but only a little. She wasn’t exactly surprised, but given what Kara had already told her, she felt bad about how brazen she had been. **Shit. Guess the cat’s out of the bag now. “Hey Kara?”**

“Yeah?” came the less than enthusiastic response from the bedroom. Lena grinned. Poor Kara was so tired. Lena shut off the lights in the apartment and joined Kara in the bedroom. She was
unsurprised to find her hero was already in bed, having gone through her nightly routine at superhero speeds. “So Maggie just texted me.”

“Oh yeah?” was the lackadaisical response.

“Yeah, she thought Sam and I were being far from subtle in our flirtations tonight.”

“Oh crap!” Kara shot up in bed.

“I mean, we had to let people know at some point, right?” Lena shrugged. “I just feel bad, still, that I let things get a little out of hand. Thank you again, darling, for reining me in.”

Kara smiled sleepily. “What are girlfriends for?”

“Well … not that exactly, not for most couples, I imagine. But for me, you’re absolutely perfect.” Lena had been walking towards the bed, and now she leaned down and kissed Kara softly. “You’re the best thing that has ever happened to me, Kara Zor-El.” Kara immediately kissed her back, smiling wildly. “Now you go to sleep. I’m just gonna respond to Maggie, and check in with Sam, then I’ll be in bed, okay?”

Kara mumbled her acceptance of this plan, already half asleep. Lena headed into the bathroom to wash her face and brush her teeth, typing out a quick response to Maggie on her way.

[9:34 p.m.] Ugh, you caught us. Sam and I are … something. We’re still figuring it out. But things are going well, and Kara is our most enthusiastic supporter.

She shot off a quick text to Sam before she sat her phone down to wash her face.

[9:35 p.m.] Hey you. Sorry I let things get a bit *ahem* out of hand tonight. But it was thrilling, wasn’t it? Anywho. Turns out we weren’t all that subtle, and Maggie is asking about us. Guess the cat’s out of the bag?

Lena washed her face and brushed her teeth. It wasn’t until she reached for the floss that she heard the phone buzz. It was Sam.

[9:40 p.m.] You’re a terrible tease, Lee. We need to find some alone time soon. Or invite Kara if you want, that could be fun too. Maggie wasn’t the only one who noticed. Ruby gave me the third degree on the way home, which was oh so wonderful since she’s still nursing that crush on you. Then Alex texted me about it, so there’s no doubt Sanvers have been discussing our scandalous behavior tonight.

Lena giggled. She couldn’t deny that she kinda liked being found out in this way.

[9:41 p.m.] What did you tell Ruby?

The response was immediate.

[9:41 p.m.] I told her that you and I are more than friends, but that it’s really new and we haven’t figured everything out yet. But that Kara was fully in the loop and supportive, and that the three of us were happy to talk to her about it if she had any concerns. What did you tell Maggie?

Lena finished flossing before responding.
More or less the same. That it’s new and we’re figuring it out and Kara is our biggest supporter. I also apologized for being so brazen. I don’t suppose you overheard Kara scolding me when we ‘went to the bathroom’?

She peed, then finished removing her clothes and putting on her usual silk shorts and camisole. Then she read Sam’s response.

OH COME ON. Of course I listened in on that. I’m the one who made sure Kara saved me, not that I couldn’t have broken your hand with my fucking thigh, just so we’re clear. You drive me crazy, Lee. But yeah, I heard it. And as usual, she made excellent points. You should listen to our girl. But I’m beat. Going to bed now. Night, dummy.

Lena grinned, then typed out a quick goodnight. Then she turned off the light in the bathroom and padded softly to her side of the bed. She snuggled up to Kara’s already fast asleep form, then just as she was reaching to plug her phone in for the night, it buzzed with another text message. From Maggie.

Damn Luthor. GET. IT. But for real, I trust that you’re being careful with your heart, and Sam’s. No need to rush. But good for you.

She smiled and breathed a soft sigh of contentment as she plugged her phone in, then settled in. Lena knew she was going to sleep incredibly well tonight.
With Ruby spending the night at a friend’s, Sam, Kara, and Lena were taking advantage of a night free of any parenting duties to get in some serious three-way cuddling. They were currently situated as a three-headed pile of limbs sharing a very large, very comfy fleece blanket. None of them was wearing pants any longer—Kara insisted that it would be more comfortable without them—and Kara was in the middle. She was leaning on Lena, with a hand comfortably on her thigh, while her legs were intertwined with Sam’s on the other side. Lena was playing with Kara’s hair without thinking too much about it. Sam had an arm around Kara, and her hand was stroking subtle patterns against Lena’s forearms. Lena couldn’t remember the last time she felt this at ease. It was wonderful.

Kara had insisted on watching Frozen again, and Lena hadn’t had the heart to argue. She didn’t really care what they watched, if she was being perfectly honest. Sam grabbed the remote (or maybe it only seemed that way to Lena) and paused the movie just as Elsa was about to open the castle to the public again for the first time since she was a girl. “So, what is this dinner about tomorrow?”

Kara hummed as Lena’s hand hit a particularly good spot, then asked, “What do you mean? It’s obviously about the wedding.”

Sam rolled her eyes. “Yeah, no shit, Sherlock. I meant, why did they invite all three of us? You two are clearly the maids of honour or whatever they choose to call that position, but why invite me?”

“Obviously, you’re going to be the flower girl, darling,” Lena joked. Sam flicked her arm in retaliation, and Lena winced. “Fuck, that actually hurt! Kara, you’ve gotta teach Samantha to be more gentle with us mere mortals.”

Instantly, Sam was leaning forward, looking across Kara at Lena with legitimate concern in her eyes. “Lee, are you serious? I’m sorry! I guess I’m still getting used to my strength, even now.”

“It’s alright, love. Though it’d probably be better if Kara kissed it.” Kara reached behind her head and pulled Lena’s arm forward tenderly. There was a small welt, slowly bruising just a little, where Sam had flicked her.

“Oh no, you poor baby!” Kara kissed it delicately. “You want me to grab some ice?”

“Oh please, it’s just a small bruise. It’ll be fine.” Sam looked guilty, so Lena assured her, “Believe me, darling, I don’t mind a bruise here and there, but in the future, let’s have more enjoyable reasons for them.” Sam’s eyes flashed with recognition at Lena’s insinuation, and Kara chuckled.

“Rao, you two are impossible. Do you ever think about anything other than sex?”

Sam grinned impishly. “Well, I was trying to talk about dinner tomorrow.”

“I wouldn’t worry too much about it, baby. They probably want you involved in the planning to some extent. You’re good friends with Alex, and you’re important to both of us. We’ll see. Regardless, just be prepared.”

“For?” Sam asked. Kara pressed back into Lena a bit more, wiggling until she found the perfect
spot, and the blanket covering the three of them slipped a little. Sam began to stroke Kara’s now exposed leg.

“Alex is getting a haircut tonight, and she said it’s going to be very short. Still purple though.” Kara raised her eyebrows as if this was some dramatic news. Neither Sam nor Lena was at all surprised.

“Man, Alex is really putting the rest of us to shame in the alternative lifestyle haircut game,” Sam grumbled cheerfully.

“You know, darling, you’d look pretty enticing with short hair yourself,” Lena offered. “You could always wear a wig like Sam when you’re flying about. Might help improve your … disguise.” Sam snorted, then laughed, at the mocking way Lena said ‘disguise.’

“And how exactly do you propose I keep a wig on my head when flying around at Mach 2?” Kara asked, matching Lena’s mocking tone perfectly.

“Look, I’m just saying soft butch would look amazing on you. Obviously, there would be logistical problems to work out. Sam, I’m not wrong, am I?”

Sam smiled warmly. “I think Kara Zor-El Danvers can pull off any look she chooses.” Kara smiled back, brightly, but Lena furrowed her brow.

“Suck up.” Lena faked a scornful look in Sam’s direction. “Anyways, I am quite certain that Alex will look every bit the majestic gay that we all know her to be. I am eager to see the new ‘do.”

“Okay but can we please get back to the movie now?” Lena had no clue how Kara managed to make whining sound cute, but she supposed that being madly in love with the woman might have something to do with it. Sam kissed her cheek, then pressed play, and they all settled back in.

The only other pause in the movie happened when Kara provoked Sam into a tickle fight, which Lena made damn sure she stayed completely out of. One bruise was enough for the night. Fuck, they were really cute though, all flailing limbs and contorted bodies, and Kara shrieking in delight and agony of the best sort. They were so busy struggling with each other that neither of them noticed Lena filming them until she had a couple of minutes of footage. Once Kara caught sight of Lena’s phone out, she got embarrassed and immediately demanded mercy from Sam. Lena got them all new bottles of kombucha while the supers settled down, then they finished the movie.

As the movie wound down, they had all gotten decidedly handsier, and so once it was over, Lena brought up what was on all their minds. “Hey so … should we have a conversation about sex?”

Kara grinned, then started humming what sounded suspiciously like Salt-N-Pepa’s *Let’s Talk About Sex*. “Really, Kara?” Sam asked incredulously.

“Face it, Sam, our girlfriend’s a massive dork.”

“Yeah, but that’s why you love me,” Kara prompted happily, then continued humming under her breath.

“Lee, what is there to talk about? Wouldn’t it be more fun to just, you know, figure it out as we go?” Sam shot Lena an entirely too enticing and sultry look, and a very familiar warmth began pooling low in her gut.

“No. Bad Sam. Stop being so sexy.” Kara laughed out loud, seemingly content to see where Lena and Sam took the conversation. So, Lena continued. “It’s kind of a big deal, don’t you think?”
“Is it? It isn’t like we have all had tons of sex with each other already?” Lena suspected Sam was stringing her along, that she actually agreed with Lena. But she couldn’t be sure without actually having the conversation.

“No, not exactly. We’ve all had tons of sex with each other in pairs, but we’ve never had sex all together. It’s an entirely different dynamic, and while I am quite eager to experience said dynamic, I want to be sure that we’re all ready for it.”

“That’s very responsible of you, creampuff” Kara’s smile radiated through her voice. “But what is it that we need to talk through, really?”

“Well, for starters, we can talk about how you two can have sex with each other no problem, but if I get in on that action and either of you get too into your normal routine, you could accidentally break all my fingers … for example.” Lena gave them both a very pointed stare. “And I know for a fact that you are both quite fond of the things I can do with my fingers.”

“So, yes, that is a legitimate concern. Fair point, Lee.” Sam smiled coyly, then leaned back until her head was resting in Kara’s lap. She looked up at Lena, which should have been goofy as hell, but instead she reached up and softly took Lena’s hand, sliding a finger softly along her lips. “I do quite enjoy these.” She raised an eyebrow. “Fuck, how is she making this sexy? “What if I promise to be gentle?” The question came out sultry and full of intention.

Lena took a steadying breath, trying to keep her arousal at bay. “You know it isn’t that simple, Sam. You’re somehow both incredibly sexy and adorably funny, but please take this seriously.” Sam sat up and took Lena’s hands in her own, Kara still between them.

“Lena. I am taking this seriously. And we don’t have to fuck tonight, I promise. But Kara and I are both fairly accustomed to not breaking you during sex, and even if we didn’t have superpowers, I would suggest that we take things slowly our first time as a threesome regardless. That way we can explore and keep in touch with each other, and most importantly, make sure we don’t break you.” She smiled softly, and Lena felt safe again.

“I like the sound of that.”

“I do too, for the record.” Kara said it as if she was just reminding them that she was still there.

Sam ran a finger down the middle of Kara’s torso. “Yeah, I bet you do.” Lena felt Kara shudder just a little against her. It was good to know that she wasn’t the only one on whom Sam had that effect.

“Samantha. It is really unfair how sexy you are.” Sam faked a look as if she was surprised by this information.

“You know,” Kara interrupted. “You’re one to talk, Lena.” She dragged a finger along the top of Lena’s lacy forest green underwear. “Have you seen yourself in these?”

“I’m less concerned with how I look in them than I am with how your touch feels right now, if I’m being perfectly honest.” In a heartbeat, Sam knelt on the ground next to her, a hand gently placed just above Kara’s and working its way slowly upward, pulling Lena’s sweatshirt with it. Her body tensed at the additional touch, and Lena already felt like she was in heaven, just having these two women she adored touching her. The skin-to-skin contact was intoxicating.

“Is this okay?” Kara checked in, and she and Sam both paused long enough for Lena to nod enthusiastically. No harm in seeing where this goes. The wide neck of Kara’s slouchy tee gave
Lena an excellent view, and Kara winked as she realized where Lena’s gaze was pointed. Then she withdrew her hand and bent down, bring her lips to touch where her hand had been. Sparks shot up and down Lena’s spine, and she hummed in delight at the sensation. Meanwhile, Sam’s fingers were tracing patterns slowly up Lena’s side, soft enough that her touch felt incredible but firm enough that it didn’t tickle.

Lena chuckled. “I could get used to this.”

“I knew you’d come around,” was Sam’s sly response. Then she grabbed Lena’s sweatshirt with both hands and raised an eyebrow in question. Lena raised her arms over her head, and the sweatshirt was off before she could blink. She shivered a bit at the cool air on her breasts, so Sam smiled and slid a hand onto each of them.

“My hero,” Lena mumbled, almost too focused on the sensations her body was experiencing to make her usual quips. Sam’s hands were wonderfully warm, and oh wow, Kara’s lips had moved up Lena’s hipbone. Because of the way she was situated, her breasts grazed the tops of Lena’s thighs just enough, stiff nipples tactile through the soft fabric of her shirt. Kara pulled away a little, tracing Lena’s tattoo softly.

“Should we take this back to the bedroom?” Lena hesitated, and that immediately drew a mischievous glint to Sam’s eye. She leaned in, eyes never leaving Lena’s, and pressed her lips firmly to Lena’s breast. Her tongue traced a purposeful circle around Lena’s nipple, then her teeth closed gently but firmly and tugged just enough to drive Lena insane. A moan escaped her lips.

It was too much. Insecurities aside, Lena knew that she wanted this. Wanted it badly. She whispered, “Take me there.” She honestly couldn’t say which of her superpowered ladies picked her up, but there was a quick breeze and she was tossed onto the bed. She pushed herself back against the pillows and headrest. Kara was next to her, and Sam was on her knees by Lena’s feet. Kara planted a soft kiss to Lena’s lips, then turned to Sam.

“Let’s get this off of you,” Kara practically growled as she slid over and pulled Sam’s tank top off of her, bra quickly following. Lena was content to just watch them touch each other, tender but hungry looks splashed across their faces. A thought occurred to her.

“New rule: no superspeed.” Sam turned from Kara to raise an eyebrow at Lena. “I want to see everything.” Lena was feeling more confident now and was happy to make sure her girls knew what she wanted.

Sam barely kept herself from laughing at the inside joke as she cheekily responded, “Sure thing, boss.” A soft whimper came beside them, and they turned to see Kara staring at them wide-eyed. She blushed at the sudden attention and offered a quiet explanation.

“Sorry that was really hot, you are both really hot and topless and I’m fine, this is fine, don’t mind me.” Lena giggled, then reached over and placed her hand against Kara’s chest, pressing her to the bed.

“Oh, believe me, darling. We intend to fully mind you.” Kara whimpered again, and it was simultaneously sexy and adorable. Sam was suddenly at her side, hand gliding up Kara’s bare leg.

“Kara, you’re not gonna get too overwhelmed too quickly now, are you?” Kara gave them another couple seconds of wide-eyed glancing back and forth, then seemingly flipped a switch. She bit her lip, then leaned in and kissed Sam in this drawn out, languid way that did nothing to quell the heat building between Lena’s legs. Lena carefully reached out a hand to stroke Kara’s thigh, hesitating for a second because she didn’t want to give Kara a reason to stop kissing Sam. But she couldn’t
resist, and while Kara hummed a little at Lena’s touch, she continued to kiss Sam passionately. Lena enjoyed the show, but allowed her hand to roam a little, moving up Kara’s thigh, along her hip (she loved the way Kara’s body tensed subtly as she traced her hip bone), and then under Kara’s shirt.

As Sam pulled away from Kara, she turned her head and leaned over, so close her nose was nearly touching Lena’s. “Is this good so far?” Lena answered by leaning in the rest of the way and taking Sam’s lower lip between her teeth, for just a moment, before pecking her on the lips and moving her head back teasingly.

“Quite.” This was apparently too much for Sam to take, and she jumped onto Lena. She was clearly careful to stick to the no superspeed rule, though, and her attention to Lena’s wishes made her want Sam that much more. Sam kissed her roughly, ravenously even, and Lena returned her passion fully. As Sam straddled her, Lena could feel the desire coursing through her, and Lena gripped Sam’s hips firmly, trying desperately to press their bodies even more tightly together. The friction was incredible, and almost distracted fully from the things Sam was now doing with her tongue in Lena’s mouth.

Opening her eyes for just a moment, Lena noticed that Kara had brushed Sam’s hair aside and was kissing her neck. The sight caught her by surprise a little, and she gasped softly into Sam’s mouth. Kara looked so good, and before she could think about it, she was grabbing Kara by the shirt and pulling her down to join the kissing going on between her and Sam.

It was tentative, almost awkward at first. Lena couldn’t speak for Sam, but she knew that she and Kara had never had three-way make outs before. After maybe a minute of giggly, sloppy kissing, they found a good rhythm, and Lena moved her hand between Kara’s legs. Her underwear were already absolutely drenched, and Kara gasped as Lena’s hand slid the damp fabric aside.

Sam, meanwhile, began to move her lips down Lena’s body, utilizing the perfect mix of tongue and teeth as she traced a path from Lena’s jawline down her neck, across her collarbone, and between her breasts. Lena felt her skin burn with each new kiss, bite, or lick, and each time she would get overly distracted, Kara would grin into her kisses, prompting Lena to resume the motions of her fingers. *Who knew threesomes required such multitasking?*

Eventually Sam’s head found its way between Lena’s legs. “Time to get rid of these,” she whispered, before pulling Lena’s underwear up and over her hips and tossing them aside. At the first pass of Sam’s tongue, Lena’s back arched involuntarily, and she moaned loudly. “Drama queen,” Sam joked, and the exhale of her breath on Lena’s clit sent additional sparks up and down her spine. “I only just started.”

Kara chuckled, and decided that the focus was now firmly on Lena, so she moved her kisses slowly down towards Lena’s breasts, hand already having come to rest on the left one. As Kara’s tongue traced languid circles slowly closer and closer to Lena’s nipple, her body tensed, and then shuddered. Lena knew she was going to come very quickly. Her body was completely unaccustomed to this much stimulation all at once.

She knew that her ladies were completely aware of how her breath was speeding up, and how little control she had over her own body at this point. “Let me know when you’re about to come, Lee. I want to make sure you enjoy it.” Once again, the feel of the air from Sam’s sultry whisper felt incredible against her clit, and it was almost enough to send her over the edge right then. She bit her lip, and Sam got back to work.

“Kara,” Lena gasped. “Kiss me. Please.” Kara complied, and her lips were rough, with hints of saltiness from the sweat they were all working up. Kara’s tongue entered her mouth just as Sam
started moving her tongue back and forth across Lena’s clit, and she practically shouted, “Right there! Don’t stop!” Sam did as she was told, and Lena cried out as her back arched and wave after wave of pleasure shot through her. Sam kept going, and Lena’s hips bucked wildly against her head until finally Lena rested a hand on Sam’s hair, the tension in her hand practically begging Sam to stop. She pulled up and leaned in to kiss Lena deeply.

Lena broke away from Sam’s lips again, in desperate need of air as she came down from an incredible high. Kara and Sam kissed briefly, then gazed at Lena, measuring her reaction. She smiled brightly through panted breaths, just barely able to gasp out an awed, “Wow.” She felt almost as if she were floating, her entire body covered in a thin sheen of well-earned sweat. She honestly wasn’t sure how long she sat there smiling at her girlfriends, contentedly enjoying the afterglow, but eventually, she caught her breath.

Sam was still lounging between Lena’s legs, but Kara had snuggled up to her side. “You know, Kara darling, we’ve got more than enough room in here for a king-size bed, don’t you think?” Kara looked around the room casually.

“Yeah, I don’t know. I think there’s plenty of room—” Her voice cut out as she realized Sam and Lena were both staring at her. “What?!” Her eyes went wide again. “Ohhhhhhh.”

“There it is,” Sam snarked. “Lee, this is your place, the two of you. You don’t need to go upgrading your bed on my account.”

“And what if I just wanted some more space because Kara kicks in her sleep?”

“I would say you’re full of shit, since we both know Kara sleeps like a corpse,” Sam replied dryly, shooting Lena some major side eye.

“Well, it was only a hypothetical—” Lena started, but Sam put a hand on hers.

“Hey, if you really want to, it would mean a lot. You two, making room for me in your place, in your life … you know how to make a girl feel special.” Lena squeezed Sam’s hand.

“Awwwww.” Kara wrapped them both in a hug, kissing each of their foreheads. “You two are super cute. I’m pretty much in love with both of you.” Her smile beamed relentlessly at both of them. Sam, however, was clearly not in warm, fuzzy mode just yet. She nibbled at Lena’s ankle bone, dragging her teeth in a surprisingly tantalizing motion.

Raising an eyebrow at Sam before kissing Kara’s head, Lena bit her lip then asked, “Alright, who’s next?”

“Sup queers!” Maggie and Alex were the last ones to arrive for their own dinner. Noonan’s was surprisingly dead, but Kara guessed maybe there were more exciting places to be on a Saturday night in National City. She had been the first to arrive, since she had stopped into the office to get some work done that afternoon, and CatCo was basically right next door. She didn’t frequent Noonan’s as much as when she had been Cat’s assistant, but most of the waitstaff still knew her well, greeting her warmly as she entered and asked for a table for five. Sam and Lena had arrived shortly after that, and then Maggie and Alex swaggered in a few minutes after 7.

Alex looked absolutely incredible. Her still-purple hair was cut so short, and she really owned the look. The sides were shaved into a slight undercut, while the top was a sort of asymmetrical look, with a part on the right side, and the left side just long enough to reach her cheek. Kara leapt up to
hug her. “AHHHHHHH. Alex, I LOVE it! You look so wow wow wow!”

Alex chuckled. “Thanks, Kar. It does look pretty sweet, doesn’t it?” Releasing Alex, Kara turned to Maggie and grabbed at her left hand. The ring looked amazing on her delicate finger, and the sapphires seemed even brighter in the setting than they had at the store.

“Maggie!! I love it!!”

“Calm down, Li’l Danvers,” Maggie deadpanned. “I mean, thank you! But wow, Kar, take it down a notch.”

Kara blushed. “Sorry! I’m so happy for you two!!” They all took their seats, and the waitress, Karen, came over to take Maggie and Alex’s drink order.

Lena leaned back and put an arm around each of Kara and Sam, then joked, “Alex, I feel like you’ve upped a level in gay. It’s quite inspiring.” Alex rolled her eyes. “No really, I’m already trying to convince Kara to cut her hair short, too.”

“Oh yeah, because her Kara Danvers disguise isn’t threadbare enough,” retorted Maggie, drawing a snort from Sam.

“Actually, it would improve her disguise tremendously, if we could just figure out a way to keep a Supergirl wig on her head while flying.” Lena pulled her arm out from around Sam so that she could wave it dismissively. “You can’t deny Kara would look amazing with a pixie cut.” Her eyes glinted in a mischievous way that Kara either didn’t like at all or liked entirely too much—feelings were confusing sometimes. “Or maybe even like a mohawk or something.”

Kara laughed nervously. “I’m sure Snapper would just love that.”

“Even more reason to do it, if you ask me,” Sam snarked. Kara shot Alex a ‘save me’ look, and Alex cleared her throat.

“Hey so, we invited the three of you out for a reason.” That reason would have to wait, because just then Karen arrived with their drinks. She took the orders for the table, clearly trying to hide her disbelief at the amount of food ordered by Kara and Sam. They exchanged a look. Sam was still amused by the looks they got when they ordered food, but Kara was long over it. Still, she adored watching Sam continue to acclimate to her new self.

Once their orders were in, Alex continued. “Like I was saying, we brought you all here because Maggie and I wanted to ask if you would help us with the wedding planning.”

“She’s underselling it,” Maggie butted in. “We need you three to be our super special gay wedding death squad.”

“Death squad?” Kara squeaked.

“Not a death squad. No one will be dying.” Alex shot Maggie an exasperated look. “Ugh. Let’s just start here. Kara, will you be my best lady?”

The grin on her face was instantaneous. She loved the term ‘best lady.’ “I would be honoured, Alex! Yay!” She jumped up and ran around the table to give Alex another hug. Maggie waited for her to return to her seat before facing Lena.

“And Lena, I was hoping you’d be mine, but feel free to be more chill about it than Kara.” Kara
turned to Lena, who was very clearly not going to be chill about anything. Tears were already forming in her eyes, but she fought valiantly to keep them under control. Her full-lipped smile was radiant, though.

"Maggie, it would be an honour. My apologies for the lack of chill, I just … I never could’ve imagined being at a table like this, with a family like this, and having a friend like you—" she turned to Sam, "—other than you of course, darling—who would bestow such an honour upon me."

“Geez, Luthor, I’m just asking you to make sure I don’t spaz out and run away is all, it’s not that big a deal.” Maggie’s dimples contradicted her words entirely, and they all knew that Lena’s friendship meant as much to Maggie as it did to Lena. They got up and embraced briefly.

Kara glanced over at Sam as Lena sat back down and was pleasantly surprised to see that Alex had already placed a comforting hand on Sam’s. “I bet you’re wondering why you’re here, huh?” Sam nodded, timid for once in her life. “Look, Sam, I know you’re a new part of our lives, relatively speaking, and you caught us a little off guard at first with all this poly business. But you’ve been a natural fit into our little found family all along, and you’ve quickly become one of my best friends. It would mean a lot to us if you were involved in the wedding planning, but we did have a particular, and very prestigious, role in mind for you.”

Maggie butted in again. “We want you to plan us the best, queerest, most fun, no-holds-barred, lesbian bachelorette party ever. No pressure or anything.”

“You guys!” Sam was overjoyed, and Kara was glad. She knew that Sam had been nervous about where she would fit into everything. “Way to play to my strengths. I’m absolutely in. I won’t let you down.” She turned to Maggie. “And if Lee needs help reining you in on the big day, she can get me to help. No way you’ll escape me and all my superpowers, plus I won’t punt you into the sun for any momentary cold feet you might get.” Maggie and Sam both gave Kara a look.

“Iso would not do that,” Kara scoffed immediately. “What kind of monster do you think I am? Violence is never the answer, Samantha.” Then she leaned in and whispered to Maggie, “No, but she’s right. You hurt Alex, and I’ll punt you into the sun.” She smiled brightly as she turned Maggie’s words back on her. “No pressure or anything.”

Maggie chuckled nervously, and Alex narrowed her eyes at Kara. “Hey! You’re not the only Danvers sister who gets to be protective.”

“Fine. But can we be done with the death threats for the night, please?”

“Deal! Now. I have some great ideas about colour schemes and decorations. How do you feel about rainbows?”
The Bachelorette Party

Chapter Summary

Part 1 of the New Orleans adventures

The pictures online did not do this balcony loft suite credit. The split level loft room had such a distinctly New Orleans feel, but with all the luxury that Lena more or less insisted on. Sam couldn’t believe they were finally here. Nearly two months of planning the coolest joint lesbian bachelorette trip, and now it was coming to fruition. She turned to Lena excitedly.

“Lena! We fucking did it!” Lena smiled back at her calmly, because Lena Luthor was too cool to get overly excited celebrations about accomplishing lofty goals. “Wait, where’s Kara?”

The blonde had squealed loudly when they entered the room and immediately started flitting around at superspeed, looking at everything. But now she had disappeared. Sam used her x-ray vision and immediately found her bubbly girlfriend. She turned back to her less bubbly girlfriend and explained, “It’s fine, she’s out on the balcony, waving to people on the street.”

Lena chuckled. “How very Kara. And seriously, Sam, the next four days are going to be incredible. You have planned a marvelous trip for our dear Sanvers.”

“Thanks! I had a **little** help.” Sam had done all the major planning, in terms of picking the location, the activities, and the dates, but Lena had been instrumental in figuring out the best accommodations and scheduling all the logistical details. They really were a great team. Sam glanced at the stairs. “Alright, I gotta check out the ‘bedroom;’ do we want the suitcases downstairs or upstairs?”

“If you could superspeed the items that need to be hung up into the closet upstairs, the rest can stay down here.” Sam complied, even though it was really only Lena’s dresses that needed to be hung up. When Sam returned downstairs five seconds later, she halted with her hands around Lena’s waist. “Thanks, darling.”

“No problem, Lee. So, are you finally going to tell me who our mystery guest is?” Lena’s eyes glinted mischievously.

“What would be the fun in that? She’ll be meeting us downstairs when we head out for dinner. You’ll just have to suffer your curiosity a bit longer.” Sam had planned this trip, but Lena had been the sole point of contact with the surprise seventh member of their group. No one but Sam, Lena, and Maggie’s friend Luna even knew that the group was seven, not six, and Lena and Luna were being very sneaky about the whole thing. Luna had been Maggie’s friend the longest, and she insisted that they absolutely had to invite this mystery lady. Sam was in charge of all the trip planning, so she was understandably frustrated with the well-kept secret. The mystery woman was staying in the same suite as Luna, despite there being only one bed, but Luna had assured her it was fine. Sam was absolutely dying to know who this person was, so of course, Lena used that to torment her.

“Fine! I’ll just have to distract myself until dinner.” Sam slipped into her seduction voice. “Hey, you don’t suppose they wanna go right away do you? Because that bed
looks awfully comfortable.” Lena bit her lip, which was always a good sign.

“You know, I wouldn’t be surprised if Maggie and Alex had the same idea. Let me text Maggs.” Based on the buzzing of Lena’s phone, the response was pretty immediate. Lena read her phone and laughed, loudly. “Oh my. She said, and I quote, ‘Leave me alone Alex is already tied to the bed. Get it Li’l Luthor.’” Sam snort laughed.

“Well then,” Sam wrapped her arms around Lena’s waist again and in the next moment was dropping her shrieking in surprise onto the bed upstairs. Lena’s melodic laughter was infectious, and Sam climbed onto the bed, straddling a still giggling Lena. She pulled her hair back into a ponytail at superspeed, then leaned down. One hand was pressed into the bed to hold her up over Lena, and she slid her other provocatively up Lena’s jaw and into her hair, stroking Lena’s hair softly behind her ear before taking a firmer grasp. “It feels like we’re forgetting something,” Sam teased, eliciting a sly grin from Lena.

“Oh Kara, darling? If you’re quite finished waving at the nice people, Sam and I were hoping you might join us for some pre-dinner love making. If you’re so inclin—” Lena’s teasing was cut off by Kara’s lips. Ever the master of multitasking, Kara’s hand had also found its way under Sam’s blouse, sliding tantalizingly slowly up her now taut stomach. Sam was momentarily distracted by the sounds of passers by on the street below, and she realized Kara had left the balcony doors open.

“Babe, in your excitement to sex up your girlfriends, you may have forgotten to close the balcony doors.”

Kara’s head shot up, eyes wide. “Oh gosh!” Her lips were already a little swollen, and Sam found herself entirely too turned on to care about a potential audience for the noise they were about to make.

“Fuck it, let’s give them a show.”

“That’s the spirit, darling,” Lena growled, taking Sam’s face firmly in her hands and pulling it down forcefully to meet Lena’s waiting kiss. Sam let out a low hum as Lena’s hands trailed down her back, nails digging in slightly. She responded by tracing her kisses further down towards Lena’s chest.

“Hey, Kar? Let’s get our girl out of this dress.”

“So, Luna, how long have the three of you been a thing?” Maggie’s ex-girlfriend (and best Gotham friend) had a neat vibe that Kara found fascinating, but she wasn’t exactly sure that she liked the game Kate Kane was playing with Lena’s name. Despite having known Luna for years, and having coordinated with both Lena and Luna to keep her attendance on this trip a secret, Kate insisted that Lena’s name was definitely Luna, and vice versa. It was funny at first, but Kara wondered how long she would keep it up.

Lena, for her part, seemed intrigued by it, and she had been playing along all night. Kara bet it was because Kate made it very clear she didn’t see Lena as a Luthor. The seven of them had walked over to the Good Friends Bar after dinner in a private room at Muriel’s, and Lena had stayed arm-in-arm with Luna the whole way, daring Kate to make additional comments. Personally, Kara found the whole charade ridiculous. Lena and Luna couldn’t possibly be more different. Lena was dressed to the nines in a skintight dress and five-inch heels, with hair in a perfect, tight ponytail. Luna, on the other hand, was a different kind of sexy, wearing a fitted vest as a top, exposing a couple inches of midriff above the thick belt of her tight jeans. She had such a
cool hairstyle, an undercut on one side, and thick, wavy locks on the other, with a couple of streaks of blue mixed in. Very cute, but definitely no Lena.

Kara was kind of impressed at how eclectic a group they had assembled. On one end of the spectrum was Lena, obviously. On the other end was Kate, who was maybe the oddest dressed woman Kara had ever seen. She was as tall as Kara or Sam, and her short, messy hair was a brilliant shade of red, framing what had to be the palest skin Kara had ever seen. (She had discretely asked Kate if she was a vampire—Kara didn’t care, she had nothing against vampires. Just curious. Kate insisted she was not.) Her pale face was marked by her deep red lipstick and very dark, shadowy eye makeup. She was wearing high-waisted burgundy jeans with suspenders over a high-necked, halter crop top and camo boots, and she had a ton of tattoos. Maggie said Kate was some sort of heiress, but none like Kara had ever seen. Gotham must be a strange place.

Anyways, now they were out for a night of casual drinking and getting to know each other, and Kate was hanging out with Kara and her girlfriends while Luna, Maggie, and Alex played darts over on the other side of the bar. Lena seemed in no rush to answer Kate’s question, so Kara decide that she would do it herself.

“Well, Lena and I have been together almost as long as Alex and Maggie, what like a year and a half?” Lena shrugged, as if to say ‘sounds about right.’ “Sam and I started dating in November, and Sam and Lena… well that’s, fairly new.”

“But we’ve been good friends for nearly six years now,” added Sam. Kate raised an eyebrow, sidling up a little closer to Sam in a way that Kara wasn’t sure she loved.

“Just friends that whole time? I have trouble imagining that.” Sam gave Kara a reassuring wink, as if she could sense her unease, then leaned closer to Kate. She placed a hand flirtily on the redhead’s chin.

“Oh sweetie, I’m sure you can imagine plenty.” Sam wasn’t one to be out-flirted, and Kara scolded herself internally for the brief moment of jealousy. Definitely need more Almeracian vodka. Human alcohol didn’t really do much for Kara and Sam, so she had brought along two large bottles of the very potent alien vodka in the biggest purse she owned. She and Sam had been spiking their own drinks at superspeed all night, since they had to hide their identities from Luna and Kate. “Though I feel I should warn you, we’re not really looking to add a fourth.”

Kate chuckled, reaching up and stroking Sam’s hand softly, before moving down to the table beside them and patting it softly. “Don’t worry, tall dark and sexy—I already figured that out. But it’s a bachelorette party, right? Who says a girl can’t have a little fun?” She tossed back the rest of her drink then smiled at Lena. “What do ya say, Luna, wanna grab some more drinks? I’ve gotta get nice and drunk so that Maggie has a chance to beat me at pool tonight.”

“It is a party, isn’t it?” Lena sauntered after Kate, and Kara sidled up closer to Sam, who put an arm around her shoulders.

“Wanna listen in?” Sam whispered.

“You know it!” Kara loved having someone with senses as good as her own. Enhanced people watching was one of Kara and Sam’s favourite everyday activities. Sam and Lena had already reached the bar. Lena was standing straight in her usual power pose, one hand on her hip. Kate was leaned back against the bar, arms splayed wide. Kara took another sip of her vodka cranberry as she and Sam listened in to the banter.

“You know, you don’t look like any servicewoman I’ve ever seen.”
“Could be because I’m not a servicewoman.” Lena raised an eyebrow, clearly curious to see where her assumption had gone awry.

“Sorry, it’s just, your tattoo. That, and your overall demeanor. Most people might think it was simple alertness, but you identified every exit in this building the minute we walked in, didn’t you?” Kara looked closer, and sure enough there was a military-style tattoo on Kate’s left arm, a green arrow or spear head around the outline of a sword crossed with three lightning bolts. Lena really had a great eye for detail--the tattoo blended in with the larger sleeve of tattoos adorning most of Kate’s arm.

“Huh, you’re much more observant than I would’ve expected from the Luthor heiress. Not planning an evil plot on me, are you Lena?”

“Oh, now you know my name, Kate? How interesting.”

“What can I say? I like playing games. At least when it comes to hot chicks. So, this bachelorette trip should be great for me. We’re all super hot.” Their drinks came, along with two “vodka sodas” that Sam had sneakily switched out for two glasses of diet coke for her and Kara. “And, for the record, I was in the military, top of my class at West Point. But they kicked me out when I wouldn’t pretend to be straight. Your attention to detail is almost as exquisite as your sense of style.” Kate pushed off the bar and started walking back towards Kara and Sam, without looking back at Lena.

“Girl’s got game, I’ll give her that,” Sam whispered to Kara before Kate and Lena got back.

“Holy wow, you aren’t kidding.” Kara giggled and kissed Sam on the cheek.

Kate gave her a look as she walked up. “Wow, Kara, you really are every bit the shiny happy golden retriever Maggie said you were.”

“She really is,” Sam and Lena confirmed in unison, and Kara smiled brightly at both of them.

“Fuck me, you lot are disgustingly cute.”

The atmosphere at The Good Friends was pretty awesome, with a fairly quiet but fun crowd that at least looked like it trended towards a queer clientele. Kara shouldn’t have been surprised, given that Sam planned the whole thing. They ended up hanging there most of the night. A bit later, Kate and Sam were taking on Alex and Maggie at pool. Kate had apparently gotten drunk enough that she thought Maggie had a shot at winning. Ultimately, all that really meant was that the game (games really—things got far too complicated) became a high-powered show down between Alex and Sam, who were both excellent pool players.

Meanwhile, Kara and Lena had posted up on either side of Luna. Lena was quite pleasantly drunk at that point, but Kara and Luna were both closer to tipsy still. Luna had been Maggie’s closest friend before she met Alex, and while they weren’t as close as Sam and Lena had been or as Maggie and Lena were now, she had known Maggie the longest. She had been the one to insist that Kate be involved. Luna had hung out with her a few times with Maggie, but she didn’t really come up in conversation when Kara was around. As such, Kara didn’t know her well at all, and figured tonight was the perfect time to remedy that.

“Alright, Danvers, explain something to me.”

Luna narrowed her eyes and chuckled softly. “That’s your name isn’t it?”

“Uhhh I mean yeah, but usually Alex is the one people call ‘Danvers.’ I’m always just ‘Kara.’” Kara’s cheek heated up. She knew she was being awkward, but she didn’t know how to stop.

“Alright then, just Kara, what sorta dirt can you give me on Alex?” Kara’s eyes narrowed as Lena laughed at Luna just going for it. “What? I just wanna know a little more about the lady my girl is marrying.” She gave Alex a long, appraising look. “Like … for example, she didn’t really think she was straight all this time, did she? That lesbian over there with the purple undercut and the leather jacket?”

Lena snorted into her drink, and Kara shot her a pointed glare. Luna nodded at Lena, appreciating the ridiculousness of the idea. Kara had no clue how to answer the question. “I …well, I mean, yeah but—” Kara took a long sip of her drink, and Luna just looked at her, dark eyes amused but still curious. “She … ugh. It’s all my fault. She just figured dating and sex and stuff wasn’t for her. It never occurred to her that she was gay, and I never brought it up.”

“But … I’m sorry, you’re both gay, and it just never came up until your late twenties?” Lena walked around Luna as she was talking and leaned against Kara, steadying her a bit. “Crazy huh?” Kara tried for humour, knowing she was going to have to work around some details she obviously couldn’t share. “So, we just … never really talked about it. When we were younger, we just had different priorities. I can’t speak for Alex, but I always knew I was queer, I just didn’t really think to put much of a label on it because I wasn’t really interested in dating. When Alex first came out to me, I felt so freaking guilty because maybe if I had just talked about it, she would’ve figured it out sooner? I just kind of always assumed she was asexual or something—”

“Maggie assures me that is very not the case, just fyi darling.” Lena was grinning mischievously, making Luna laugh. Kara could feel her brow crinkle as she turned to her girlfriend. “Leeeeeeenaaa! Please don’t tell me you and Maggie just sit around swapping sex stories.”

Lena shrugged ever so slightly. “Don’t be so crass, Kara. We don’t discuss sex that often.” Kara didn’t really care that much, but the booze had her feeling dramatic. For the record, she felt like she was extremely sex positive. But Kara couldn’t let this teasing go unpunished, so she pouted theatrically.

“Oh wow, Lena, how do you resist those puppy dog eyes? That’s one of the most adorable things I’ve ever seen.”

“She doesn’t,” Kara remarked, feeling vindicated. Lena rolled her eyes, but didn’t contradict her girlfriend.

“Cute. So, Alex legitimately didn’t know she was gay until she fell head over heels for Maggie, huh? I just … did no one in your friend group have eyes?” Lena was absolutely cracking up. She had already told Kara on a number of occasions that Alex dinged her gaydar from the very first moment Lena met her.

“Ugh. Apparently we did not.”

“And Lena … you’re like, famous. Kinda. How come I never heard anything about you being gay? I’m pretty sure I would’ve noticed if there were rumours that the hottest, wealthiest chick in National City was interested in the ladies.” Luna was insightful, but a little pushy. But Kara couldn’t pretend she didn’t enjoy having the spotlight slid over to Lena, so she could be the one
getting teased for a bit.

“Yes, well, if you ever had the distinct misfortune of meeting my mother, you would understand why I have been pretty firmly in the closet most of my life. Fortunately for you, she is hiding god knows where, probably planning some new plan to kill me or kidnap me or brainwash me or something?” Kara’s brow furrowed a little. She knew that Lillian’s continued freedom was a serious concern for Lena, but she didn’t usually mention her in casual conversation anymore. Not since Jeremiah. Maybe Lena was more drunk than Kara realized.

“Yikes. Sorry, Lena. Didn’t mean to bring up any sore subjects.” Luna took another drink, glancing back to the pool table where Maggie had just loudly accused Kate of cheating somehow. Sam was standing with an arm resting lightly on Alex’s shoulders, both of them silently enjoying the show. As if an afterthought, Luna tossed out a follow up thought. “So what you’re telling me is that, before Lena and Maggie—what like two years ago?—your friend group basically seemed more or less straight? Or at least, straight-presenting?”

Kara’s eyes widened. She had never really thought about it that way, especially back then. It took Alex coming out for her to really come to terms with how important questioning and labelling sexual orientation and gender was for humans, but Luna had a point. A really good one.

“Gosh. I … yeah, a little bit. That’s crazy!” She looked at Lena, bewildered, and Lena just smiled knowingly back at her.


Kara’s head snapped to the side, mouth agape at Lena’s insinuation. “Noooo. James is so straight. Isn’t he?”

“Darling, just because he kissed you that one time and then tried to hit on me that other, doesn’t make him straight. Have you heard the way he talks about Superman?”

“Oh right! You guys are friends with James Olsen. You’re like 6 degrees of Kevin Bacon away from knowing Superman … or, uhh, fuck. You know what I mean.” Luna seemed legitimately fascinated by this idea. If only she knew that she was currently getting drunk with Supergirl and Power Girl. Kara had to actively work not to laugh aloud at the thought. Fortunately, Lena had her back.

“Friends might be stretching it a bit. Kara used to be pretty good friends with him, but he and his superpowered friend have never really been big fans of mine, thanks to my last name.” Lena wasn’t lying, per se, but she was definitely telling the story in a particular way to distract from any connection Kara might have to anything Super-related.

“Fair enough. And also, that really sucks. You seem pretty badass to me, Lena. Even if you played along with Kate’s bullshit for a little too long tonight. If Supes can’t see how cool you are, that’s his loss. And also—” Luna leaned in conspiratorially, and yup, she was definitely feeling her alcohol now, “—who the fuck cares what men think anyway?”

Lena laughed uproariously, and Kara laughed along even though she thought the gross generalization was a little off-putting. A good many men were entitled misogynistic asshats, she had to admit, but she tried to see the good in people where she could. Oh Rao, am I even sunnier when I’m drunk? Kara smiled at the thought, feeling a little silly. “More drinks! Lena, Luna, come with me!”
Lena and Luna followed her, and Lena was sure to keep a hand on her arm just in case Kara forgot herself and moved faster than humanly possible. They approached the bar, and Kara turned back to Lena. “Luna! I am enjoying getting to know you, and you said a nice thing about my girlfriend! So, I bestow upon you the honour of choosing our next round of drinks.” Lena made a face at her, ostensibly because she knew full well that whatever Luna chose wouldn’t have any effect on Kara. Acting on impulse, Kara leaned in close, close enough that her lips grazed Lena’s ear as she whispered, “It’s fine! I promise I’ll take a superfast supershot of superalien supervodka, kay?”

That was apparently enough to send Lena into a fit of giggles, though Kara had no idea why. Lena was so very pretty when she laughed, though, so Kara didn’t complain. Luna, on the other hand, looked at them both like they were crazy. “You know what? I don’t wanna know. You two keep your sweet nothings.” She turned to the bartender. “I’m gonna need three of the most New Orleans-y drink you can make for us.”

“Oh, Three Sazeracs, coming right up!”

“Ooooooooh I like the way that sounds, ‘Sazerac.’ Doesn’t it sound nice, Lena?” Kara was smiling brightly, she was really having fun now.

“Yes, darling, it is quite a nice sounding word. Are you feeling quite alright?” Kara snorted at Lena without really thinking about it too hard.

“I’m great, creampuff. Having a blast.” Their drinks came, and Kara turned to the two beautiful ladies, all three of them with an authentic Sazerac in hand. “Doesn’t this place have an upstairs? Let’s go check it out. I bet there’s a balcony!” Luna grinned and Lena sighed, and both followed her diligently up the stairs. Sure enough, there was a balcony. As they walked out into the warm Louisiana air, Kara could hear the distinct sounds of drunken revelry to their right, no superhearing required. That must be Bourbon Street, a block over. But there were still plenty of people walking the street below them for her to wave at enthusiastically.

“Wow,” snarked Luna. “Just wow. Is she always like this?” she asked Lena.

“More or less,” came the answer, and Kara giggled as Lena took care to kiss her cheek affectionately.

“Oh here we go! Kara thought, not unpleasantly. She kept facing the street below, taking in the sights and sounds of New Orleans around her. But she wasn’t ignoring Luna, and neither was Lena. Rao, this Sazerac is so tasty!

“I have a feeling where you’re going with this, but it’s fine. Ask you question.” Lena’s tone was just the perfect mix of sardonic wit and compassionate acquiescence. Kara briefly felt proud of herself for thinking of the word ‘acquiescence’ on the fly. Then she glanced back at Luna to make it clear she welcomed her question.

“Cool. So like … do you three never get jealous?” Luna asked hesitantly, clearly not wanting to seem like an ass. Lena fielded the question.

“Of each other, you mean? I think there was a little jealousy here and there at first, when we were still feeling everything out, but there’s not really any lately.

“I got jealous earlier when Kate was flirting with Sam!” Kara blurted out, unprompted. “But then I felt stupid for feeling that way, and just enjoyed the show. They’re both excellent flirts.”
“Huh.” Luna took a drink. “So, it’s really not an issue anymore? Like … Lena, if Kara is sleeping over at Sam’s, or they’re going on some big date, just the two of them—well … hold on, I guess lemme start there. Is it always the three of you, or do you do stuff as couples too?”

Kara turned from the balcony, dead set on answering this one. She smiled at Luna, leaning back against the wrought iron railing of the balcony. Then she lost her balance and nearly had to use her powers to keep herself from falling over the edge. “Rao, I’m a clumsy dork. Let’s sit.”

They took seats around a nearby table. “You know, Lena and I were together for nearly a year before I even met Sam. Though … Sam and Lena met first. They used to date! But that was a long time ago… and you know, again now, obviously. But they were just really good friends for most of the last six years.” Kara paused, trying to remember the question she was answering. “Oh right! My point is yes, we do stuff as couples. All of us doing things together, like in a non-friend way, is a fairly new thing actually.”

Kara grinned at Lena, who seemed to be enjoying her inebriated state. Luna was slouched comfortably in her chair, taking in the information. She seemed to be handling it just fine. Or maybe these Sazeracs were just that good.

“Yeah, cool cool. That makes sense. And hell, it sounds pretty hot. But that’s what I was gonna ask before, though I’m starting to think I know what your answers will be. So, if Kara and Sam have a hot date, plus a sleepover I guess, and it’s just them—you don’t get jealous or lonely, Lena?”

Lena considered it, which Kara knew was more because she wanted to get the phrasing right, not because she wasn’t sure of her answer. “Do I get lonely sometimes, when Kara and Sam are doing things? Sure. On occasion. But just as often, sometimes I want some time to myself. Or I’m hanging out with Maggie. Or my friend Winn.” Lena took a sip. “It’s not really any different than anything else. If you have a couple of friends go out to a thing without you for some reason, does that make you feel jealous?”

“Not usually. I mean … unless they’re doing something really awesome and were so rude that they didn’t invite me.”

“Exactly. It’s the same with us, except that there’s romance and sex involved. And we don’t really do that. Sure, sometimes I need a night with Kara, without Sam. But we would never exclude her from something cool. It’s just that—whether it’s me and Kara or Kara and Sam or me and Sam or all three of us, the dynamics are a little different. And there’s room for all of it. Am I explaining it right, darling?”

“You’re doing awesome, creampuff. I’ve got nothing to add,” Kara beamed at Lena. She was feeling really warm and happy and good right now. “Also, I really freaking love you and stuff.”

“Hah. I love you too, Kara.” Lena turned back to Luna, eyebrows raised in question.

“Thanks for answering my dumb questions. I just … I don’t know anyone in a relationship like this. I was curious. The three of you are really goddamn cute, if I’m being perfectly honest.”

Kara had been too distracted by the conversation, and the drunken pedestrians below them, to hear anyone coming out on the balcony with them. So she jumped just slightly when Sam’s voice came seemingly out of nowhere. “Do I hear someone talking about how adorable my girlfriends are?” She came into view, with Alex, Maggie, and Kate close behind her. “Because I mean, you’re damn right, Luna. They’re fucking ridiculous. But this trip is about the one with the purple hair and the really tiny one.” Sam’s words slurred a little, and Kara wondered if she had—"Rao, she
—taken one of the bottles from her purse, and hid it somewhere, finishing it off herself. “Wait, what were their names again?”

“Sanvers!” shouted Lena, producing an eye roll from Alex and a groan from Maggie.

“Yeah! Those bitches,” Sam confirmed, as she came up behind Kara and placed her hands on either shoulder. Kara closed her eyes and leaned into Sam’s strong hands. “The ones who absolutely can’t handle me and Kate at pool.”

“Hey don’t look at me, I tried to let them win. It is their party after all.” If Kate was trying to look innocent, she was failing spectacularly.

“Hardy har har. Enough of this bullshit,” Maggie insisted. “Lena, finish that drink. Kate, go pay the fucking tab.” She drew in a breath, standing straight in such a dramatic fashion that she had to be making some sort of announcement. “The night is far from done, bitches. Call me bridezilla if you will—”

“We will,” Alex teased, and Maggie glared at her, albeit playfully.

“Fine. But fuck it, let’s hit Bourbon Street.”

Sam groaned, raising a hand from Kara’s shoulder to massage her own forehead. “Fuck that, I explicitly left Bourbon off our plans for a reason, Maggie.” Maggie shot her the side eye, and Sam raised both of her hands in a defensive motion, conceding to the bridezilla’s wishes.

“Nah, this is my party, and I’ll do what I want to. And I want to go make fun of drunken frat boys. Lez go!”
Chapter Summary

Part 2 of the New Orleans adventures

“Hey Kate, you think we’ll find any otters out here?” The ginger looked over her shoulder back at Kara with a playful smirk.

“Really, Kara? An otter? In a bayou?”

“Is that a no?” Kate scoffed, then turned back to the front of the kayak they were sharing. It was much cooler than Kara had imagined Louisiana would be in late April. Kate was wearing a dark, cowl-neck sweatshirt over a pair of blue and grey camo pants with combat boots. She was one of the few members of their group who was excited that it was cool and overcast today, and Kara didn’t blame her. Kate’s ghostly skin probably burned super easily. Based on her scent, Kara guessed she was probably doused in sunscreen and bug spray regardless. Kara, on the other hand, hadn’t brought any cool weather outdoor outfits (for which Lena had scolded her this morning). She was kayaking in a tank top, denim Bermuda shorts, and hiking boots. Good thing she wasn’t human or anything.

Kara released her paddle and pulled out her phone. A quick search gave her the information she wanted. “Ah hah! There are so otters out here! Somewhere.” Kate didn’t respond at all; instead she used Kara’s pause in rowing to lift an ice cold beer to her lips. “Hey! Where did you get a beer?” Kate moved her body sideways, pointing at the miniature cooler hidden in front of her feet, inside the body of the kayak. Kara was dumbfounded. “How did you get that in the kayak without me noticing?!?”

Kate shrugged. “What can I say? I’m very sneaky. It’s kinda my thing.”

Just then, Sam yelled from a good thirty feet in front of them, “Will you two quit arguing about the wildlife and catch up to the group please?!” Kara stuck out her tongue playfully, but she and Kate took up their paddles once again.

“You miss seeing my face that much, Sammy?” Kate asked playfully, once they caught up to the group.

“I’ll leave that to Luna,” Sam retorted, winking at the younger woman sharing a kayak with Alex. Kayaking had been, as with nearly all of this trip, Sam’s idea. Amidst the expected drinking and revelry, she had wanted something a little more active or outdoorsy. Something distinctly Alex. Kayaking the nearby bayou was what she settled on, and Alex’s eyes had indeed lit up when Sam revealed their afternoon plans.

They had all taken their time waking up that morning, sleeping off hangovers at their own paces before meeting up for beignets at the world famous Café du Monde. Then they rented four kayaks, an SUV, and small trailer to transport the kayaks. Sam was the only one of them who had kayaked before, so she took one for herself and paired the rest of them off in intentionally eclectic pairings. Kara/Kate, Alex/Luna, and Maggie/Lena (okay so that last one wasn’t eclectic, but Sam had done her best). They had now been on the water for twenty minutes or so.
“Alex, you’re a badass, right?” Luna had ignored Sam’s insinuation, changing the topic immediately. Sam and Kara had accidentally heard some very distinctive and particular noises coming from Kate and Luna’s room, which was next door to Lena, Kara, and Sam’s room, not long after they had all turned in around 2 a.m. They had tuned out the sounds, not wanting to pry, but speculation had quickly broken out between the three as they drifted off to sleep. Sam had been looking for an opportunity to tease them about it all day. Luna was apparently not keen to talk about it right now.

“Yes, I am. Why do you ask?” Alex was sitting behind Luna, looking skeptically at the back of her head.

“I just … I mean there are snakes out here, right? And alligators? Can you like … handle them? I just really don’t want to get bitten by some poisonous water snake and die in some fucking swamp in Louisiana.”

Alex’s face scrunched into an incredulous (and really funny) look, but Maggie fielded the question, shouting across the water, “Don’t worry your pretty little head, you precious urban princess. Alex Danvers can kill a full-grown gator with her bare hands.”

As those two bickered a bit further, Kate and Kara paddled up alongside Lena and Maggie. “You doing okay, sweetie?” Lena was having a rough time. The outdoors were not exactly her thing. A casual hike through a Midvale forest was one thing; a lively kayak through a New Orleans bayou is a different animal entirely. She hadn’t complained and was soldiering on admirably, but Kara could tell she was pretty uncomfortable right now.

“I’m doing alright Kara. Have you noticed any pretty animals yet?” Kara smiled appreciatively. Her wonderful girlfriend just wanted her to have a good time, even if she wasn’t.

“Definitely not any otters, I can tell you that,” Kate snarked. Kara just smiled that much brighter, knowing that her own joy would help Lena feel a little better.

“No, no otters Kate,” Kara rejoined, “but I did see a couple of herons against a gorgeous backdrop of purple water hyacinth. I got a photo for later.” Kara was beyond excited; it would be an incredible painting if she could capture it correctly.

“Katherine, I’m going to have to insist that you refrain from mocking my girlfriend’s love of otters. It is adorable and precious, and also you should give me one of your beers.” Kate and Lena exchanged a series of looks, but Kara could only see Lena’s face, since she was directly behind Kate in the kayak. Based on Lena’s looks, she guessed it was some sort of power play, but she couldn’t be sure. Not exactly her area of expertise. But in the end, Kate shrugged, and took one hand off her paddle to reach in her cooler and pull out a beer for Lena.

“Alright, Li’l Luthor, you’re draggin our ass here. Let’s show these bitches how we kayak.” Maggie’s tone was jovial but insistent. Lena sighed, then she and Kara exchanged a knowing look. Lena gladly helped Maggie pull ahead, because she knew it would leave Kara with a modicum of privacy to have a conversation with Kate that Lena knew Kara really wanted to have.

Kara paddled in silence, she and Kate at the tail end of their group yet again. She was unsure how to start the conversation. Except that Kate surprised her by beating her to it. “Blondie, I get the sense that you wanna ask me something. Given your status as sister of the bride, I’m guessing it has something to do with my history with Maggie?”

Mouth agape, Kara stared at the back of Kate’s head. How does she do that? The more Kara got to know Kate, the more of an enigma the fascinating woman became. She was alert, insanely
observant, astute, insightful, and above all else, mysterious. Kara could see the appeal, but that only stoked her curiosity further. Despite somewhat similar looks, Kate and Alex were very, very different people. Kara wondered if there was some common thread. And also why Maggie and Kate didn’t work out.

“Okay well, gosh, it’s …. Yeah. I’m super curious. How did you and Maggie meet?” Kara hoped Kate didn’t mind her prying a bit. She also had a strong feeling that if Kate didn’t want to talk about something, she wouldn’t.

“In a hurricane, actually. I knew that the hurricane was about to hit Gotham, but I was too drunk to care, and I got picked up and brought to the station to sober up and ride out the storm. Maggie was walking across the precinct bullpen, and it was one of those bullshit cliché moments where our eyes met across the room. Instant sparks.”

Something about Kate’s tone made Kara wonder if she was getting the full story on that, but she was too polite to push. “What was Maggie like back then? How long ago was it?”

“Like seven or eight years ago, I think? When I first met Maggie, she was just a beat cop, trying so adorably hard to make detective in the Gotham City PD. We always clashed about her devotion to her career ambition and my … well, the opposite of that. But we couldn’t stay away from each other. She was—what?—like 24 or 25 back then, and as feisty as she is now, imagine double that.”

Kara smiled softly. Young Maggie sounded like a handful. “So … do you mind if I ask what happened?”

“I don’t mind at all. It’s ancient history. And Maggie and I are long past it, obviously.” The two of them kept paddling, albeit a bit more idly than the rest of the group. Kara waited with baited breath. By now, she loved and trusted Maggie, and she knew in her gut that she and Alex were meant to be. But she couldn’t deny wanting to know as much about Maggie’s past as possible, especially from such an interesting and knowledgeable source as Kate.

“It’s … complicated.” Kate’s voice sounded hesitant, but not pained. Not in any way that would worry Kara. “Don’t freak out or anything okay?” She glanced over her shoulder, and Kara nodded. “I asked her to marry me. We had only been dating a little over a year, and things had always been more or less turbulent between us. But that woman made me feel things. And maybe I was a lot impulsive back then. Hell, I still am, even if I’ve toned it down a bit.”

Proposed?! Kara struggled to process this new information. She didn’t realize Maggie and Kate had ever been that serious. And obviously it hadn’t worked out … how do you remain friends after something like that? “So … what went wrong?”

“What went right, you mean? Let’s not forget things have worked out pretty well here.” Kate glanced back at Kara, winking cheekily. “Maggie freaked out, which in hindsight makes perfect sense. Called me crazy. Said I was moving too quickly. And I was.”

“And that was it?” Should I feel bad for wishing there was a less underwhelming ending to this story?

“No, actually. We kept on for a few weeks after that, pretending nothing was different. But of course, things were different. Eventually, Maggie thought she wanted me to ask again, but that she had conditions.” Kate paused. “I guess I should tell you that the week before I proposed, Maggie solved this huge case that had been tormenting her for weeks. And … around that same time, she caught me in a pretty big lie. There’s a whole story there, but I really don’t feel like getting into
“So, the proposal was you overcompensating, huh?” Kara took Kate’s silence as confirmation. Kara realized that wasn’t the end of the story though. “Wait, what were Maggie’s conditions?” Kate hesitated. Maybe she still wasn’t comfortable talking about. Maybe she didn’t want to say anything negative about Maggie to her fiancée’s sister. Or maybe she just wasn’t sure how to explain. Kara didn’t push—she just kept rowing along gently while she waited for Kate to collect her thoughts.

“Long story short, she wanted me to change. To give up my … *lifestyle*. Get a *real* job. And that wasn’t something I was willing to do. Not for Maggie. Not for anyone. So, we broke up.” Kate picked up the speed of her rowing just slightly, giving Kara the impression that she wanted to be done with this conversation. Kara matched her speed, and they began to catch up to the group.

In some ways, Kate’s story reminded her a little of when Lena and Sam had dated the first time, minus the ending wherein they ended up in a polyamorous triad. Kara doubted that was something Alex and Maggie would be down for. Still… “How long before you were able to be friends again? I mean … you two seem great now. How did that work out?”

“Oh, things were definitely tense between us for a couple of months. I got into some trouble that put me just a little at odds with the cops, which didn’t help. I was acting out. But eventually we came to an understanding. I stopped fucking up, even though I wasn’t willing to make the changes that would’ve been necessary for us to get back together. Eventually, we started hanging out casually. Neither of us really had many friends, not really. And we liked each other too much to just stay away. Things didn’t completely cement into the purely platonic friendship we have now until she moved across the country to National City a couple of years later. Since then, we stay in touch but only really see each other maybe a couple of times a year. We’re both busy people and not really the traveling sort.”

“Thanks for sharing that with me, Kate. Sorry if any of my questions were awkward.”

Kate blew her off. “Like I said, ancient history. Nothing to feel awkward about. Maggie’s a good kid, and she and Alex seem really happy together.”

“I agree, even if …” Kara silenced herself, realizing that this wasn’t really the time or place to bring up her past issues with Maggie. Especially not now that they were back in earshot of the rest of the group. “Nevermind. A story for another time.”

“Well, now I’m curious,” Kate complained wryly. “Don’t think I’ll forget.”

“I’m quite sure you won’t,” Kara teased. Kate had already proved how effectively she caught onto all the little details and remembered them perfectly. It honestly made Kara just a little uncomfortable, especially since there was something about the way Kate interacted with her that made Kara worry she suspected that Kara was something more than human. However, as they pulled up to the group, she was distracted by Lena complaining about a smell of some sort, drawing a chuckle from Kate.

Lena felt like overall she was hiding her severe dislike for the bayou fairly well. But she could only repress it for so long. As they began turning a slight bend in the part of the bayou Sam was leading them down, something began to assault her nose. “What the fuck is that horrendous smell? Something out here is *foul*.” The laughter from behind her announced Kate and Kara’s reentry into the orbit of the group, and Lena turned to shoot a stink eye in their direction.
“Seriously, did something die? This swamp didn’t smell great before, but this is just awful.”

Sam called back to her, “Actually Lee, you’re absolutely right.” She pointed a little ahead of them, on the right shore of a small embankment amongst the various trees and moss dotting the surface of the bayou. Resting there, belly up, was the only slightly decaying corpse of an alligator. Lena felt her face shift from discomfort to pure disgust.

“Fucking gross!” exclaimed Luna. Lena agreed with her completely. But of course, Maggie thought it was the perfect opportunity to crack a joke.

“Babe, did you already scope this area out and come fight a gator without telling us?

Alex made a face. “You know that if I fought a gator, I would’ve been bragging about it all day. Don’t even joke.” She paused, face getting pensive. “But while we’re on the topic, if we did happen to find a gator and, hypothetically, I killed it with one of the knives I’ve got stored in my boots … could we get in trouble?”

Maggie immediately answered, “Yeah, babe. Pretty sure that’s illegal. You almost certainly need a license for that.”

“Okay, but everyone understands that I could absolutely kill a gator with nothing more than a knife, right?” Lena was absolutely sure that Alex Danvers could definitely do that. Kate made a sound as if she was going to speak up, but Alex fixed her with such a ferocious glare that she immediately swallowed whatever snarky comment had been on her tongue.

Kara spoke up. “How do you think she died? Alligators are the biggest predators around here, right?” Because of course Kara would be concerned with the untimely demise of a massive reptilian monster in a swamp. Lena sighed. This is the woman I love.

Alex squinted, surveying the alligator corpse. “I don’t see any major wounds, and it doesn’t appear as though any other critters have been munching on it. That’s really weird. I wonder if it was diseased or something. Surely if hunters got it, they would’ve taken it, either as a trophy or food. Fried gator is surprisingly delicious, after all.” Alex had eaten gator last night before they hit the bars and had been raving about it ever since. “I don’t know, Kara.”

“What, Kara, are you looking to get yourself a pet gator?” Lena glared daggers at Sam, who almost certainly had brought it up solely to antagonize Lena.

“Samantha, do not give Kara any ideas.” She ignored the laughter her outburst had brought out of the rest of the group, turning to Kara. “Darling, you know very well that we don’t have time to take care of a cat, much less something as … exotic as a literal swamp monster.”

Kara’s face fell a little, because Sam’s suggestion had produced exactly the reaction Lena feared it would. “Yeah … you’re right. But I could totally convince an alligator to be friends with me, I’m sure of it.” The reactions to Kara’s girlish naivete ranged from knowing adoration (Alex, Sam, and Lena) to knowing exasperation (Maggie) to disbelieving incredulity (Luna and Kate).

“You absolutely could, love. But that doesn’t mean you should. Let’s leave the scaly beasts where they belong, in the stinky swamps.” Lena smiled brightly at Kara, earning a look of pure sunshine in return. She loved how expressive Kara’s face could be. With Kara reassured, Lena directed her attention back to Sam, who was watching the conversation with a sly grin on her face. Lena mouthed, “You’re dead.” Sam responded by seductively licking her lips, and Lena could only shake her head. She is as infuriating as she is delightful. This was the dynamic they had quickly established between the three of them, since Lena and Sam had reconciled, and Lena
couldn’t pretend she didn’t relish it, even in this godforsaken backwater.

As she broke the look she and Sam were sharing, she caught Luna watching them. A mischievous grin spread slowly across her lips. Lena raised her eyebrows in question. Luna glanced over at Kara, then mentioned, as if it were the most casual observation in the world, “You know, when Maggie told me we were gonna be hanging out with Lena and her two girlfriends, Sam and Kara weren’t exactly what I pictured.” Lena’s brow instantly furrowed. *Where is she going with this?*

“Just saying, when I think of a polyamorous lesbian triad, I don’t immediately picture a gaggle of femmes, you know?” Again, Luna’s tone made it sound as if Lena absolutely shouldn’t take this as an insult, but it was a very strange observation. Lena had no clue how to respond. Sam had no such issue.

“Umm… sorry to disappoint?” The statement was worded as a harmless question, but Lena could hear the biting sarcasm under her tone. She wondered if Luna could spot it. She glanced forward at Maggie, who looked more than a little uncomfortable. While she was unsure of Luna’s motives, Lena didn’t want any potential conflict or negativity to spread, so she jumped in and tried to lighten the mood.

“You know … I’ve been trying to convince Kara to cut her hair off for a while now.” She winked at Sam, trying to calm her down a bit as she soothed things over.

“Oh shit! I could totally see that,” Luna cooed. “Kara, you’d be one sexy ass soft butch. Maybe that’s just a Danvers thing.” Her nose crinkled. “I mean, not genetically, obviously. But you know what I mean.”

Lena gazed over at Kara, who was blushing. “See, darling. I’m not the only one who thinks so.” She turned back to Luna. “She thinks it wouldn’t be a good look for her job, but I think that’s crazy.”

“Lena, if my sister likes her long hair, you shouldn’t push her to cut it.” Alex also sounded confused by the direction the conversation had suddenly taken. “And Luna, I hope you’re not passing some sort of judgment on my sister and her girlfriends. They don’t owe you anything. No one has to look a certain way to be queer, you know.” Her tone was stern, but not overbearing.

“Fuck me, is *that* how is sounded?” Luna suddenly seemed very aware of the small amount of distance between herself and Alex, who had just minutes ago been talking about killing an alligator with nothing but a knife small enough to hide in a boot. “I promise, I’m not that bitch. You gorgeous ladies do you. I was just … the whole poly thing is still a little weird to me, I guess. But I didn’t mean to insult any of you. Really I didn’t.”

“Geez, Luna. And here I thought you were cool,” Kate snarked. Kara shot her a disapproving look.

“It’s okay, Luna! Our relationships—heck, even the abstract concept of our relationships—aren’t something that you’ve ever really been exposed to. Of course your brain would have trouble trying to understand fully. I don’t think you were *trying* to be rude, just … think before you say something silly next time, okay?” Kara Zor-El Danvers, always looking to give people the benefit of the doubt. She shared a small smile with Luna, who looked both guilty and reassured.

“Thanks, Kara. You really are a ray of sunshine, huh?”

“That she is,” Sam confirmed. “But Lena and I definitely are not, so don’t fuck with us.”
“Noted.”

“Hey Sam? If you’re done arguing with my less than woke friend, could you please let me know how much further we have to kayak before the drinking can begin anew?” Lena agreed fully with Maggie’s sentiment. Sam, however, immediately began to look around with a worryingly confused expression on her face. Then she stared down at her map and compass.

_I swear by all that is holy, if Sam got us lost ..._ Lena had helped Sam with the planning as necessary, but the kayaking was something she hadn’t been looped in on. If she had been, she would have invested in some sort of serious GPS navigation device. Sam insisted she could get them through with a paper map and compass. However, she seemed to very much be floundering right now.

“Samantha, love, do we have a problem?” Sam did not look up from the map, and Lena could tell from her face that she was more embarrassed than she was deep in thought. Lena glanced around, and it was immediately clear that she wasn’t the only one worried. Everyone had a look of concern on the face, and one by one, they each turned to look expectantly at Alex. If anyone could get them home, it was the intrepid, do-everything DEO badass.

Except it was Kate who spoke up. “We’re over halfway through the rough oval Sam planned out. We keep heading west, we should find our way back. I can keep checking with the navigational device in my watch just to be sure. It’ll be fine, no one freak out.”

“You have a navigational device _in your watch?!_” Lena wasn’t at all surprised, based on what she had learned about Kate so far. But clearly Luna was.

“I’m ex-military and stupid rich—_of course_ I have fancy navigational technology in my watch.” Kate shrugged it off like it should’ve been obvious. The woman was a grab bag of mystery and intrigue. Lena couldn’t wait to spend the next several months pumping Maggie for more insight about her. For now, she was just glad at least one person knew how to get them back to the kayak dock.

Then, just before they all started paddling again, the funniest comment of the day came from Kara, of all people. “Wow Maggie, you _so_ have a type.”
“This place is incredible!” Alex and Sam were standing close enough to each other that Alex didn’t have to shout all that much over the pumping bass of the so-called ‘90s hip-hop jamz.’ Her compliment sent a thrill through Sam’s spine. Out of all her plans, this was the one she was least sure of, but most proud. Kayaking yesterday had been an adventure, and burlesque that night had been a thrill. But this was something different. Unique. All around them, a crowd almost exclusively made up of queer women danced and talked and partied in the dark space that was usually an art gallery. “What even is this, really? How is it that you found a night club just for queer women?”

“Hah!” Sam grinned at Alex. “Actually, this isn’t a night club. It’s an art gallery.” Alex’s eyes widened in surprise, then shifted back and forth as her lips pursed in astonishment. “There’s this group called Grrlspot that hosts a pop up lesbian bar slash queer dance party, once a month. They do it in all kinds of different spaces. I ummm may or may not have planned our trip around tonight, so I’m beyond relieved that you think it’s cool.”

“Of course it’s cool Sam!” Alex looked at her like she was crazy for having been worried in the first place. “I’ve never been around this many people like me in my entire life.”

“Maggie certainly seems to be enjoying it!” Maggie and Luna were out on the makeshift dance floor, pressed closely to a number of other ladies all around them as Salt-N-Pepa blared through the speakers placed strategically around the room. The space was dark, save for the plethora of spotlights, blacklights, and other colourful light up displays scattered around the room. The lighting worked perfectly for Luna, revealing a fine layer of body glitter coating her warm brown skin.

Out of nowhere, Kate appeared by Sam’s side and said, “Boo,” causing Sam to jump several inches into the air. It was as if she had simply materialized out of the shadows.

“Jesus, Kate. What the honest fuck?!”

“What? I’m just standing here.” She winked mischievously at Alex, her pale skin almost glowing in the club lights.

“Your skin is like a sexy neon sign in here! How the fuck did you sneak up on me?!”

Kate walked around to the other side of the small table Alex and Sam were standing around. “Did you hear that, Danvers? Tall, dark, and gorgeous thinks I’m sexy.”

“You know she’s dating my sister, right?” Alex raised an eyebrow in a look of faux judgment.

Kate didn’t take the bait, taking a sip of her drink before leaning across the table so she didn’t have to yell. “Yeah well, she’s also dating Lena fucking Luthor, so excuse me if I try to throw my hat in the ring.” She got a devious look in her eye. “Speaking of, where are Luthor and the human ray of
“Kate, you’re adorable, in your own creepy way, but I already told you the ring is closed. No more hats for the foreseeable future.” She rolled her eyes. “And I’m sure Kara and Lena are around here somewhere, don’t you worry.”

“So, how’d you find this place anyway?” Alex’s tone made it very clear she was done with Kate’s shenanigans.

“Honestly, I just googled ‘lesbian bar in New Orleans.’ Turns out the only actual lesbian bar near here closed a while back, but this whole Grrlspot thing has really taken off lately.”

“It’s fucking awesome!” Alex was positively radiating enjoyment.

“What’s not to love about a popup queer girl party. Women are awesome.” Kate checked out a couple of girls walking by, hand-in-hand. “Am I right?”

Alex’s eyes followed Maggie’s movements out on the dance floor as she agreed, “They sure are.”

“Heaven really is a place on Earth.” Sam knew Kara would be mad at her for making a San Junipero reference without her. Especially when Kate made it clear that she didn’t get it.

“Belinda Carter? Really?” Sam’s eyes widened. She shouldn’t have been as surprised as she was, but maybe Kara was rubbing off on her. Before meeting her, Sam probably wouldn’t have had half the (adult) television knowledge that she now did. *Oh shit, have I been domesticated?*

“Okay so first of all, it’s Belinda Carlisle, and yes, but I was actually referencing San Junipero, aka the gayest episode of Black Mirror ever. Also the only one with a happy ending. As the lesbians ride off together in a sexy red convertible, the song plays them out.” Kate made a face as if that sounded like something she might actually want to check out, but then Alex made an unusual noise, drawing Sam’s attention. She was biting her lip and gazing down at her phone.

“I uhhh … gotta …” She didn’t bother finishing her excuse as she walked away from them, a slight skip in her step. Kate moved closer so it would be easier to talk. They both glanced at the dance floor, where Luna was now alone in the middle of three other women, their bodies in tight formation as they moved against each other rhythmically with the beat. Maggie was nowhere to be seen.

“Looks like your girlfriends aren’t the only ones finding a quiet spot where they can get busy tonight.” Sam narrowed her eyes at Kate, but otherwise didn’t respond. She knew for a fact that Kara and Lena had been in the bathroom together for the last nine minutes and counting, but fortunately Kara had left her overly large purse with the alien booze behind with Sam.

Kate moved in even closer, till her upper arm was pressed firmly against Sam’s. She was worried that Kate was going to keep trying to make a pass at her, but the next words out of the heiress’s mouth were as far away from what Sam expected as possible. “So, do you and Blondie ever fuck while flying?” For the first in her life, Sam did a literal spit take, before turning a scolding, wide-eyed look of incredulity on Kate.

“You mean … like the mile high club? In the plane bathroom?” Sam did her best to hide the shock and suspicion she was feeling behind a mask of embarrassment. Based on the way Kate moved a little closer as her face broke out into a huge shit-eating grin, she wasn’t buying it.

“I mean, I’ll take that story too, but no, I was talking about when you and she are flying around in
the sky in those sexy ass bodysuits. Are those all one piece or a top and pants? Because I imagine it would be harder to fuck if it was all one piece.” Kate winked. “I do think Kara’s new look is a definite upgrade over the skirt though.”

Sam’s heart was pounding. She definitely knows. Fuck. What do I do? Can we really trust her? She decided to try to play dumb a bit longer, and see how things played out. “Kate, what the fuck are you talking about?”

“Really, Power Girl, we’re going with the whole routine? Whose idea was the corny name anyway? ‘Reign’ was much cooler, even though I get why you would want to get away from it.” Kate took another sip of her drink, then chuckled. “Sam. Relax. Your secret is safe with me. I just wanna shoot the shit, okay? Plus I really need you to answer my questions.” Changing tactics, Sam put on her best Lena Luthor business face, turning into Kate’s body contact and nonchalantly taking another drink. She’s going to have to prove I can trust her before I admit any of this. That or Maggie and Alex are going to have to vouch for her. My identity, my daughter, is too important.

“Fine, fine. I get it. Trust is tough, especially with something like this. But let me ask you one other thing. Did you actively try to copy my look or do you expect me to believe it’s pure coincidence that you went with black and red, including a thick red wig?” This time, instead of spitting her drink, Sam choked on it. Which Kate found uproariously funny.

“Oh but seriously, what the fuck are you talking about?” This flirty interrogation had officially taken a legitimately confusing turn. Unless … “Hold on, are you trying to tell me that you’re one of those Gotham bat vigilantes?” Kate looked at her as if Sam had just insulted her mother. Or something. Sam knew that a group of wealthy weirdos had taken it upon themselves to play guardian angels in Gotham while wearing black leather bat costumes, but the only one she knew anything about was the Batman, who was apparently the ringleader? And she only knew that much because Kara’s cousin sometimes worked with the bat guy.

Kate glared at her. “I’m not with them. The whole bat thing was well-established when I got drawn into the whole vigilante thing, so I just went with it. The fact that it really bothers Batman is just icing on the cake. You really haven’t heard of Batwoman?”

“Sorry. Hey, do you have any pictures?”

“First, you answer my question.” Sam rolled her eyes but decided it wouldn’t hurt to indulge Kate a little. “Let’s just say that when you can both move at superspeed, a one-piece bodysuit with a cape isn’t really much of an obstacle.”

“Fuck yes, I knew I could get you to admit it. By the way, Kara really should’ve gone with a cowl from day one. Your disguise is good, but when you’re next to her it becomes pretty easy to guess that you’re Power Girl. I had her pegged almost immediately, and I only got more curious when you both kept sneaking your own special booze out of that massive, completely out of place purse. Because you’re both aliens, right? Human booze doesn’t do it for you?”

“No it does not.” Sam opened the purse just enough to flash the bottle. “This is Almeracian vodka. And you promised me a picture.”

“I absolutely did not. Also, do you really think I would just carry pictures of my secret vigilante identity around in my phone? Do I look like your girlfriend?” Sam narrowed her eyes, and searched the internet for a photo herself.

“Oh! I guess I see what you mean about the colour scheme. Though I’ve got a lot more white.
Wow, this whole bat thing gives you a pretty sexy vampire aesthetic, you know?"

“I’m aware. Also that’s like the fourth time you’ve called me sexy tonight. You sure you don’t want a piece of this?”

“Wow, you never give up do you?”

“I really don’t.”

“How have we never done this before?” Kara’s hushed tones were really turning Lena on, almost as much as Kara’s hand under her skirt. But even so, Lena made a slight face. She didn’t know how to tell Kara that she and Sam had fooled around in no fewer than five restrooms since they started hooking up again. “Lena!” Kara whisper-yelled. “You and Sam have had bathroom sex, haven’t you?” Lena nodded, hoping that she didn’t ruin her girlfriend’s suddenly frisky mood. Kara wasn’t usually this spontaneous, and Lena was fucking loving it. Fortunately, she had nothing to worry about. “That is so sexy,” Kara purred.

Lena was pressed against the cool surface of the wall in the corner stall of the surprisingly clean and stylish bathroom of the art gallery. They had been out on the dance floor when Kara kissed her, slowly and purposefully, then leaned in and whispered in Lena’s ear to tell her how fantastic her body felt moving against Kara’s. A raised eyebrow was the only response Kara had required to make a spontaneous decision, pulling Lena off the dance floor and into the bathroom. Lena suspected Kara checked the space out with her x-ray vision before they entered, because she found herself whisked into the corner stall furthest from the door to the bathroom the second they entered the room.

Kara was pressed closely, her warm and vaguely citrusy scent flooding Lena’s senses and her nose nuzzled against Lena’s ear and hair. Her hand kept moving upwards, taking the hem of her form-fitting, emerald dress with it, further and further up the inside of Lena’s thigh until Kara’s hand grazed teasingly through just the edge of Lena’s pubic hair as it continued up along her hip bone. Lena bit her lip, her abs tightening at the slight tickle of Kara’s soft touch. Kara’s voice was hot in her ear. “You didn’t wear any underwear.”

“I wanted to see if you would figure it out,” Lena whispered. Kara’s head pulled back slightly, so that she could look at Lena. Kara’s normally bright blue eyes were dark with lust, and her soft pink lips twisted into an eager smile. “I wanted to see if Kara Zor-El might be tempted to misbehave.” Lena immediately received the reaction she was looking for, along with a bonus surprise. Kara bit her lip, as desire flooded her wide eyes. Before Lena could register that Kara’s hand was no longer on her hip, it was firmly between her legs.

“How’s this for misbehaving?” Kara gasped, as quietly as possible, before dragging her teeth gently along Lena’s neck. Her body responded instinctively, back arching as she pressed herself, warm and wet, onto her Kara’s hand. Kara’s hand hadn’t moved yet, waiting patiently as she drew soft kissing teasingly along the neckline of Lena’s one-shouldered dress.

“Kara, please,” Lena begged hungrily. Kara bit down on Lena’s collarbone, drawing a soft moan from her lips. Then she slipped a single finger inside, watching as Lena’s cheeks warmed. Lena bit her lip, pupils blow wide, eyes begging Kara for more. Her palm moved against Lena, soft but firm, and Kara slipped a second, then third, finger inside. Lena’s eyes closed as she enjoyed the sudden tightness inside of her, Kara’s fingers beginning to trace a path back and forth.

Kara’s free hand cradled the back of Lena’s head, and the look in her eyes dared Lena not to break
eye contact as the movements of Kara’s hand intensified. As her wrist shifted slightly, Kara’s palm pressed down roughly against Lena’s clit, drawing a too-loud moan before Lena could stifle it. Kara’s free hand instantly moved from behind Lena’s head to firmly over her mouth. The blonde giggled as quietly as possible, but for Lena, the hand over her mouth added a whole new dimension to the sex.

Playfully, she tried out a soft moan into Kara’s hand, testing to see what she felt like she could get away with. Kara’s eyes widened in surprise, then narrowed, her brows furrowing in a playful scold. Lena tried to drag her teeth slightly along the inside of Kara’s hand, forcing Kara to press her to the wall a little more roughly, hand clamping down so that Lena couldn’t move her mouth at all. It sent a wave of pleasure and arousal down Lena’s spine and into her gut. Lena widened her eyes just enough so that Kara knew how much Lena was enjoying this, and she pressed harder against Kara’s hand, squeezing her fingers. Lena could feel her arousal building steadily.

Lena grabbed onto Kara’s hips, grip tight as Kara’s fingers pumped steadily. Her breathing sped up as her body tensed in preparation for what was about to happen. Light waves of pleasure began to dance and radiate out through her body. Kara could sense that Lena was close, so she adjusted her hand ever so slightly, allowing her thumb to vibrate (Rao bless Kryptonian biology) against Lena’s clit as the tips of her fingers curled just so inside of Lena. Just like that, the orgasm blossomed in Lena’s center and ripped through her entire body. Her hips bucked against Kara’s hand, while Kara’s other hand only just barely stifled the low sounds of pleasure escaping her throat.

Kara moved the hand over Lena’s mouth, but not the one between her legs, which were now shaking slightly. Kara pressed her cheek to Lena’s as she whispered huskily into her ear, “Breathe, Lena. I’m not done with you yet.” Lena hummed her approval. This was a side of Kara she didn’t see very often, and she was damn well going to enjoy every fucking minute of it. “I really want to go down on you, but what if someone looks down at the bottom of the stall and sees me?” Her whisper was thick with desire but tempered slightly by a sudden reappearance of her nerves. “Is that really going to stop you, darling?” Lena pushed Kara’s hair aside and took her earlobe between her teeth, then slid her tongue along the edge of Kara’s ear. “Especially when you know how desperately I want your head between my legs?” A slight shudder passed through Kara, and as she looked back at Lena, it was very clear that no amount of nerves was going to hold her back in this moment.

A wide smirk broke out across her face as she slid to her knees. Good thing Kara wore pants tonight. Kara lifted Lena’s left leg up, draping it over her shoulder as she trailed kisses up Lena’s thigh. Then the door to the bathroom slammed open loudly, startling them both. Kara looked up at Lena, who pressed a finger to her lips. They heard the sounds of one or two people shuffling into the bathroom, pausing, and then practically crashing into the stall one over from them. Kara and Lena exchanged confused looks as the sounds of hushed laughter and … kissing? … drifted over from the other stall. Then Lena heard a voice, whispered but audible. And quite distinctive.

“Fuck me, Danvers, you sure know how to touch a girl.” This statement was followed immediately by a low growl. Lena grinned. Looks like we’re not the only ones in this bachelorette party feeling frisky.

Before Lena could stop her, Kara called out, “Maggie?” The sounds from the other stall ended abruptly, with one or the other of Alex and Maggie shushing the other.

Then Alex’s voice called back, sounding more than a little wary, “Kara?!”

Maggie followed that up with a giggle, “No offense, L’il Danvers, but you gotta get the fuck outta
here. We need a little privacy.” Alex and Kara both groaned in unison. Lena’s leg was still draped over Kara, and she could feel Kara's breath on her still wet skin.

“Sorry Maggs, but we’re a bit busy here. Could you come back in another, oh, let’s say five to ten minutes?” She had to fight to keep herself from giggling. Lena found the whole situation contradictorily arousing and awkwardly hilarious. Kara practically shrank from embarrassment the minute she realized Alex and Maggie now knew that both of them were in the stall together, and from the sound of it, Alex did too.

Meanwhile, both Maggie and Lena were having fun with it. “No can do, L’il Luthor. I’m horny and drunk, and you know what? This is my bachelorette party, so I’m gonna have to pull rank here and ask that you kindly get the fuck out before my fiancée gets any more embarrassed and awkward than she already is.”

Lena smirked, pulling Kara to her feet. “Guess I can’t argue with that. Besides—” Kara immediately shook her head, begging Lena not to push the awkwardness any further, but Lena just couldn’t help herself, “—I at least got one good orgasm out of this already.” Alex and Kara both groaned, again in unison. Kara’s face was a bright red at this point. “I am a bit thirsty now.” She led Kara out of the stall, tapping a quick playful pattern on Maggie and Alex’s stall door on her way by. “Have fun you two.”

“Hey there, love.” Lena sidled up to Sam, looking quite pleased with herself. Sam’s keen nose detected all the delightful indicators that Lena and Kara had just been making love, probably in the bathroom. In particular, the lavender notes distinctive to Lena were mixed pleasantly with Kara’s more citrus tones.

She leaned in close, wrapping an arm around Lena and kissing her cheek before whispering in her ear, “Did you two have fun?” Lena grinned at her, then responded loudly enough that Kate could hear her too.

“Quite. Though … we would’ve had a bit more fun if we hadn’t been interrupted by our lusty bachelorettes.” Sam rolled her eyes.

“Well, maybe I will just have to take care of that myself, a little later.”

“Okay wow,” Kate snarked. “I can’t believe you two are just openly discussing your sexual escapades right in front of me. I love it. But also, where did Kara go after Maggie and Alex kicked you out of the bathroom?”

“Oh, she was super embarrassed and immediately went to go dance with Luna so she could avoid being here while I told Sam about it.” She pointed at the crowd. “There she is. Everyone wave.” They all waved, and while Kara could obviously hear them, she kept her eyes firmly fixed in the opposite direction.

“Is she really so embarrassed that she’s going to ignore us? Is she always weird about sex?” Sam and Lena immediately laughed in unison, and Sam was almost sure she caught Kara shooting them the briefest of stink eyes.

Sam explained, “Not at all. She loves talking about sex. It’s just that Kara and Alex both get super weird about each other having sex.”

“It’s honestly the strangest thing. Good thing she’s so damn adorable.” Lena’s eyes narrowed.
“Katherine, what exactly did you mean when you said Kara is ignoring us? She’s halfway across the room, and the music is quite loud.” Sam winced. There was a good chance death threats would follow Lena realizing that Kate knew about her and Kara’s alter egos.

“I mean she’s got like super hearing or whatever, right?” Immediately, Kara was standing on the other side of Kate, concern written all over her face. Lena was glaring daggers. Sam sighed.

“Stand down, ladies. Yes, Kate knows. But she’s not going to out us or anything. Also she’s one of those Gotham bat people.” Kara’s eyes widened, but Lena’s expression didn’t change.

“Wow, okay Sam. I promise not to tell your secret to anyone, and you turn around and blab mine to your girlfriends the first chance you get? I see how it is.” She smirked, which Sam was starting to learn was par for the course with Kate. “But seriously, is Lena about to try and murder me in the middle of this party or what?”

“Don’t think I won’t,” Lena threatened, her voice icy and menacing. “I would do anything to protect Kara and Sam.” Sam squeezed Lena’s hip, hoping to calm her down at least a little.

“Not that I don’t find the whole intimidating Luthor thing sexy as hell, because I absolutely do, but as I told Sam while you and Kara were getting it on in the bathroom, I’ve got secrets of my own. And I’m a big fan. I’m not any danger to your girls.” Kate put an arm around Kara’s shoulders, seeing if she could get away with it. “Besides, I face people trying to maim and kill me on a regular basis already. I’m not about to put myself on the shit list of a Luthor, two supers, a black ops agent, and the best detective I know.”

Kara didn’t shrug off the contact from Kate, instead fixing her with her best Supergirl look. “Kate, this is really important. And I think we can trust you. You’re a good person, even if you have questionable taste in vigilante outfits. Just remember, it isn’t only our lives at stake here. Knowing our secret identities is a heavy burden. Please don’t let us down, okay?”

“Sure thing, Blondie. But I’m pretty sure anyone with functioning eyes and half a brain can tell that Kara Danvers and Supergirl are the same person. If your identity is that important, you should really do something more drastic than throwing on a pair of spectacles.” Kate turned flirtatiously to get a little closer to Kara, taking a golden lock of hair and twirling it around her finger. “Now, tell me all about your little encounter with Luthor in the bathroom. Was it hot?”

Kara’s mouth opened wide, then she mumbled, “Okay bye,” and took off for the dance floor again.

“That was way too easy,” Kate called after her, earning a chuckle from Sam. Kate turned back to Sam and Lena. “What did she mean ‘questionable taste in outfits?’ I look incredible in black leather.”

Sam looked her up and down, then traded a look with Lena. They both shrugged. “Yeah, you probably do. But I think she’s talking more about the whole bat motif than the stylized black and red leather.”

Kate scoffed. “Whatever. If ain’t broke, don’t fix it. The criminals of Gotham are freaked out by it, and that’s what really matters.”

Lena raised an eyebrow. “Is it, really? Terrifying street thugs is actually effective in lowering crime in Gotham? Or do you just get off on making bad men wet themselves?”

“Aw come on, Luthor. Can’t it be both?” Kate flashed them an impressively genuine smile,
without a single hint of sarcasm.

Sam laughed. “Wow. Kate, I think you might be certifiable, but I kinda like it. I’m glad we got to meet.”

“Finally, I’m making some progress. What do ya say, Lena? Can I trade ya Luna for Sam for the night?”

Lena rolled her eyes. “I’m not going to dignify that with a response.”

“Don’t push your luck, Kate.” Sam gestured back towards the bathrooms. “Now, Maggie and Alex are about to come out. Let’s great them properly.” As the bachelorettes walked out, noticeably satisfied looks on both of their faces, Sam, Lena, and Kate broke out in uproarious cheering and applause. Alex immediately turned beet red, but Maggie took a bow for the crowd, milking the attention for all it was worth.
Kara was half-awake, but in no way interested in getting out of bed anytime soon. She was on her back, perfectly sunken into the insanely comfortable mattress Lena had bought when she got the king-size bed for the penthouse. The cool fabric of the bamboo sheets felt incredible against the warmth of her naked skin. The bedroom was still mostly dark, thanks to Lena’s blackout curtains across the floor-to-ceiling windows of their bedroom. Speaking of Lena … The bed was warm to her left but cool to her right. Sam was snuggled up against her left hip, still breathing steadily in her sleep. But Lena had slipped out of bed already.

Kara glanced over and found a lime green post-it on the nightstand. As she stretched languidly, careful not to disturb Sam too much, she reached her arm out and plucked the small note from its perch. In Lena’s perfect, almost calligraphic handwriting was written a simple “Love you xoxo.” A bright smile spread across her face, matching the warm feeling of adoration that blossomed in her chest.

Happiness. Bliss. Comfort. Home. Kara felt as if she was surrounded on all sides by the warm embrace of a perfect bubble of contentment. She loved all the little things the most. A note with sweet nothings on it. The faint smell of Sam’s shampoo in her nostrils as she slowly woke up in the morning. Lena taking her hand unexpectedly, just because. The way Sam’s face scrunched up exactly the same way every time Ruby made an off-colour remark about Kara and Sam’s displays of affection around the house. The brilliant look on Alex’s face as she said, “I do,” to Maggie Sawyer. Kara sighed happily.

A quick glance of her x-ray vision told her Lena was working diligently in her home office. Such a workaholic. Alex and Maggie got married last night, and the after party got pretty crazy. As she remembered the previous night, two thoughts crossed Kara’s mind. First, she couldn’t remember a time when her life was filled with this much overwhelming and unadulterated joy, on basically all fronts. Her sister was married to a beautiful, devoted partner. Her girlfriends were safe and happy and loved her tremendously. She was thriving at her job. After Krypton, Kara could never have imagined that she would ever be able to find even half this much happiness in her life.

Her second thought was how in the heck did Lena not have a raging hangover after last night? The woman was a marvel in a way Kara, even with all the gifts provided by her Kryptonian physiology, could hardly fathom. But just then, Sam began to stir beside her. Kara wrapped her arms around the brunette, just as one soft brown eye, still hazy with sleep, eased itself open to look at her.

“Good morning, gorgeous.” The corner of Sam’s lips turned up slightly, but half her face remained buried in her pillow. Kara moved a hand softly across Sam’s cheek and through her hair, and Sam hummed into the touch.

“Morning,” she croaked out in response. “Where’s Lena?”

“Working, of course.” Sam rolled her eyes, lifting her head off the pillow and propping it up on one arm.
“She’s such a beautiful weirdo.”

Kara giggled. “I know, right?” Sam sat up further, sheet falling away from her as her arms rose in the air into a long and full stretch. Kara didn’t realize she was staring until Sam pursed her lips and raised an eyebrow.

“You make the most adorable face when you’re in awe of how hot I am,” Sam quipped. Kara blushed, but reached out a hand anyway, tracing a finger along Sam’s collarbone, then down her chest, over the swell of her right breast, and to the side along her hip. Sam’s skin was so soft and smooth and radiant.

“Sorry, you’re just really, distractingly attractive.” Sam stretched again, this time reaching a hand out to cradle the back of Kara’s head as she finished. She pulled Kara just close enough to plant a kiss on her forehead.

“Last night got crazy.” Kara moved so that she could lean back against Sam, who kept stroking her hair.

“Yeah. But the ceremony was so lovely.” Lena had rented out this quaint little Italian-style villa in downtown National City for the wedding and reception. There had only been maybe fifty people, and it had been a gorgeous space for the intimate gathering. Both bridal parties were in grey tuxes, with Kara, Sam, and Vasquez in deep purple ties and Lena, Luna, and Kate in powder blue ties. Alex and Maggie were in black tuxes (white was really not their colour, they insisted), with patterned ties. Alex’s was purple with subtle white polka dots, whereas Maggie’s was a blue herringbone pattern. Kara’s favourite local string quartet had played the ceremony, which was short but sweet. J’onn had officiated, in formal Martian robes (he changed into a suit for the reception).

The ceremony had taken all of thirty minutes, followed by thirty minutes of ‘happy hour’ before dinner. The reception (or after party, as Maggie insisted on calling it), on the other hand, lasted another five or six hours as they partied into the night. “If we’re gonna reminisce,” Sam whispered, “let’s have some coffee and force our girlfriend to put a pause on her oh so important business.” Kara was hesitant to move from her comfortable spot against Sam’s perfect body, but coffee did sound lovely. And she wanted to kiss Lena pretty badly. Kara squeezed Sam’s thigh, then got out of bed, grabbing each of them a fuzzy robe. “I’ll brew the coffee; you get the girl.”

Sam placed her hands on Kara’s hips from behind, guiding her out of the bedroom and down the hall. Kara peeled off at the door to Lena’s office, but not before Sam gave her ass a squeeze that drew a surprised squeal as she opened the door. Kara glared at Sam, who winked, before turning in to see that Lena was laughing at her. “I see you’re both awake then?”

“Sam’s making coffee,” Kara explained, then noticed the mug on Lena’s desk. “More coffee, I guess. You’re going to come hang out with us now. Your work isn’t that important.” Kara reached down to pull Lena up out of her chair, but instead, Lena wrapped her arms around Kara’s waist and pulled her down into her lap.

“Oh yes? And are you going to make me?” Lena grinned at Kara, hands on her sides in a clear threat to engage tickling. Rather than employ force, Kara elected to go with a much more effective tactic, leveling her most devastating pout at Lena. Her girlfriend immediately cracked, sighing as she wrapped her arms further around Kara and squeezed her tightly. “Oh fine.” They got up together, and Kara led them into the kitchen.

“Your note was an adorable way to stay the morning, creampuff.” Lena smiled brightly.
“Coffee’s almost ready, Kar, “called out Sam. “What note?”

“Oh Rao.” Kara had gotten distracted by Sam’s naked form and soft skin and forgotten to show her the note Lena left for them. She retrieved the post-it with her superspeed, then stuck it playfully to Sam’s butt, in retaliation for Sam’s early ass grabbing. Her only reaction, however, was to laugh at Kara’s antics, then pull the note from her ass, tenderly sticking it to the otherwise spotless fridge as she read it.

“Ooooooo, look at this, babe. Lena loooooooves us,” Sam teased, making childish kissy noises in Lena’s general direction as she carried Kara’s and her mugs to the dining room table. Then she grabbed Lena’s empty mug and topped it off before plopping down next to her.

“Just so we’re clear, darling, I’m going to completely ignore, well, all of that.”

“You’re no fun. You know I’m hilarious. That’s why you loooooooove me.” Sam dug her elbow playfully into Lena’s side. Kara stayed out of it, content to sip her coffee and watch her girlfriends being just way too cute.

“Anyway,” Lena emphasized, “are Sanvers on their way yet?” Kara glanced over at the clock on the wall above the liquor cabinet.

“Yup, they should already be in the air on their way to Madrid.” She frowned. “I can’t believe they left so quickly. You think they even slept last night?” A devious glint immediately sprung to the eyes of both women across the table from her, and Kara groaned. “Not what I meant!”

“But now you’re totally picturing it, aren’t you?” Kara felt her nose crinkle as her brain tried to revolt against her, creating imagined images she definitely did not want to picture.

“Shuuuut uuuup, Sam!”

“There there, let her be,” Lena cajoled, reaching across the table to take Kara’s hand. “But, speaking of sexy, should we talk about Samantha’s decision to strategically lose her shirt and tie—and bra, I have to assume—in the middle of the afterparty?” Lena glanced sideways at her. “I didn’t just dream that, right?”

“I got hot, okay?” The mischievous smirk Sam was failing to keep off of her face said otherwise. “Don’t pretend you didn’t love it. That tux jacket was perfectly fitted anyway, and Ruby had already left.” She winked at Kara. “I was feeling feisty.”

“Yes, darling, you made that very clear on the dance floor the rest of the night. I think you might have embarrassed Eliza a bit.” Kara blushed as she remembered how … risqué some of Sam’s dance moves had been last night.

“Yes, because I was the one who basically gave Kara a lap dance in the middle of the crowd on the dance floor.” This time, Kara giggled. They had all gotten pretty crazy last night, drunk on both booze and happiness. Come to think of it, they should all probably be more hungover than they were. And yet, here they were, bathed in the mid-morning sunlight, blissfully enjoying delicious coffee together.

“I just can’t quite believe that my sister is actually married.” Kara was a little in awe of it. “Like … Maggie’s basically my sister now.” Sam and Lena seemed much less amazed than Kara, both just shrugging into their coffee.

“Is it really all that different than things were two days ago?” Sam asked. Kara gasped. Sam
wasn’t being dismissive at all, Kara could tell by the sincerity in her voice. And she had a point, Kara supposed.

“I guess not? Probably it’s just a cultural difference. Like … on Krypton, marriage was this huge thing—but that was because it represented the joining of great Houses. The sorts of long-term romantic relationships people prioritize here on Earth didn’t have to result in marriage. Actually, I guess most of them probably weren’t marriages at all.” Kara paused, considering the differences. “I hadn’t really thought about marriage at all until all this wedding stuff. I never really imagined that any of us would actually get married, formally speaking.”

Lena smiled softly, her pale green eyes doing that cute calculating thing where she considered a new piece of information for the first time. Sam, on the other hand, was suddenly much stiffer than she was before, and she wouldn’t meet Kara’s eyes. Instead she looked out the window, off into the distance, as if trying to mentally escape the conversation. Kara used her superspeed to appear in front of Sam, who didn’t move even though she had to have seen Kara coming. “Hey.” Kara put a hand softly to Sam’s cheek, and she finally met Kara’s gaze. “What’s up?”

Sam’s soft brown eyes filled with a flavor of worry that Kara hadn’t seen before. Lena was watching patiently from just behind Sam, tentatively reaching out a hand to rub her back. Sam’s mouth twitched a little around the edges before she finally spoke up. “I don’t know I guess I just … well … fuck this is awkward. Marriage is just a really weird topic when it comes to the three of us, you know? And we’ve never really talked about it. And …”

“And you’re the newest person to this relationship, relatively speaking, and you are concerned about where you might fit in the future?” Lena finished for her, and the sad face Sam made was all the confirmation Kara needed.

“Hey!” Sam turned back to Kara, who surprised her with a firm kiss. “We’re not going anywhere. And I don’t care one bit about Earth legal customs. We’re in this together.” She grabbed Sam’s hand, then extended her other to Lena. “All of us.” Sam’s face brightened a little, her lips moving towards a smile.

“What I was trying to say—or what I was getting around to eventually, I guess—is that I never really imagined myself getting married. Not … not after Krypton, anyway.” She was suddenly distinctly aware of that same little hole in her heart, the Krypton-shaped one that would never go away no matter how much love she had in her life. A tear escaped her eye. Then warm arms embraced her as Sam and Lena surrounded her. Krypton was gone, and some part of her would always miss it—her people, her culture—but this was her home now. Sam and Lena were more a home to her than Krypton ever was. She held them tightly.

“I love you. Both.” A pair of hands found their way to her sides, and immediately Kara began to writhe as Lena tickled her. “Nooooooooo, Leeeeeeena.” Kara was up and away and on the other side of the room in a heartbeat.

“Wow, you guys are both saps,” Sam joked. Her face was entirely changed. Whatever worry she had before, it was gone now. “Here, let me top off everyone’s coffee, then let’s sit out on the balcony for a bit.”

The sun felt amazing on Kara’s skin. She knew Sam felt it too. Kissing Lena on the cheek, Kara wished that she could experience this feeling too. “Anyway. I just mean … I don’t know what the future holds, but I can’t imagine my future without both of you in it. My home isn’t a place, it’s you. It’s both of you. And Alex. And Maggie. And Ruby. And Eliza. And J’onn… anyway, I’m rambling, and you get the picture. Sorry for freaking you out, Sam. I didn’t mean to. Just …
“It’s fine, Kara. I shouldn’t have … I know that you both love me, in your own ways. I shouldn’t have assumed I’d get left behind.” Lena wrapped an arm around Sam.

“Of course you won’t, dummy. Hell, I’ve known you much longer than Kara. Obviously, we’d kick her to the curb if we decided to be boring monogamous people again.” Kara narrowed her eyes and crossed her arms, huffing before she turned away from them dramatically. Unfortunately, they didn’t take the bait. “I mean, especially now that you have all her powers and stuff…” Both their arms wrapped around her at the same time. Lena had continued the joke only long enough for them to sneak up on her, and Kara had been so focused on playing as if she was pouting that she wasn’t paying attention.

“You’re not getting away from us, Blondie. We’re kind of big fans.” Kara turned back to them, but kept her face firmly fixed in a hardcore pout. “Awww Lee, you hurt our girl’s feelings. Better make it up to her somehow.”

An impish grin broke out across Lena’s face, and she stood. “I wonder how I might do that, Samantha.” She slowly and deliberately slipped one leg, then the other, over Kara’s lap, so that she was straddling her. “Kara?” Lena leaned in so that their noses were touching. “Do you have any ideas?”

Kara was distracted from her pouting routine by the way she could almost taste Lena’s lips, so very close to her own. “Ummm… I … you could just …” Lena kissed her before she could attempt to finish what was left of the thought. Her lips closed firmly around Kara’s, and her tongue gently moved along the inside of her top lip as it traced a path towards her tongue. Lena’s center pressed down firmly against Kara’s body as she straddled her, and Kara wrapped her arms around Lena to hold her as closely as possible. Lena withdrew her tongue so that she could take Kara’s bottom lip in between her teeth, which drove Kara wild with desire.

Then Kara’s phone rang. In the tone that was exclusively for major DEO emergencies. “Fuck,” Lena grumbled, and Kara picked her up and set her gently down in her own chair before answering the phone.

“This better be goo—”

“Kara!” Lucy’s voice was firm, but with an edge of panic. Kara’s heart immediately began to pound. She had never heard her like this. “This is an emergency. Turn on the news right fucking now. Then get to the DEO immediately.” Lucy hung up, as if for emphasis, and now Kara was legitimately terrified. She was inside the penthouse and had the television on less than a second after Lucy hung up. Sam and Lena were right behind her. Kara turned to the local news, and her heart sank. The words on the chyron towards the bottom of the screen would be forever burned into her memory, because they signaled the most dramatic change in her life since Krypton died.

BREAKING NEWS: SUPERGIRL IDENTITY REVEALED TO BE CATCO REPORTER KARA DANVERS.
I’m going to kill her. Lena couldn’t even begin to process the storm of emotions swirling within her. She couldn’t imagine what Kara was going through. She had been completely silent since they turned on the TV and saw the news. Lucy and J’onn had met them as they entered the DEO, and Power Girl flew in a few minutes later (so that no one would guess she had been with Lena and Kara). Even now, the video was playing on a nearby TV.

Lillian’s face nearly filled the screen. Her normally icy features were softer than usual, her rigid expression relaxed into a (no doubt faked) modicum of emotional appeal. This was not her mother’s real face, but rather a façade she had implemented expertly to manipulate the public’s opinion. As Lillian explained, through strained voice and barely held back fake tears, Supergirl was a liar. A manipulator who had tricked the public and used her superhero status to advance her ‘human’ career as a reporter. Who had brainwashed and turned Lillian’s own daughter against her. An alien pretending to be human and toying with the people around her like playthings. The warning with which she finished the video was perhaps the most chilling part, if only because Lena knew there was a truth to it that even Lillian wasn’t aware of. “If this Kryptonian, who sees herself as a goddess, can hide in plain sight, manipulating the biggest media corporation in National City to propagate her pro-alien ideology, how many others of these aliens are pretending to be human in order to gain positions of power and manipulate our own society against us? Cadmus will not stand for it, and we call upon the people to rise up and stand with us in defense of humanity.”

Lillian had released the video through one of the Cadmus broadcasts that morning, but it had been corroborated by an exclusive package of evidence provided to Channel 3 KPJT News. There was more than enough photographic evidence that there was no way Kara could believably deny the truth of the allegations. There were photos of Kara opening her shirt to reveal the suit. Photos of Alex with Kara compared to photos of Alex with Supergirl. Interviews with local waiters who could point out how much food Kara consumed. Even interviews with a couple of CatCo employees about Kara’s mysterious disappearances from work. And now everyone had the story.

“No. Absolutely not, Alex. I don’t need you. This is a PR issue, not an ‘Alex beats up the people who are mean to me’ issue. You enjoy your honeymoon.” Kara’s voice sounded surprisingly under control, but Lena suspected she was putting on a front for Alex. “Yes, I’m okay. I’ve got Lena and Sam, and Power Girl will help too, if necessary. Yes, I’m at the DEO. No, I don’t know how we’re going to handle this yet.” Kara sighed, and their eyes met briefly. Lena gave her an encouraging smile. “Alex, I’ve gotta go. Lucy and I will figure this out, okay? Promise me that you will stay in Europe and do the whole backpacking extravaganza. You and Maggie deserve it.” Kara hung up, shoulders slumping in exasperation.

“Lena, what am I going to do?”

“You’re damn well going to get in front of this,” came the emphatic answer from Lucy. She had given Kara her space when Alex called, but now she was back in full director mode. “Come on, this isn’t a conversation to have in the middle of the DEO.” Kara, Lena, Power Girl, and J’onn followed her into a nearby conference room, and J’onn hit the button on the panel by the door to make the glass walls opaque. Everyone sat at the table, and Sam took a seat close beside Kara, since everyone in the room already knew her identity. Lena was the only one who remained standing, too agitated to sit.

This was too far. Lillian had ruined her childhood, saddled her with an insane amount of insecurities and mental struggles, forced her to stay in the closet for years, dictated her life path,
condescended to her, kidnapped her, and nearly killed her on a number of occasions. But this was the final straw. She had stolen Kara’s life from her. Lena was confident—no, she knew—that they would figure this out, find a new way forward. But this was unforgivable. Worse. Nearly everything Lillian did was unforgivable—she was more monster than person. This, this was … something Lena couldn’t let go. She was going to find Lillian, and put an end to her evil ways, one way or another. But for now, Kara needed her.

“There’s really no way we can deny this? Even if I—”

“Come on, J’onn. You’ve seen the evidence. Even if we put Kara Danvers and Supergirl in the same room together, no one is going to believe that it isn’t some sort of trick.” Lena could see why J’onn was in charge of operations while Lucy handled administration and PR. “Kara, you’ve got to—”

“Talk to Cat, I know.”

“Exactly.” Her bold green eyes flashed with resolve. The rest of them—and especially Kara and Lena—might feel lost at sea, but Director Lane was on a mission. She seemed determined to set them on the right path. “As soon as we get our stories straight here, you should head straight there. I’m sure she’ll be expecting you. Hell, I bet she’s already sent you no fewer than three text messages and a voice mail.” The look on Kara’s face told Lena that Lucy was spot on.

“Okay, but what is the plan here?” Sam asked. “Kara’s identity is out there. There’s no shutting Pandora’s box, but we can’t just let Lillian’s bullshit go unchallenged.”

Lena stepped up to the table, slipping her hands under Kara’s cape to rest one on each shoulder. “And we won’t.” Kara looked up at her, a drop of adoration mixing into the cloud of fear in her eyes. “Nothing changes, not really. Supergirl is a hero. A beacon of hope. And now, the world can know what I’ve always known: the true hero isn’t the symbol, but the woman behind it. Kara Zor-El Danvers can be a brighter symbol of hope than Supergirl ever was.” The smile Kara flashed her was among the brightest Lena had ever seen, which was really saying something. “And I’m sure Cat will make that very clear in any interview you have with her.”

“Cat!” Worry flooded back into Kara’s eyes. “What Lillian said. She’s not wrong, you know? It was dishonest of me to use Supergirl as a source. What if I can’t be a reporter anymore?”

Sam wrapped Kara’s hand in her own. “Don’t jump to conclusions. That’ll be a conversation to have with Cat.” Kara’s eyes widened as she turned to Sam.

“Sam!” She turned frantically to J’onn and Lucy. “We have to protect Sam and Ruby! We have to be sure that Power Girl stays anonymous.” Lena frowned. Kara wasn’t thinking about the flip side of that coin either. Public scrutiny into Kara’s life was about to explode. It would be major news, to some a scandal even, that Supergirl was not only gay and in a long-term relationship with a Luthor, but that on top of that they also had a third girlfriend with a daughter. Lena was accustomed to living in the public eye, but Kara, Sam, and Ruby were not. Things were going to get so much worse before they got better, and they were going to need to really work their asses off to be able to keep Sam’s identity as Power Girl under wraps. But that was a conversation for the three of them; one that did not include the DEO.

“We will,” Lucy promised. “Sam, you should still be okay. There’s never been anything to tie you to Power Girl unless someone was watching you thoroughly back when Reign was taking over your body periodically. At this point, we’re pretty confident that no one outside of our inner circle did so. Besides, Reign was always masked, and while it wasn’t nearly as good a disguise as Power Girl’s wig and cowl, no one was ever able to get a clear high-resolution photograph of Reign’s face.
anyway. Your identity is as safe as it is going to be. You just have to be extra diligent about conversations outside the DEO and the privacy of your own home, as well as how and when you change into your uniform.” Lena opened the thick folder on the table in front of her, the one that Lena was only just now noticing she had been carrying with her the whole time. “Now, let’s get into the specifics of what our response to this video is going to be.”

“What is that?” Lena asked immediately.

Lucy batted her eyelashes at Lena, then smirked. “This is my ‘Supergirl’s identity has been revealed’ starter kit. I’ve been working on it since I joined the DEO.”

“What?” Kara gasped.

“Sweetie, we all knew this day was coming. Sure, we didn’t know it would be Lillian who outed you, but we’ve all been warning you about your disguise forever. It was only a matter of time. So, I made sure we would be prepared.” Lena smiled at Lucy. She hadn’t really had any occasion on which to work with the DEO’s human co-director, and she could see immediately that the woman was a marvel. Cool under pressure, a brilliant tactician, and a calming presence. She made a note to become better friends with the younger Lane when this was all over.

Lucy continued, “First, I’ve got all the legal documentation ready to go to have your public identity legally recognized as Kara Zor-El Danvers, a Kryptonian refugee on Earth and American citizen under the Alien Amnesty Act.” She looked warmly at Kara. “The paperwork just needs your signature, and I can handle the rest. I took a guess and went with Kara Zor-El Danvers, but you can just be Kara Zor-El if you want.”

“No.” Kara’s voice sounded genuinely confident, even bordering on hopeful, for the first time since the metaphorical bomb dropped. “My name is Kara Zor-El Danvers. Thank you, Lucy.”

“You’re welcome, Kara. Once the paperwork is approved, you’ll need to get a new driver’s license and passport, but I’ll work to make sure that is all handled as efficiently as possible. Next will be your interview with Cat. We need to have a conversation about what you can and can’t talk about.”

Ah yes, we must protect the DEO’s secrets. Lena knew that Lucy needed to have this conversation, and she respected that, but it irked her a little even so. Kara shouldn’t have to worry about protecting the DEO at a moment like this. Her whole life was being turned upside down, and her focus should be on how she wanted to present herself to the public. That and protecting her family.

“Obviously, your identity is out there, as is your relationship with Alex. There will be some scrutiny on her and the capacity in which she works with Supergirl. There is no official documentation anywhere that the Department of Extranormal Operations exists, because to anyone without top level security clearance—” Lucy rolled her eyes, “—and some friends and family, but shh don’t tell the President that, the DEO doesn’t legally exist. As far as the public is concerned, Alex Danvers is part of a classified joint FBI and Homeland Security task force that aids and assists Supergirl when needed. Feel free to talk about the personal aspects of working alongside your sister—I’m sure that will be lovely, Kara, and people will love it—but as far as the technical aspects of her job, everything is classified. Don’t say anything more than that.

“Got it.”

“The letters ‘D,’ ‘E,’ and ‘O’ should never leave your lips in public, okay? This is more important now than ever.” Kara nodded solemnly. “But the rest? Your personal life—well it’s just that, personal. You get to decide what you want to say and how you want to say it. Just know that
as far as I’m concerned, you don’t owe anyone anything.”

“And Kara, Lucy speaks for me and for the entire DEO when she says that,” J’onn added. “Anything we can do to help you through this, short of revealing the DEO to the public, we will do. You’ve more than earned it.” Kara, Sam, and Lena all smiled warmly at the co-directors.

“Thanks guys.” Kara’s voice sounded closer to tears than her eyes would tended to indicate just then.

“J’onn’s absolutely right. And that brings us to the next part of my plan. Lena, I’m hoping to get some big input from you on this.” Lucy looked up at her, and Lena immediately knew what this was about.

“Security.” Lena nodded. “Security.” Lucy nodded again, knowing that Kara wouldn’t like what she was about to say. “Darling, we might have to give up the loft.” Kara’s entire face dropped, but she didn’t say anything. “I know. It’s just … I don’t know yet what sort of paparazzi to expect, but it’s going to be a lot. That building isn’t set up to deal with the comings and goings of the seedier members of the press, and that’s without even talking about actual threats on your life.” Lena squeezed Kara’s shoulder gently. “Building security at the penthouse is the best in the city at handling the many issues that spring up when you live in the public eye. For now, it’s best that we stay there.”

Lena turned her gaze back to Lucy, who seemed legitimately bummed for Kara. They all knew how much Kara loved the loft, which had been her home for nearly six years now. Longer than she had known anyone in this room. “Lucy, I’ve got my own well-vetted security company that I employ to protect me and my assets, but I’m assuming that Supergirl is an asset the DEO will want to be involved in protecting themselves, yes?”

“You’re damn right. I’ll have Vasquez take point on this until Alex comes back, since you know she won’t let anyone else handle it once she’s here. If you could just provide us with the contact information for your security company, Vasquez will handle everything else. We’ll probably need to make some improvements to building security, and we’ll keep a couple of agents present on site at all times.”

Lucy turned to Sam, who immediately stood up in anticipation of what Lucy was going to say. “The answer is yes, Luce. Whatever it takes to keep Ruby safe. We just have to be subtle about it.”

J’onn took over the explanation at this point. “We’re going to need to let a few more agents in on your secret identity. It’s risky, but I can’t see a way around it. It’s less risky than any other outcome. Vasquez and I will find the right people for the job, but here’s what I want to do. You can obviously take care of yourself, but I’d like to keep two plainclothes, undercover DEO agents on location at your house and at Ruby’s school at all times. In fact, if you’re okay with it, I’d like to have at least one agent with eyes on Ruby at all times, just in case.”

Sam looked confused. “That seems like overkill, doesn’t it? I mean, Kara’s the one whose identity was exposed, not me. I want to keep Ruby safe, but is she really in that kind of potential danger?” Lucy and J’onn both became noticeably more uncomfortable, and Kara looked like she was ready to go along with anything that would keep Ruby safe. So, Lena had to be the one to explain the point that Sam was missing.

“Sam, love, Kara is now the biggest celebrity National City has ever seen. I know you’re used to the level of paparazzi and media scrutiny that I’m under, but that’s nothing at all compared to what is about to happen. There’s no way we’re going to be able to keep it a secret that you and Kara are
a couple.” Realization dawned on Sam’s face. “The public won’t know that Ruby’s mom is Power Girl—” she glared daggers at Lucy and J’onn, “—and it damn well better stay that way. But they will know that Ruby’s mom is in a polyamorous, queer relationship with both Supergirl and Lena Luthor. That’s a near certainty. Life’s about to get a lot harder for the girl, and yes, that means she will be a target.” Lena reached over and stroked Sam’s cheek. “I think J’onn’s plan here is for the best.”

As the real consequences of all this began to sink in for both Sam and Kara, their faces became decidedly more troubled. Lena wished she could carry this burden for them and promised to herself that she’d carry as much of it as they could—or would—let her. She focused back in on J’onn, her voice carrying all of the considerable authority and insistence of which she was capable. “There’s one last major concern that we need to discuss.”

J’onn’s eyes hardened. “Lillian Luthor.”

“Precisely.” Lena took her hands off of Kara’s shoulders and walked halfway around the conference table, towards where J’onn was standing. “This is the final straw. This is the end of the road for her. I don’t care what it takes, but I’m going to find her and I’m going to stop her. I welcome the assistance of the DEO to the extent that you also have a vested interest in taking down Cadmus, but let me assure you Director J’onzz, you will not get in my way.” Lena made sure that the threat in her words was very clear.

“Understood, Ms. Luthor. The DEO will be happy to work with you to investigate the whereabouts of your mother and her Cadmus cohorts. But let me also make myself clear, and I hope you will forgive me for being blunt. This organization does not exist to aid in some quest for revenge, and we will not condone cold-blooded murder. The best I can promise you is that we will not interfere with your … family affairs, so long as they don’t interfere with our ability to take down Cadmus once and for all.”

Lena stepped closer and offered her hand to J’onn, who shook it firmly. “Thank you, J’onn. I think we have an understanding then.” She walked back to the other side of the table. As best as Lena could tell through the cowl, Sam appraised her with a mix of awe and approval, whereas Kara’s face was significantly more conflicted about what Lena had just said. Or perhaps, more accurately, the things Lena had left unsaid. Lena silently pleaded with her to leave it for now—they could discuss her plans for Lillian later.

Kara glanced at her phone, where a fourth message for Cat Grant was now displayed, along with a legion of social media notifications and other messages and requests dotting the screen. “Lucy, is there anything else in your file that we need to talk about, or can I head over to see Cat now?”

“I think that’s it for now, Kara.” Lucy tried to give Kara a reassuring smile. “Today’s gonna be rough, kiddo. But you can get through this. You’ve got a ton of people who love and support you, and a ton more who respect and admire you. Just remember to breathe.”

“Thanks Lucy. For everything.” Kara got up and in a blink was on the other side of the room, hugging both Lucy and J’onn tightly.

“Stronger together,” J’onn reminded her, earning him a small smile and a nod.

“Just be sure Alex and Maggie stay in Europe, okay? I already yelled at her on the phone, but you know how she is. It might take an order from a superior officer.” There was a hint of playfulness in Kara’s tone, which was like music to Lena’s ears. She worried profusely about Kara getting overwhelmed by all this.
“I’ll make sure of it, Supergirl. You leave it to me.” Kara began walking towards the door but stopped suddenly.

“Ummm, Lucy and J’onn could you give us a minute in here?” They both nodded, then headed out the door. J’onn paused just long enough to put a reassuring hand on Sam’s shoulder before he exited.

Kara took Sam by both hands. “Sam, I am so sorry.”

Sam’s eyes widened. “Babe, what do you have to be sorry for? None of this is your fault.”

“It is. I should’ve been more careful with my identity. I’ve put your identity, your privacy, and Ruby’s safety at risk because I screwed up.”

Sam immediately pulled hands from Kara’s and took her face in both hands. “Hey. This is not your fault. Ruby is going to be okay. We’re not going to let anything happen to her. And Lucy’s plan is a good one. I’ll be okay. I’m worried about you right now.”

Kara nodded, eyes welling up a little. “Okay, okay. You’re right. I just …” She glanced over at Lena, holding out a hand to her. “We need to talk to Ruby tonight, all three of us. I’m sure she’ll have questions for me, and we need to have an honest discussion about how her life is going to be affected. Let’s plan on dinner okay?”

“Sounds like a plan, just—”

“Don’t worry, I’ll use my superspeed to be sure that no one catches Lena and me coming to your house.” Lena grimaced. “Hey, just enough to get high enough above the clouds that people can’t see us, and then to get us down into Sam’s house without being scene, okay?” Lena nodded, already mentally preparing herself. *Note to self, bring anti-nausea medication to dinner.*

“I meant what I said earlier this morning. Nothing has changed, even if everything has. I love you both. You’re my home.” They all hugged tightly, and Kara kissed them both before turning to leave the room.

“Take your time with Ms. Grant, okay?” Sam kept her distance, back into Power Girl mode. Power Girl and Supergirl were friends and coworkers, but definitely not lovers. The distinction was more important than ever now. “I can handle anything that pops up.” Supergirl nodded, and Power Girl took off.

“Give Cat my best, darling, and if she wants a follow up interview on the intricacies of a Super dating a Luthor, tell her I’m game if you are.” Lena fixed Kara with her most mischievous grin, eager to lift Kara’s spirits and get her in the right mindset and mood for what had to be something of a daunting interview, even with a close friend like Cat. “And remember, no matter what, I love you too.”

Kara smiled brightly, squeezed Lena’s hand, and then took off. Lena sighed, pulling out her phone to call a car to take her back to L-Corp. Except that just as she opened the lock screen, a wooshing noise came up behind her and she felt herself picked up off her feet by the familiar arms of her favourite blonde Kryptonian. Kara grinned at her as she carried her firmly across the sky. “I figure L-Corp’s on my way.”
A Symbol of Hope

Everything at CatCo was about as bad as Kara imagined it would be. Cat had excellent security in the building after her run-ins with Livewire, but as Kara neared the building, she could see the horde of press and paparazzi assembled below on the sidewalk around the building. *Good thing I can fly.* The thought of facing a crowd like that made Kara sick to her stomach.

Regular business hours for CatCo Magazine did not typically include the weekend, but it wasn’t the only company with office space in the building. If not for Alex’s wedding the night before, Kara might’ve been hard at work at the National City Tribune by now. Her chest tightened again; she knew that she was probably about to get fired. She had messaged Cat before she left the DEO, asking her to meet at CatCo.

Cat was waiting for her on the balcony, but before she could descend to meet her, a flash of red and blue passed through her peripheral vision. Startled, Kara turned to see Kal waiting for her on the roof. Her chest tightened. Things were getting better, but they had still been a bit strained between the surviving members of the House of El since their confrontation over Kara’s romantic entanglements. They had gotten along fine at Alex’s wedding, but that was mostly because the conversation stayed shallow and Lois and Sam did a good job of keeping the awkward silences to a minimum. Kal was still fairly cold to Lena and Sam, and as long as he was going to be that way, Kara wasn’t ready to let him back into her circle of trust.

Kara sighed but flew over to meet him. As she landed, he moved closer. She felt immediately uneasy, unsure what to expect from him, but he surprised her in the best possible way, wrapping her up in a warm, comforting hug. “Are you okay?”

She melted into his hug, feeling at ease with her cousin for the first time in months. “I’m … adjusting. Lucy had a plan for this, and that was really reassuring. She thought of everything.”

Kal chuckled. “Of course she did. She was always the planner of the Lane clan.” He pulled away. “I figured your first step would probably be an exclusive interview with Cat. Lois sends her regards—wants you to let us know if there’s anything we can do to help. She also insisted that I tell you that she would be a much better choice than Cat for your first interview. But I’m pretty sure she knows you won’t change your mind.”

“Thanks, Kal. I really do appreciate it. And—” Kara gulped, the familiar feeling of guilt blossoming again in her gut, “—I’m sorry if this creates extra pressure on you.”

Kal grimaced, before trying to put on a good face. He was clearly well aware that more people would be after Superman to reveal his identity now. “Don’t worry about me, Kara. I’ve been at this for nearly twenty years now. I know how to handle the scrutiny.” He put a hand on her shoulder. “You need to focus on yourself right now. Everything is about to change for you.” He frowned. “I’m sorry that you have to deal with this.”

“Yeah well, according to Lucy, this day was always going to happen sooner or later. I just didn’t expect it. Lillian’s known my identity for over a year. I figured if she was going to expose me, she would’ve done it already.”

“That woman is a monster. It’s nothing short of a miracle that Lena was able to survive her childhood without becoming like Lex. Speaking of … how is she handling this?” Kara analyzed Kal with cautious optimism. This was the first time he had openly admitted, unprompted, that Lena was not like her family. Still, she couldn’t trust him enough to be completely honest about
Lena’s reaction. Kara wasn’t sure how she felt about Lena’s implied threats of violence against Lillian, but she was sure Kal would assume the worst of her girlfriend.

“Lena is furious and worried. And incredibly supportive. She thinks Kara Zor-El Danvers can be more of a hero than Supergirl has ever been.”

Kal thought about that for a moment. “You know, she might have a point. Superman and Supergirl have done some remarkable things for this planet, but I think I might’ve been too narrow-minded in my approach to using my powers when I first set up this double life for myself.” That’s not the only thing you’ve been narrow-minded about, Kal. Kara did her best to keep a straight face. She sensed he was about to make a really good point, and possibly reveal a bit of personal growth while he was at it.

“I had serious concerns about the Amnesty Act, but I think I might have been wrong. I’m starting to see that assimilating with humans isn’t necessarily the only valid way for aliens to fit into our society. Lois has been telling me about all the good that has been happening since the Act passed. Sure, there’s been violence and discrimination too, but I suppose that was always going to be the case.” He smiled. “Lena’s new CFO, the Coluan, has apparently become something of an unofficial face of the virtues of alien amnesty and citizenship. Growing up in Kansas, Ma and Pa just never imagined that society would be able to accept me for who I really was. People like this Coluan—”

“Her name is Kaziah,” Kara interjected. “She’s a friend.”

“Oh. Cool. Well, Kaziah and others like her—and now even you, I guess—are showing me that Ma and Pa were wrong. Maybe they can accept us. Maybe aliens can become contributing members of society without hiding.”

Kara’s heart warmed. “Kal, I’m proud of you. You’ve come a long way. And it means a lot that you came and found me. Today has been sort of a mixed bag, and I sorta doubt it’s gonna get any easier.”

“Look, I know I’ve been sort of a … well, I feel like the word you would probably use is ‘butthead.’ More like shithead, Kara thought. Sam’s been a bad influence on me. “But I’m really trying, I promise. I love you, cousin. And I want to help, if I can.”

“Thank you, Kal. I mean it.” She smiled, genuinely. “Now. I’ve got a date with a pretty reporter.”

“Still not over your crush on Cat?” He smirked knowingly.

Kara rolled her eyes as she turned away. “Bye Kal.” She leapt into the air dramatically and floated down to Cat’s balcony.

“Oh Kara, how nice of you to pop by. I don’t have any major news to cover or anything, so I figured I would just fritter away my time enjoying a now annoyingly cool latte out on the balcony. Did you enjoy your conversation with our handsome man of steel?” Cat’s snark provided Kara with a welcome feeling of normalcy. She plopped down on the padded outdoor chair across from Cat.

“He’s feeling surprisingly open-minded today. I’m glad he came to find me.” Cat was silent, her dark eyes focused attentively as she watched Kara with a worried but curious look. “But we’re here to talk about me, not my cousin.” Cat nodded, then tilted her head just slightly as she waited for Kara to continue.
Kara felt her face scrunch up as frustration spread through her. “Cat! The world knows I’m Supergirl! Please, tell me about your plan for how to handle this!”

“Oh, so you just assumed I have a plan?”

“Don’t screw with me right now, Cat. Normally you’re delightful, and I feel weird talking to you like this in the first place because some part of me still thinks of you as ‘Ms. Grant’ sometimes and it’s already been a long day and it’s barely even lunchtime yet, and I feel pretty lost and conflicted and confused right now and—”

“That’ll be enough, Kara.” Cat stood and walked over to sit beside Kara, placing a hand on hers. “I’m sorry. Of course I have a plan. This is going to be the most incredible interview ever, I promise. But first, talk to me. How are you handling it?”

“Well, this definitely isn’t how I imagined spending the day after my sister’s wedding, I can tell you that.” Kara scowled. Had it really only been a few hours ago that she was spending a happy morning with her girlfriends, joking about Lena’s love note? “But I imagine it’d be a lot worse if I couldn’t fly.”

“Ah yes, I had to fight my way through the paparazzi swarm just to get in here. How fortunate for you that you were able to avoid that.” Cat’s lips pressed together tightly in a slightly forced smile. “So. We’ll need to do a televised interview, I think. I’ve already made the necessary arrangements. We can do it this afternoon and broadcast it tonight, if you’re ready. I figured you needed to get your message out to the public sooner rather than later.”

“I do. I can’t let Lillian’s lies go unchallenged.”

Cat exhaled loudly. “I thought my mother was bad, but Lena’s definitely takes the cake. How did she find out?”

“Oh, she’s known for a long time. As for why now, I can only guess. I think she’s finally realized that she’s never going to convince Lena to see the world in the twisted way she sees it, and she’s lashing out. Going out of her way to make mine miserable.”

Cat rolled her eyes, muttering, “Vindictive bitch.”

“You have no idea,” Kara quipped.

“Okay, so here’s what I’m thinking. We can spend the next couple of hours mapping out what we want to cover in the interview, negotiate out what is on the table and what isn’t. Maybe practice a little. Then we’ll head down to the television studio and film the interview. We can air it as special event on our local affiliate tonight, and post it on CatCo’s website after.”

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“Okay but—” Kara’s heart thumped away at a worrisome pace in anticipation of the inevitable answer to the question she needed to ask, “—just be honest with me: am I fired?”

To her utter surprise, Cat looked at her like she was a complete idiot. “Kara, for such a brilliant woman, sometimes you are shockingly dense.” Cat rolled her eyes while shaking her head as dramatically as possible. “I didn’t build this empire by throwing away talent. Besides, can you imagine the outrage if I fired the hero of National City? I know you’re worried about the disparaging remarks your … I guess ‘mother-in-law’ isn’t quite accurate, at least not yet … made about you. But trust me, dear, you’re still easily the most popular person in this city. As far as I’m concerned, you’re more of an asset to CatCo now, not less.”
“But I’ve used myself as a source on, like, so many articles. I’m … I’m a disgrace to journalism.” Using herself as a source was something that never quite sat well with Kara, but Supergirl was a good source when it came to alien-related stories in National City. And she hadn’t known how else to get Supergirl’s side of things out to the public without risking her identity. But that didn’t make it any less of an ethical violation.

“Yeah, we’ll have to do something about that. You screwed up, but it isn’t like I can pretend I didn’t know you were doing it. I bear that responsibility ever bit as much as you do. We’ll work something out with Snapper, maybe a suspension without pay, but we’ll move past it.” She smirked at Kara. “I can’t believe you thought I would fire you. It’s like you don’t know me at all, Keira.”

Kara made a face. She used to hate that name, but now Cat really only used it to playfully tease her. It was almost endearing, even though she’d never admit that to Cat. “Thank you, Cat.”

“Don’t thank me for making a smart business decision.” She pushed herself up out of her seat.

“Now, we should get some food here somehow. Any thoughts on how to get a delivery person through the horde below?”

Kara thought for a minute, then smiled brightly. “Yeah, I think I’ve got an idea. What are you in the mood for?”

“Just get me a decent salad from wherever you order your meal for three or however much you normally eat. Expense it to the CatCo credit card.” Kara pulled out her phone and shot off a quick text.

[12:13 p.m.] Hey babe, could you grab us some food & fly it up to us?

[12:14 p.m.] Sure! Just send me the order & I’ll make up an excuse to get away from Ruby for a few minutes. She’s nervous but excited about dinner tonight, btw.

Kara texted her the order, then followed Cat into her office, leaving the balcony door open for Sam. The rest of the floor was dimly lit and empty. Cat poured herself a light drink. I didn’t realize she had the materials for a Moscow mule in here. Kara waved off Cat’s offer to pour her one, and the she came and sat down across from Kara.

“So, where do we start?” Kara asked, now intensely curious about what Cat had in mind.

“That will depend on how much of your personal life you’re willing to get into, but the way I see it, there are three or four big topics we should cover. You’ve already talked publicly, as Supergirl, about Krypton and why you came to Earth, but I think it’s a good idea to share at least a little about how you’ve made a life for yourself here on Earth. Maybe also explain why you finally made the decision to become Supergirl and why you felt it was important to keep your true identity secret.”

Kara nodded. “Yeah, that makes sense. I think it would be good to talk about what a wonderful home the Danvers made for me, though I don’t want to mention my hometown or Eliza by name, okay? Bad enough that I’m now a celebrity. I don’t want anyone harassing Eliza.”

Kara had picked up Eliza from the loft prior to her trip to the DEO. She worried about someone getting Kara Danvers’ address, so she wanted to be sure Eliza wasn’t bothered. Sam had taken her to hang out with Ruby after they finished up at the DEO. Eliza was worried about Kara, but otherwise was handling things pretty well. She didn’t deserve any increased scrutiny, though.

“That’s perfectly reasonable. You know, you’ve never really told me why it took you so long to
take up the Supergirl mantle. You have all these powers, and I know you’ve always had this inherent, if often unfortunately naïve, compulsion to help people. Why did it take you until you were—what?—25 to put on the cape and put yourself out there?”

“Just after my 25th birthday, actually.” Kara pursed her lips. Technically, it had been her 49th birthday, but she didn’t count the 24 wherein she had been comatose and ageless in the Phantom Zone. “And … when I came to Earth, my adopted family convinced me that the safest choice for myself was to pretend to be human.”

Kara pondered how much to tell Cat. She was sworn to secrecy about the DEO, so she would have to keep things vague, but she was pretty sure she could still share the gist of the story. “You see, there was the secret organization—either Cadmus or another group that worked closely with Cadmus—that was looking to abduct and experiment on aliens. I don’t think people realize just how much the Alien Amnesty Act has changed things. It really wasn’t safe for alien refugees, and Superman was pretty famous by the time I arrived on Earth. A young Kryptonian would have been a highly sought after captive, and my adoptive parents wanted to protect me.”

There was real anguish and concern in Cat’s eyes, but she stayed on topic. “How did you end up with the Danvers in the first place?”

“They knew my cousin. I can’t get into the specifics, but they were scientists who helped Superman understand some of the basics about our Kryptonian biology. He trusted them, so when I came to Earth, he asked them to take me in.” Cat frowned, and Kara immediately knew where the conversation was about to turn. Her crush on Clark Kent was outweighed by her protectiveness over Kara Danvers.

“I’m sorry, but were Mr. Farmboy and his glamorous reporter girlfriend too busy to care for a teenage girl?” Cat’s nostrils flared slightly, matching the anger in her tone.

“Look … we’re not going to waste any time in this interview bad-mouthing Kal—” Cat mouthed the word ‘Kal?’ without trying to interrupt, “—sorry, that is the name he was born with, but I think I’m the only one who still uses it. Habit. Don’t tell him I told you.” Cat nodded, her wry smile betraying an otherwise solemn appearance. “Yes, he was selfish. I think things were still new in his relationship with Lois, and she was just getting used to the idea of dating an alien. He didn’t want to try to provide for me on top of that.”

“What an absolute ass.” Cat appeared as though she were about to go off on Kal again, but she was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Power Girl, loaded up with takeout food. Kara leapt off the couch and kissed her girlfriend in greeting. “Thanks for this! I didn’t know how else to get food up here without dealing with the paparazzi.”

“You know me, always looking to save a damsel in distress,” Sam joked. “Hey Cat.”

“Samantha,” Cat responded, rifling through the bags of food in search of her salad. Then her face turned serious, almost panicked. “Shit.” She looked back and forth between the two of them. “If my office were bugged, would one of you be able to detect it?”

Kara immediately moved to put her at ease. “Yes. I check your office for bugs quite regularly, Cat. I’m actually much better at protecting secrets than people give me credit for.” She was in the regular habit of checking the important places, where she spent a good amount of time or otherwise expected that people might be talking about her or Sam’s secrets, for surveillance equipment. She had been even more diligent about it since Lillian revealed that Cadmus had been planting spy cameras around the city, back when she discovered that Supergirl and Power Girl were fooling
“Aw, babe, your boss was worried about my secret! That’s so cute,” Sam teased. “Cat, who knew that you cared about li’l ole me?” Cat didn’t justify the comment with a response, merely giving Sam the side eye before turning back to her salad. “Well fine then, take all the fun out of it.” She turned back to Kara. “I’ll leave you to it. Just text me when you and Lena are on your way.”

“I will.” Kara kissed her again. “Love you.”

Sam was gone again seemingly before the “love you too” had finished leaving her lips. Cat chuckled behind her.

“You can never tell her this, but I find your superpowered girlfriend’s mouthiness surprisingly delightful.”

Kara sat back down, a satisfied smirk on her face. “Sorry, Cat, but I’m absolutely going to tell her that. You’re just going to have to get used to having more than two people in your life who you actually like.” Kara pulled out the first container of food, filled with a hoagie and kettle chips.

“Now, now. Don’t exaggerate. I never said that I liked her. Hell, I’ve never said that I like you.” Kara faked a shocked gasp.

“Cat Grant! But what about all the flirting?”

“I don’t have to like you to find you attractive, dear.”

“Well then what about all the years of mentoring me?”

“I also don’t have to like you to want to cultivate the many skills and talents you so clearly possess.”

“What about the time you went on ‘The Talk’ and said you liked to think of me as a friend?”

“That was before I really got to know you.”

Kara growled. “Catherine Jane Grant, you admit that you like me or I’ll go interview with Lois instead.”

Cat fixed her with her most shocked and appalled look. “Well well, Kiera. Righteous ultimatums looks strangely good on you. Fine, you’re one of two people that I actually like. Just don’t tell anyone.”

“Yay!” Kara did a short, seated dance of celebration. “Now, back to what I was saying. I took my adoptive parents’ warnings to heart, and so I did my best to try and live a normal human life. I graduated high school, then college, then got a job working for a woman I admired greatly. But it was always hard for me, especially when I would see news reports about Kal’s heroics.”

“You wanted to be a hero too?”

“I think you know that it’s not about being a hero. I just … I felt like I was meant for something more. That I was being selfish by hiding. Protecting myself when I could be out there using my extraordinary gifts to improve the lives of others. I still … I didn’t wear a uniform, and I made sure to avoid attention, but I helped where I could.” Kara reminisced as she thought back on the small victories she had found back then. “You can get away with a lot—saving a pedestrian from being hit by a car, feeding a homeless person, grabbing a robber and depositing him at the nearest police
“Do you think you would’ve been content to go on living your life like that if your sister’s plane hadn’t nearly crashed into the city?”

“Honestly? I don’t think so. If it wasn’t that, something else would’ve sprung up that I wouldn’t have been able to ignore.” Kara grabbed the next container, having devoured the contents of the previous one.

“Okay, so then why the costume? Why his symbol? Were you trying to protect your identity? If so, why no mask?” Cat had already finished her salad, and now she was taking notes.

“Okay, first of all, it isn’t his symbol. This—” Kara gestured to the sigil on her chest, “—is the crest of the Great Kryptonian House of El. It is … the closest analogy on Earth would be a coat of arms.”

“You wear your family’s coat of arms on your chest? And Superman never thought the world might want to know that bit of information?”

“Kal doesn’t remember our family. He doesn’t remember our culture. I can’t speculate as to why he chose to wear the crest. Or chose blue and red for that matter.”

Cat interrupted, “Wait explain that to me. How is it that you remember Krypton, but he does not?”

Kara winced. “Oh right, I guess I haven’t shared that with you. It’s not really something I feel like we need to get into for the interview, but Kal was an infant when we left; I was thirteen.” Cat gaped. Cat Grant’s mouth was literally wide open, her eyes wide with shock. “Ms. Grant, your mouth is open.” She promptly shut her mouth, face tightening into its ‘I’m Cat Grant, don’t fuck with me’ expression.

“You didn’t see that. Now, you want to explain to me what sort of alien time travel hijinks explain how you could be thirteen years older than your cousin when you left Krypton and yet I know for a fact that he is around my age, whereas you’re not even thirty?”

“Okay so here’s the deal. My pod left Krypton shortly after his, but it was just a tad too late. The explosion of the planet knocked my pod off course, and it was caught in an interdimensional portal. I was trapped in what we called the Phantom Zone for 24 years. Inside the zone, time does not pass. I was unconscious that entire time, but when I emerged and made my way to Earth, I found that baby Kal, who had arrived here unimpeded, was now 24.” Kara could see Cat’s mind working to try and make sense of this, building out a timeline in her imagination. “Lemme put it this way: I was born in 1966, but from 1979 until 2003 I didn’t age, so now I’m biologically 28 years old.”

Even that was a little complicated, honestly. Alex was a better person to explain how her biology works, but probably she was closer to biologically 25 still. Under the yellow sun, Kara aged much, much slower than she would otherwise. Fortunately, Cat seemed satisfied with her answer.

“What you’re telling me is that you’re a year older than me, but you still look like that.” Cat made a face. “I need a stronger drink. Your biology is truly unfair. But I think you’re entirely correct that there’s no need to get into all that for the interview. But I will ask you about the crest—people will love that. You still haven’t answered the question, though.”

“I didn’t?” Kara couldn’t quite remember the original question.
“Why the outfit? Where you actively trying to hide your identity? And now that I’m thinking about it, why not wear a mask?” Oh good, this question again. Kara thought about it for a few moments. Was I trying to hide my identity?

“Cat, I don’t really think I thought about it much, not at first. My entire life on Earth up till that point, I had been playing a part. A toned down, less confident version of myself, meant to avoid attention. I continued playing that role in my when I was Kara Danvers, outside of my home anyway, even once I became Supergirl. But then suddenly I could just openly be my confident, heck even brash, self. I wanted to be the opposite of the Kara Danvers I had been playing all those years. I didn’t think much about disguises, really. Besides, my face was already out there after I caught the plane, even if the photo was grainy. And Kal never seemed to need one.”

Kara paused, considering the question further. “When I first started fighting crime, I just … It really wasn’t about being like Superman. I just wanted to be a symbol. I wanted people to look at me and feel inspired. Hopeful. And there was already an established brand that gave people that feeling, so I latched onto it.”

“I must say Kara, I’m proud to know that even back then I had taught you at least a few things. It was quite the wise move, in terms of PR.” They shared a warm smile.

“Thanks, Cat. As for why no mask, I just … back then I felt strongly that I couldn’t be a symbol of hope if I hid my face. I thought masks were inherently suspicious, like … like no one would really trust a Supergirl whose face they couldn’t see.” She frowned. “I’ve since developed a more, umm, nuanced perspective on it.”

“Okay, let’s move on.” Kara began tidying up the office, throwing out the takeout containers. “How much can you tell me about the secretive military group you work with? The one that employs your sister?”

“You should definitely ask that, because the pictures of Alex and me in uniform are out there now. Just know that I can’t say much. All I can tell you is that she works for a classified, joint FBI and Homeland Security task force that aids and assists Supergirl. They’re based here in National City. I am also happy to talk about how rewarding it is to work side by side with Alex. I just can’t get into any details about her employer.”

“That’s fine. Now, as I see it, there are three other big things we need to hash out. One, your personal life. In particular, the dynamics of a Super dating a Luthor and how you feel about Lena’s family, especially Lillian, whose fault it is you’re even doing this interview.” Kara nodded, so Cat continued. “Two, whether you will continue to work at the National City Tribune, and what that will look like going forward. I’ll have a lot to say about that myself, obviously. Finally, I’d like if it you could speculate a little on how your life will be different now that you don’t have to live a dual life. Do you plan to change your approach to Supergirl at all?”

Kara smiled. “Yes, to all of that. I shouldn’t have too much I will need to avoid there. Except for Sam. The most important thing in all of this is protecting her identity now.” She caught the raised eyebrow Cat directed at her. “Yes, I’m aware that sooner or later, it will come out that Lena, Sam, and I are polyamorous. We haven’t exactly been hiding it, and we don’t have any intention of starting now. I just … we’ll address that when we have to. Power Girl’s identity is very well protected, but I don’t want to invite any more scrutiny on Sam—and Ruby—than is absolutely necessary. So please, when we talk about my relationship with Lena, let’s talk about it as if it is an ordinary, two-person monogamous relationship.”

“I get it. And hell, that just means another exclusive for me when it does come out. Right, Kara?”
“Fiine,” Kara conceded. “As long as Lena and Sam are okay with it.”

“Hey, while I’m thinking about it, have you given any consideration as to how much of a gay icon you’re likely to become after this interview?”

Kara’s eyes went wide. It had most certainly not occurred to her. “You think?”

“Kara, seriously? You are not this naïve anymore. Supergirl is a famous superhero. To some people you’re almost godlike. It will be a huge deal that you’re gay.”

“Pansexual,” Kara corrected. She giggled at the thought, blushing slightly. She had always wanted to inspire people; it just hadn’t occurred to her how much it could mean to people that one of the most famous superheroes in the country was queer. She’d need to talk to her family about this later. Her mind was already spinning with thoughts of the good she could do for her community. “I never thought about how much more I could accomplish as Supergirl if people were able to know more about who I really am.”

“And I will be here every step of the way with you, Supergirl.” She got up to pour herself another mule. “Ready to get to work?”

Kara felt a renewed vigor spread through her, thanks to this rather incredible epiphany. She leapt from her seat, feeling weightless and hopeful. Voice radiant with enthusiasm, she answered, “You know it!”
“You know, that’s a definite upside I hadn’t considered,” Sam thought aloud, glancing over to where Ruby was pacing about impatiently. “We won’t have to go out of our way to hide the fact that Kara eats so much more than humanly possible when we have meals with Ruby.”

Eliza was cooking dinner for the family, and Kara and Lena were on their way there. All things considered, Ruby was taking the news that her mom’s dorky girlfriend was also secretly the hero she idolized extremely well. Eliza and Sam had done a pretty good job of keeping Ruby’s insatiable curiosity about Kara at bay all day. It had been important to Sam and Kara that everyone be present for the big conversation. Eliza being around had been a huge life saver; she had at least been able to offer stories about Kara’s childhood. Assorted tales of a sad alien girl learning to fit in on Earth. Sam was pretty sure that some of the stories had kicked Ruby’s empathy into overdrive, and she was no longer worried that the girl would feel hurt that they had all kept this from her.

Eliza shot her a knowing smile, before whispering, “Right, now you’ll only have to hide your food consump—”

“Woah!” Ruby’s exclamation interrupted the thought. She was startled by the sudden appearance of Supergirl and Lena in the room.

“Hey there, cuties,” Sam greeted them, moving around the kitchen island to go give them both a kiss. “Kara, you wanna change into something more comfy?”

“Wait, wait no!” Ruby’s voice was frantic. “Supergirl—err, umm hey Kara? Could we take a picture together with the suit on?” Kara smiled warmly at her, and Ruby looked back and forth between Sam and Kara. “I mean, there’s no harm in it anymore, right?”

Sam held out a hand towards Kara, indicating that it was up to her. “Let’s do it!” Kara exclaimed. “Should we do some sort of a pose? Lena, will you take the picture?” Kara seemed every bit as excited as Ruby, and it was a delight to witness. Sam knew that it had been a long day for Kara. She was glad that Ruby’s enthusiasm was something that Kara enjoyed.

“Ooo ooo, yeah! Let’s face each other, with our arms up like this, as if we’re about to fight.” Lena took the photo, which Sam had to admit was absolutely adorable.

“Hey Rubes, let’s wait until we all get a chance to talk before you think about posting that to social media, okay?”

“Sure thing, Mom.” She turned back to Kara, who had already disappeared to the bedroom, changed into jeans and a tee shirt, and returned to the kitchen. Sam smiled wistfully. Kara was already leaving behind the pretense of being human, now that she was free to do so. There were definite benefits to being outed as an alien, despite the plethora of difficulties it had introduced into their lives. Some small part of Sam envied Kara. She had only had these powers for a few months, but she was already tired of constantly having to limit herself and actively slow everything down to appear human. Freed from any such restraint, Kara was wasting no time in dropping the pretense and just being herself, in all aspects. Good for her.

“Kara, sweetie, you’re just in time. Dinner’s almost ready.” Sam moved to finish helping Eliza out, asking Ruby to set the table for them. Lena poured herself a glass of wine, content to watch the goings on around her with open interest. Despite the tumultuous day, Sam couldn’t help but smile. In the years after Patricia kicked her out, she never could’ve imagined having this. A
family like this. Not normal, exactly, but something like that.

Once they had all gotten settled around the table, Sam finally gave Ruby the permission she desperately desired. “Alright kiddo, go ahead. We all know you’ve got questions.” Kara’s nervous anticipation was actually incredibly endearing. She had just shoved an entire porkchop into her mouth and was awkwardly chewing it while she waited to see what Ruby’s first question would be.

However, the teen took her time, an almost troubled look suddenly springing to her face. She glanced back and forth between Sam, Lena, and Kara before finally asking, “Why did you hide this from me?”

Sam had known the question was coming, and she was encouraged by the fact that she couldn’t detect any amount of hurt in Ruby’s voice as she asked. Placing a hand over Kara’s, Sam decided to field this one herself. “First, let me just make sure that you know, without any doubt, that it is not because we didn’t trust you. You’re a smart, loyal, and caring young woman, and that’s a good thing, because things are going to get more difficult here pretty soon. I have no doubt that you could’ve handled this secret if we had needed you to, okay?” Ruby nodded, and Kara jumped in.

“You’re mom’s right. The thing is, Ruby, that my secret identity is a huge burden for someone to carry. Or … it was. I didn’t want to put that on you. I just … you should never feel like you need to lie for me or for your mom or for Lena, okay? And if you knew, you would have to lie. Secrets like this are necessary sometimes, but they aren’t easy to keep. And they’re definitely not fun, especially when you have to hide the truth from people you care about.” Kara smiled. “Does that make sense?”

Ruby played around with a green bean on her plate as she nodded. “So … there’s not anything that I’m going to have to lie about now that I know?”

“Absolutely not,” Sam answered intently. She looked at Kara, just to confirm that they were still on the same page. “Obviously, things are going to change quite a lot going forward, and we want to be careful with everything. We don’t want people finding out that Kara is Supergirl to have any adverse effect on your life, not if we can help it.”

“What’s going to change?” Ruby’s question was a lot bigger than her nonchalant tone gave it credit for. This time, Lena was the first to answer.

“Ruby, Kara is super famous now.” Kara immediately giggled, and Lena scowled at her as she realized that she had accidentally made a pun. Sam smiled warmly at them both. “Wow, okay Kara. Good to see you haven’t lost your sense of humour in all this.” Kara shook her head dramatically, mouth full of food. Lena turned back to Ruby. “My point is: Kara is a celebrity now. There are going to be paparazzi following her around. Probably people trying to dig into her —and therefore our—personal lives. We will do our best to shield you from it, but you need to be aware of it.”

“No talking to strangers,” Sam chipped in. “That’s the new rule, and it’s non-negotiable. People know that Kara and Lena are together, but we don’t think they know about me, not yet anyway. So you’re probably not at any risk of random strangers bothering you just yet.” Sam locked eyes with her daughter. “This is really serious though, and I need you to understand that. No talking to strangers. Got it?”

“I got it,” Ruby answered immediately. “Are we going to need like … bodyguards or anything?”
Sam, Lena, and Kara all exchanged a look. It was something they needed to discuss with her, but they hadn’t expected her to ask about it, especially not right away.

Kara explained. “Yes. Lena already has a security company she trusts, and they’re going to beef up their security of our apartment. We’re going to have them provide some security for you and your mom too, but you shouldn’t notice them. You know how Alex works with me when I’m Supergirl, right?” Ruby nodded. “Well the super secret government organization she works for will also be keeping an eye on you and your mom. We don’t want you to ever feel unsafe, okay?”

“Hey Kara?” Sam interrupted, a thought having just sprung to mind. “Can we talk for like two seconds in private?”

“Sure. We’ll be right back.” Kara stood, walked over, grabbed Sam, and flew them out of the living room, up to the bedroom, all in a couple blinks of a human eye. Sam had been so fascinated by the differences after she was reborn as a Kryptonian. They still hadn’t figured out what to call Sam—‘Worldkiller’ wasn’t exactly a welcome term for any of them. When she was human, Kara’s superspeed registered as a blur if it registered at all. Sometimes she would move so fast that Sam couldn’t even see it. But now, she could see it all. It was a little disorienting the first few days—Sam wasn’t even sure she could quite explain the feeling of watching two different people moving at such radically different speeds. It was almost as if her eyes shifted modes depending on which she focused on. If her attention was on Ruby while Kara flitted across the room, Kara’s movements would register as a blur, but if she focused on Kara, it was as if the room around her suddenly froze, moving infinitely slower than normal. It was sort of trippy, and it had taken her a while to get used to it.

“What’s up?” Kara was standing close, so Sam followed her instincts and kissed her on a whim. “First, I just want to say that I’m so proud of you and how you’re handling things.” Kara smiled brightly, blushing a little. “Second, can we get Ruby one of those beacon watches? I didn’t want to bring it up in front of her unless you agree that it’s a good idea.”

“Sam, it’s a great idea! But why don’t we just give her yours?”

“Because she might recognize it as mine. Then she might wonder why I don’t need it anymore.” Kara frowned, and Sam understood why. She had just explained to Ruby how much of a burden keeping a big secret could be, and here they were, keeping another big secret. Which required them to lie to Ruby, or at minimum, alter their behaviour so that they could keep her in the dark. “But we’re agreed? We’ll have Winn make her one?”

“Of course we will. Now, let’s head back.” Sam nodded, and they flew back to the living room at full Kryptonian speed, together. All told, they were gone for only a minute or so. “Hey Ruby?” Kara ventured. “Do you wear watches often?” Ruby was not currently wearing one.

“Not really. I’ve got my phone if I need to know what time it is.” Kara put a hand to her chin in a pensive motion, thinking of an alternative. “Okay well, in that case, let’s say you were going to have one piece of jewelry that you wore every single day: what would you choose?”

“A bracelet, I guess. Why do you ask?”

“I’m going to get you a bracelet, that you should wear always. It will have a beacon in it that you can activate when you’re in danger. Only Power Girl and I will be able to hear it, and we will come find you immediately.”

“Ruby.” Sam was using her sternest mom voice now. She needed her daughter to understand this next point. “This beacon is not a toy. If you want to talk to Kara, you can text her like you always
have. Supergirl’s time is precious. She deals with matters of life and death every single day. She
cannot be your personal bodyguard. Kara’s duty extends to more than just our family, as much as
she loves us, and we need to take that seriously. You will only use the beacon if you’re actually in
a situation that needs Supergirl. Which ideally should be never. It is a measure of last resort. Do
you understand?”

Ruby’s features were serious almost to the point of worry. Yup, she gets it. Good. She turned to
face Kara. “Thank you for caring enough to want to protect me. I promise I won’t abuse your
trust.” Kara’s smile could’ve blinded everyone in the room at that moment. Sam’s heart filled
with pride.

“I know you will, Ruby. And I just want you to know that I’m sorry.”

“Sorry?” Ruby blurted in confusion.

“Yes. I’m sorry that who I am, and what I’ve chosen to do with my powers, might potentially put
you at risk. But I’m not sorry for caring for you. And I’m not sorry that you and your mom are in
my life. I just wish that me being Supergirl didn’t have to change anything about your life. But it
probably will, and we need to talk more about that probably, and I just … I’m really really sorry
for that.”

“Kara, you have nothing to apologize for.” Ruby’s words were heartfelt and sincere, full of
adoration. “You’re a hero. You’re my hero. You’re so incredible, and I’m proud that you’re with
my mom. Even if you’re both super gross sometimes.” Eliza laughed at the last point, and Kara
turned a befuddled look in her direction.

Lena chose this moment to add her own thoughts to the conversation. “You have every right to be
proud that Kara and your mom are in a relationship—”

‘I’m proud she’s in a relationship with you too, Lena!” Ruby couldn’t help interrupting, and Sam
chuckled. She could almost see the heart eyes on her face.

“Right. Well that’s good too. Just …” Lena looked at Sam, struggling with what she wanted to
say. Sam had an idea where she was going with this. “It might not be the best idea for you to go
around bragging that your mom is dating Supergirl, you know?”

“Are we keeping that a secret?” asked Ruby.

“Absolutely not,” Sam responded firmly. “I want to be very clear about this, Ruby. We are not
ashamed of our love, and we would never ask you to lie about it. But there are going to be
a lot of people who don’t understand. There will be others who might be giant assholes about it.
We just need you to be aware of that. And of the fact that because we’re Supergirl’s family, in our
own distinct way, we will be in danger sometimes. That’s why we’re giving you that beacon.”

Kara added, “You might have to deal with bullies who don’t understand how three strong women
can all be in love with each other and form relationships and family together. But we’ll always be
here to talk about anything. Lena and I love you.”

“And so do I, sweetie,” Eliza chimed in, drawing a bright smile from Ruby. For the life of her,
Sam couldn’t understand why Patricia wouldn’t have wanted to be a part of all this. Oh well.
Eliza was more than happy to be a mother (and grandmother) to all. “But surely you had some
more exciting questions for Supergirl, now that we’ve gotten some of the important stuff out of the
way.” Eliza winked at her, and Ruby’s face brightened even more.
“Actually,” Sam butted in, to Ruby’s dismay, “it’s almost time for Cat Grant’s big interview with the famous Supergirl, and I, for one, don’t want to miss it.”

“I’ve got the dishes,” Kara offered, and then she was off, rinsing and stacking and loading the dishwasher at full speed. She was finished before Ruby had finished cutting herself a piece of cake. Sam used the time to sneak around the corner with the rest of the Kryptonian amount of food Eliza had made and then hidden, satiating the rest of her hunger while Ruby was distracted. Then she grabbed a glass of wine and took a seat on the couch, playfully nudging Lena’s knee before settling in with a space left between them for Kara.

As everyone settled in, she flipped on the TV. The news station was already hyping the interview, with a little countdown clock to 7:30 when it was to air. There were three minutes left, and the station was currently airing street-level interviews with National City residents, getting the perspectives on the reveal and on the other parts of Lillian’s message.

Out of nowhere, Eliza said, “Lena, dear, I only feel comfortable saying this because I know you agree, but your mother is an atrocious bitch.” Lena cracked a wide smile, and Ruby snorted into a full-throated laugh.

“You know, Eliza, when you’re right, you’re really damn right.” She held out her wine glass, and Eliza clinked hers to it. Just then Kara leapt over the couch, floating softly down to sit between her girlfriends. Ruby applauded the move, and Kara grinned as she bowed softly. Sam was glad she was enjoying her ability to show off a little for Ruby.

“Alright everyone shh, it’s on. My girlfriend is gonna be on TV.”

“Both your girlfriends have been on TV before, dummy,” Lena mocked.

“Watch your tone, Lee, or you’ll be getting no goodnight kiss from me tonight.” Lena pressed her hand to her chest in faux dismay, but then the special jingle announced that the interview was beginning. It started with a warm welcome between Cat and Kara.

“For starters, now that it is out there, what would you prefer I call you, Kara or Supergirl?”

“Kara’s fine.” Sam could read the nerves all over Kara’s expression and body language, even though she was sure that Cat and Kara had practiced before filming. She took Kara’s hand in her own, intertwining their fingers tightly. Lena had already done the same on Kara’s other side.

Cat looked into the camera. ”Before we get into all the juicy details I’m sure everyone is just dying to know, it is important that I disclose up front that I have known Supergirl’s identity for quite a while now. I am proud to say that I never betrayed that trust. And I am equally proud to conduct this interview with a person who has become a close personal friend over the past four years she has worked for me.

Kara was smiling as luminously in person as she did in the interview. “That was really sweet of her to say,” Sam whispered. The interview continued, as they discussed what it was like for Kara coming to Earth. What her adopted family was like. How she adapted to life here. Why she felt like she needed to hide. And why she ultimately decided to reveal herself and become Supergirl. From there, the conversation moved to Alex and what is was like for Kara to work with her sister. She did an excellent job of keeping any details about the DEO out of the interview, and Sam suspected that Cat and Kara worked on the questions to help make that easier.

“Now Kara, I know you’re bulletproof, but you’ve had some rough battles since becoming Supergirl. Is it difficult for you or your sister, having to work together in situations where one or
both of you could be in serious danger?"

“It’s really hard sometimes, I’m not going to lie. But we both know what we signed up for. We’ve saved each other’s lives more times than I can count. It’s terrifying. But there’s no one I trust with my safety more.”

“Would you say she sees herself as your protector in some ways?”

The Kara on screen giggled. “Yeah, she really does. And I love her for that.”

Cat’s eyebrows raised. “And speaking of love, let’s talk a little about your relationship with Lena Luthor. How did your sister react when she found out the two of you were dating? I mean, a Super and a Luthor?! That’s a bit scandalous, no?”

Sam leaned forward dramatically so she could look at Lena and wink. “Great job corrupting the Super with your Luthor wiles, Lee.” Lena and Kara both rolled their eyes in unison, as the Kara on screen began to explain how Alex was skeptical and worried at first. Before she got to know Lena and realized that she was nothing like her mother or her brother.

“Is it weird to be so hated by your girlfriend’s mother that she would expose your secret identity to the entire world?”

“Well, that’s hardly the worst thing Lillian has done to me. All things considered, outing someone’s secret identity is pretty low on the list of villainous acts.” Cat and Kara shared a laugh.

“I take it she isn’t a fan of your relationship?”

“She’s not really a fan of anything Lena does, if we’re being honest. Add that to the raging xenophobia, and no, I guess you could say that our relationship is not her favourite thing. It makes me so angry. Lena is one of the most amazing people I’ve ever met. And Lillian has never appreciated her. She has constantly mistreated her, devalued her, abused her, and made her doubt herself. She is a hateful person. And a criminal. She belongs in prison.”

“And let’s all hope the FBI works a little harder to make that happen. So, how are things with Lena?”

Kara’s face lit up. It was adorable. “She’s amazing! Things are amazing! I ... seeing Lillian’s awful video this morning, realizing how much my life was about to change ... it was really draining. Really scary. I’m so lucky to have the love and support of my family, and Lena is definitely my family. My life has been so much more full and joyful since I met her.”

Kara leaned over and kissed Lena several times across her cheeks. Sam realized that Kara’s heartfelt expression of love had brought tears to Lena’s eyes. She felt a pang in her heart, suddenly sad that Kara hadn’t mentioned her in the interview. Even though they had all agreed not to address their triad in the interview, it still hurt a little. Almost as if she sensed Sam’s feelings, Kara turned to her. “Hey, I love you too.” She smiled into the kiss as she leaned in and pressed her lips to Sam’s.

“I do. And I know we agreed you wouldn’t mention it in this interview. But it’s nice to hear.” Kara squeezed her hand, and they turned their attention back to the interview.

“Did you always know you are gay?”

“Pansexual.” As Kara corrected Cat on screen, Lena and Sam both mouthed along. Their girl was so predictable. “It’s hard to answer that, actually. On Krypton, we didn’t concern ourselves with
things as arbitrary as sexual orientation; people loved who they loved, and gender didn’t really factor into it. I’ve known I was attracted to people regardless of gender for as long as I’ve experienced attraction, but it wasn’t until recently that I discovered that it was such a big deal here on Earth.”

Cat's expression of surprise at the open-mindedness of Kryptonian society appeared so genuine that Sam would almost believe she hadn’t practiced it. Who knew Cat was a decent actress on top of all her many other talents? The conversation stayed on Lena a bit longer as Cat tried, and failed, to pry a few more details about their romance and life together. She did, however, get Kara to open up a little more before moving on to the next topic.

“Being a superhero means having enemies, dangerous ones, and now those enemies know who you are. Who you love. That must be terrifying.”

“It is.” There was a distinct quiver in Kara’s voice. Sam knew that was her greatest fear in all this. That her choices would put the rest of them in danger. “I … honestly that is the biggest reason I’ve lived a double life these past three years. It isn’t fun, and it isn’t easy. But I would do anything to protect the people I love. I care deeply about the people of this city. This world. I am devoted to the duty I have taken up in protection of this world and its people. But my loved ones—my family—are my first priority. I would do anything to protect them. As such, I would ask, plead, with everyone out there, please respect my privacy. The privacy of my loved ones. They didn’t sign up for this. They don’t deserve to have their lives picked apart. To be put in any more danger than I’ve already put them in.”

Beside her, a couple of tears painted Kara’s cheeks, and Sam and Lena both wrapped their arms around her, holding her tight. Cat did a remarkable job of wrapping up the topic of Kara’s personal life on that heartfelt note, delicately segueing to the topic of Kara’s job. She explained to the audience that Kara would absolutely continue to work at the National City Tribune, pending a thorough investigation into her use of her alter ego as a source and any resulting punishment.

“Hey Kara?” Ruby asked tentatively. Sam paused the TV as Kara answered.

“Yes?”

“What’s wrong with you using Supergirl as a source?”

“It’s a big ethical no no. Lemme think how I can explain this. So, unless I’m writing an opinion piece—which my boss does not let me do—my goal in telling a story is to present the facts as they exist, in as unbiased a manner as possible. Who I use as a source affects how much a reader will trust my story. The best sources are people who know what happened, but don’t have any reason to lie about it or misremember it in some way. A lot of the time, Supergirl has been a source like that. Except that if people knew that Supergirl was also the person writing the story, that raises some questions about just how unbiased her—my—account of the facts were. Especially since I wasn’t being honest in the article that the author and the source are the same person. I was … deceiving my readers, in a way. Does that make sense?”

“Yeah I think so.” Sam made sure they were finished, then pushed play. Cat continued talking about Kara as a reporter. She extolled Kara’s talents, describing her as one of the Tribune’s most promising up and coming reporters. Then they talked some about how her own insights would help her in her role as the Tribune’s primary investigator of all things alien. Next, the topic shifted again.

“Now that everyone knows Supergirl’s identity, how do you envision your life changing? And I don’t mean anything so mundane as having to deal with paparazzi or giving out autographs to fans
on the street. No no, I want to know if this changes your approach to being Supergirl.”

“I’ve obviously got to do some more thinking about that, Cat. This whole thing took me a bit by surprise, you know.” Cat chuckled. “But I do want to be a more transparent Supergirl, now that I can. I believe that I have more to offer this world than just my brute strength. I want to be more vocal about the causes that are important to me. It’s important to me that I use my newfound visibility to be a vocal and proud member of my communities, in particular the alien and queer communities.”

“Supergirl the activist, huh? Now that should be a sight to see. Are you worried at all about the consequences of that? Making enemies of criminals is one sort of danger—making enemies of politicians and others of their ilk is an entirely different challenge, is it not?”

“I guess so,” Kara responded timidly. “That’s not really something I had considered, and I’m definitely not looking to make enemies. I’m focused on the good I can do. On being an example, a symbol of hope. Someone who can inspire anyone who feels downtrodden, discriminated against, overlooked, or hated because of their identity, who they love, or where they come from. If that bothers some people, I can only hope that my example will encourage them to open their minds, to see that love and hope are better than hatred and fear. That’s what Supergirl has always stood for, and I hope I can embody that ideal even more now that I don’t have to hide.”

“Well, you’ve certainly always been a symbol of hope for me, Kara. I really appreciate your candor and vulnerability today. I have just one last question, if you don’t mind.” Kara nodded her assent. “You didn’t have any choice in having your private identity revealed to the public. Do you think it’s something you might have eventually considered yourself, if this hadn’t happened?”

Kara gave this question, which was apparently a surprise to her, some serious thought before answering. “I really don’t know. Like I said before, I would do anything to protect the people I love, and I still believe that keeping my personal life hidden and separate from Supergirl was the best way to do that. But living that way is painful in a way that I’m not sure many people understand. For three years now, I’ve essentially had to be three separate people. I was a toned down version of Kara Danvers, a persona crafted specifically not to attract attention to myself, to fit in completely with human society without raising suspicion. I was Supergirl, a confident, charismatic symbol of all the best things I aspire to be. And then in my private life, I was able to just be myself. Kara Zor-El Danvers, who is somewhere between those two personas. I don’t appreciate the way that it happened, but I am glad to be done with living that sort of a triple life. I’m excited for people to see the real me for the first time in my life on Earth. I’m thankful that I don’t have to pretend anymore.”

Kara paused, considering whether to add to her final answer, then smiled into the camera. “Lena told me something this morning that has stayed with me all day. She told me that while Supergirl is a beacon of hope, the world now has a chance to see that the true hero isn’t the symbol, but the woman behind it. She said that Kara Zor-El Danvers can be a brighter symbol of hope than Supergirl ever was.” Kara’s voice was heavy with emotion. “I don’t know about all that. But she believes it. She believes in me. And I will do everything in my power to live up to that belief. To be the person she believes me to be. If I can be an inspiration to the people of National City, I feel so honoured by that responsibility and trust. But Lena, and the rest of my family, are the ones who inspire me. They are my heroes.”

Sam was too moved to pay attention to the pleasantries exchanged between the two women as the interview concluded. She had eyes only for the Kara Zor-El Danvers in the room with her, and she could feel that she wasn’t the only one. All eyes were on Kara now, and not a one of them was dry. Kara, in particular, was full-on crying now. “I mean it. I love you all. You’re my heroes.”
Ruby and Eliza stood at the same time and rushed over, and a big group hug ensued.
Naked in Bed

Sam returned as quickly as she had disappeared, not that it appeared particularly fast to Kara’s eyes. But for Lena, it had probably seemed like a flash. Sam deposited a wine glass for Lena before flashing off again to grab hers and Kara’s. Their recent discovery that Roltikkons not only made highly potent, yet bizarrely (and Kara meant that in the best possible way) flavourful wine, but that they were apparently well renowned for it, had been eye-opening. It had totally changed Kara and Sam’s patterns of alcohol consumption. The robust violet beverage was made from a grape-like fruit that couldn’t be grown on Earth, and the closest tasting Earth wine that Kara could compare it to was a Cabernet Franc. It had the same earthy notes with a distinct scent, but not quite the distinctive black olive and blueberry notes of the Franc. There was really no comparison, but it was wonderful.

And it actually got them drunk, in the right amounts!

Sam settled back in, setting her glass next to Kara’s as she cuddled back into her side. On Kara’s other side, Lena eyed Sam in a manner that Kara could only think to label as lusty, which was bonkers considering how much sex they had just finished having. Ruby had long gone to bed, and after dropping Eliza off at Alex and Maggie’s for the night (she was staying there tonight, then headed back to Midvale in the morning), the three of them had flown directly into the penthouse bedroom, not even bothering to close the balcony door behind them. Now, an hour later, all three of them were enjoying a very naked nightcap, before Sam headed back to her house.

“Creampuff, you look like you want to eat Sam.”

“In a manner of speaking, I suppose that is true, darling.” Lena’s eyes didn’t waver from Sam’s body, and Kara rolled her own. She could tell from Lena’s tone that she wasn’t actually as horny as she appeared—she was simply making a show of appreciating the raw sensuality that was Sam’s form. Not that Kara could disagree with that sentiment. “But if you would like me to stop objectifying our girlfriend, you could’ve just said so.” Lena’s eyes shifted from Sam’s hips to Kara’s face as she teased the blonde, the mischievous glint readily apparent in those pale green orbs.

“Don’t take this the wrong way, Lee, but you’re kind of a massive dork sometimes.” The reaction was immediate—Lena’s expression went from wry to pouty in an instant. Sam only laughed. “Sorry, babe. Feel free to objectify me anytime—I mean I am sexy as hell.” She gestured towards her own body for emphasis. “But you’re so transparent when you’re doing it to provoke a reaction out of Kara.”

Lena blushed ever so slightly, before immediately rising up with a rejoinder. Kara loved to watch the banter between her two partners. They were such an interesting match of wits, with years of practice in calling each other’s subtle little ticks and habits out. “I am capable of doing both, you know. Genuinely admiring your physical form and pushing dear Kara’s buttons are not mutually exclusive, thank god.”

Sam giggled. “Well we definitely agree on that point.”

“Hey!” Kara could feel her nose crinkle as she protested. She loved Lena and Sam’s banter, but unfortunately it almost always inevitably segued into some comment about Kara being awkward or easily roused. She crossed her arms, fixing a pout to her face. Unfortunately, her posture backfired.
“Kara, sweetie, I know you’re trying to pout, but all we’re seeing is how incredible your cleavage looks when you cross your arms like that,” Sam teased, her eyes firmly fixed on Kara’s chest. Kara inhaled, then exhaled in frustration. Of course it had backfired. Lena and Sam always knew how to turn her into a sputtering mess, and there was nothing she could do about it. As infuriating as it was, part of her did find a bit of (very secret) pleasure in how well they knew her. Even if it meant knowing how to easily push all her buttons.

“Kara Zor-El, the only person I know who is capable of being so delightfully silly while also being so incredibly sexy at the very same time.” Kara didn’t know exactly how to feel about Lena’s compliment, but she had no doubt it was a compliment. “You know, if I had any doubt in my mind that Kara was Supergirl, it dissipated with my first real conversation with the Girl of Steel.”

Sam propped an elbow on Kara’s shoulder, making a show of resting her head on her hand in rapt interest. “Story time!” Kara sighed but couldn’t help being a little curious what spin Lena would put on this particular retelling of the familiar story.

“Well, I was putting on my first big L-Corp gala in National City since the rebranding, and Kara was the first—and technically only—person I invited personally.”

“Untrue!” Kara blurted out. “You technically invited Mon-El too.”

“Oh please,” Lena retorted. “That was only because he happened to be there when I invited you, and I was trying to hide the massive crush I so obviously had on you.” Sam snickered, smiling widely at them. She was loving this. “Regardless, I really wanted Kara there, thanks to the aforementioned crush, but I also needed Supergirl there.”

“Even then, you were my hero. Even if I didn’t quite realize it yet.” Lena’s eyes danced with glee, her smile widening.

“Yes, well, I was only just starting to prove it to you then. But back to the story. I knew that I needed Supergirl at the party, both to draw out the gang and to distract them while I activated the hidden device.”

“And to protect your guests,” Kara butted in, narrowing her eyes.

“But of course, darling,” Lena answered nonchalantly. “So, I needed Supergirl, and I turned to the only person I knew who could get in touch with her: Kara Danvers.” Sam chuckled. “I was already fairly certain the two were one and the same, but even so, I was more than a little curious how Kara would handle keeping up the façade if she promised to be there as both her personas. And some tiny part of me was open to the chance I was wrong about her identity, even if the odds
of that were miniscule.”

Kara glanced over at Sam, who was just eating the story up. Kara sighed again, trying to be as dramatic as possible. Paying her no mind, Lena continued, “I asked Kara to get me in touch with Supergirl, who promptly showed up on my balcony later that night. Our dear Kara, as you can imagine, was quite stern with me, trying to convince me not to be so—how did you put it darling? Risky? But once I knew I had convinced her to come, I couldn’t resist poking her. I wanted to see what would happen. And I was not disappointed.”

“Whaaaaat are you even talking about?” Kara asked, confused. She remembered the night vividly. She had played her Supergirl part perfectly. Confident. Stern. Authoritative, but warm. What did Lena mean?

“I smiled brightly at her—” Lena paused, grinning as she considered her expression in that moment, “—in fact, it was a smile that only Kara Danvers had seen since my big move. So already I suppose I was disarming her, in a way, though it wasn’t entirely intentional. Anyway, I smiled and asked ‘So Kara and I will see you tomorrow night?’”

“You didn’t!” Sam exclaimed. Kara blushed, shaking her head. No. No way. She had hidden her panic in that moment so well, waiting until just before she flew away to mutter ‘crap’ under her breath.

“I did! And she panicked!”

“Pssh! Uhhhh no I didn’t! I held it together really well,” Kara protested, her voice rising slightly as the speech patterns sped up.

“Love, you absolutely did. Maybe someone else wouldn’t have noticed, but that moment of dumbfounded silence was pure Kara Danvers. Your face just froze in that way it used to when you needed that extra second to formulate a way to protect your identity. Then you said ‘right’ to give yourself another second, before walking around me as you confirmed that you and Kara both would be there.” Lena raised an eyebrow towards Sam. “She was so clearly trying to hide her face from me, and the way she emphasized the word ‘both’ couldn’t have been a more obvious giveaway. It was adorable, Sam.”

Sam planted a sloppy kiss on Kara’s cheek, then responded, “I can’t believe I didn’t figure it out myself. The minute she told me, it was all so fucking obvious. Like ‘duh, of course you’re Supergirl. You’re fucking identical.” Sam sighed, then explained in a farcical voice, “I’m brilliant, but I’m just not quite Lena Luthor brilliant, you know?”

Lena grinned fiercely. “Be fair to yourself darling—it isn’t like you had ever interacted with Supergirl in person, prior to Kara telling you the truth. I’m sure if the Girl of Steel had come calling, you would’ve figured out in mere minutes that she was actually the cute blonde you were crushing on.”

“My best friend’s girlfriend, you mean?”

“Indeed,” Lena answered, then gestured to the three of them, cuddling naked on top of the sheets, each with a glass of wine in hand. “And look at us all now!” All three of them burst out laughing.

Sam pondered for a minute, before venturing, “You know, if we had slept together before she told me, I would’ve figured it out.”
Lena rolled her eyes. “Yes, well, speaking a dead alien language in her sleep would tend to be a dead giveaway, darling.” Sam gaped. That wasn’t even what she had been thinking of—she had meant that being physical together would’ve given Kara away. Taking things a step further, Lena affected her best Kara tone before pretending to fall back asleep and utter some very strange sounding syllables in a soft voice. Both she and Kara burst into laughter yet again.

Envy spiked just slightly in Sam’s chest. She was, technically, a Kryptonian, but she definitely didn’t speak the language. Lena, meanwhile, had become fluent, and the odd language sounded even more melodic on her tongue that it did Kara’s. That hint of Irish, Sam supposed. She caught Kara looking at her, a slight twinge of twinkling in those crystal blue orbs. She smiled weakly, knowing that Kara had already found her out.

The blonde stroke a hand against Sam’s bare thigh before asking, “What is it?”

Sam hesitated. She felt stupid. But she knew Kara and Lena wouldn’t judge her. But instead of calmly and rationally explaining her thoughts, she got ahead of herself and blurted out, “I don’t speak Kryptonian!”

Kara’s expression didn’t change, save for a slight uptick of the corners of her lips. Her hand continued its slow, gentle stroke along Sam’s thigh. “Would you like to?”

Sam nodded. “I mean, what I’m saying is that I’m a little jealous that Lena speaks it. I mean… I’m Kryptonian, technically. Shouldn’t I learn the language?”

Kara giggled. “Yes, well, good luck telling Kal that.” Sam and Lena exchanged a knowing look—Kara’s cousin was always a tricky subject. “He learned just enough of it from the hologram of his father to be able to find his way around that fortress of his, and his pronunciation is just awful. Sounds more like German than Kryptonian, if I’m being perfectly honest.” Kara’s nose scrunched up in that adorable way it did when she was perplexed by someone. Then her face lit up as she turned back to Sam. “But I’d love to teach you! Then the three of us would have our own secret language!”

“Well, the three of us and Lex, anyway.” Lena’s face dropped, and her cheeks reddened in embarrassment. She clearly hadn’t meant to say that aloud, and an awkward silence set in. Sam had given Lena’s long-lost brother a second thought in at least a year. But of course he spoke Kryptonian. He had been obsessed with Superman even before they had become rivals and then mortal enemies. Even Sam didn’t know that full backstory, and she briefly wondered how much Lena had told Kara. She suspected even Lena didn’t know the full extent of Lex’s obsession, even though the siblings had been terribly close when Sam was first getting to know Lena.

“Yes,” Kara agreed softly, “and Lex. But he won’t be speaking Kryptonian to anyone, for any reason, ever again.” Her voice was quiet, but as steely as Sam had ever heard it. She hadn’t ever discussed Lex with Kara—clearly she had some issues with the man, and Sam had no clue whether that had more to do with his history with Lena or with Kal. Kal. Sam supposed she had gotten used to Kara calling him that, enough that she didn’t mentally think of him as ‘Superman’ anymore.

“Sorry. I genuinely did not intend to take the conversation in that direction.” Lena pulled at the sheet beneath her, as if some subconscious part of her felt the need to physically hide her embarrassment. Kara instantly put a hand over Lena’s.

“It’s okay, silly.” Sam smiled softly at the two of them. Kara was so fiercely protective of Lena, even when that protectiveness was displayed in the gentlest of ways. “You don’t have to pretend with us, creampuff. Lex was a big part of your life. Just because he went down a path you
couldn’t follow doesn’t mean you can’t still think of him sometimes.” Lena released a heavy breath she had apparently been holding, relaxing visibly at Kara’s reassuring words.

Sam’s mind leapt back to the Lex Luthor she remembered from when she was rising up the ranks of Luthor Corp’s finance division. The CEO had been enigmatic, but in a way that was all passion and charisma. He and Lena had been so similar in some ways—their brilliance, ambition, and creativity especially—but Lex wore it differently. He was all polish and shine where Lena was shade and hidden depths. She hadn’t known him very well, but she suspected he was the only person who knew the full extent of her relationship with Lena back then. The couple times Lena had introduced her, there was a spark of realization in his always analytical eyes, which were so eerily similar to Lena’s own. Those two had been so close. It still amazed Sam, the fact that Lena had been able to recover from that loss.

“Sam?” Lena’s own voice brought her back to the present.

“Sorry! What were you saying?”

She looked at her with a curious expression but didn’t push the inquiry. “I was saying that I can work on a lesson plan of sorts if you’d like. Kara was—” Lena paused, measuring her words carefully, “—a very umm *nurturing* teacher, but I think I might be able to improve upon her methods a bit.”

Kara shot an outraged look at Lena before her face was overtaken by excitement again. “I’m going to ignore that. But only because this will be so much fun! I love love love things that we can do as a threesome!” Kara’s joy was infectious, and Sam felt her face lift into an impossibly bright smile. A thought sprung to mind out of nowhere.

“Hey Kara? How come you don’t have an accent?” Lena blinked rapidly on Kara’s other side, and Sam grinned a little on the inside. The question hadn’t occurred to Lena, but it was a good one. Kara’s formative language-learning years had been on Krypton.

“I did, at first.” Kara chuckled. “I don’t know if you realize this, but English is a really unwieldy language. When I came to Earth, I had an abstract working knowledge of every language in common usage on this planet.” This time it was Sam’s turn to gape. *That’s ... several thousand languages. At least.* Kara smiled. “Don’t forget that I was trapped, semi-conscious, in a timeless void for 24 years. My pod’s AI took the time to transfer all the basics I would need for my life here—languages, basic cultural customs, laws, that sort of stuff—while I slept.” Sam nodded. That made sense. But the sheer breadth of it was still stunning. Kara’s mind was a remarkable thing. Sam wondered if she was capable of that sort of knowledge acquisition. *Are Kryptonian brains more advanced in some way, or is it just a technological advantage?*

“Anyway, my pod actually landed in China, but Kal found me almost immediately. When he started speaking to me in English, my brain jumped right in, but my mouth was completely unpracticed at forming the right shapes for correct pronunciation. It took months of focused study with the Danvers before I was able to approximate something like an American accent. And even then, I still tended to speak much more formally than the other kids felt was natural for a couple of years after that. I was picked on a lot, until I learned the natural rhythms and idioms and turns of phrases necessary to fit in fully.”

Sam’s heart warmed as she pictured a teenage Kara, trying her hardest to learn slang and be like all the human children around her. Right around Ruby’s age. Then she thought of how hard it must have been for her, as a refugee—a literal alien—and she bristled at the thought of Kara being bullied. “I bet Alex kicked so many kids’ asses,” she mused aloud, drawing a bit of laughter from her girlfriends.
“She did,” Kara confirmed. “We had our ups and downs, but if there’s one thing Danvers women don’t lack for, it’s empathy. And protectiveness. I couldn’t stand up for myself—there was too much danger that I could accidentally hurt someone. So, Alex took it upon herself to defend me. She’s never really stopped, I suppose.”

“I’m amazed she managed to stay on her honeymoon, if we’re all be perfectly honest,” Lena joked. Though it really wasn’t a joke. They all knew that Alex’s first instinct upon learning what Lillian had done would’ve been to jump on the first flight back to National City. It said a lot about her own growth, her love for Maggie, and her trust in Kara and especially in Sam and Lena’s ability to look after Kara, that she had stayed where she was.

“But,” Kara brought the conversation back on topic, “I’m sure Lena will be a great teacher. You might not pick it up as quickly as you did flying, but we can practice together all the time.” Sam thought of her first time flying, how hesitant and shaky she had felt. It was amazing how far she had come in such a short time. And then she remembered her feelings from earlier in the night.

“You know… I’m actually a little jealous of you,” Sam admitted. Kara looked at her quizzically, and Lena peered over the top of her wine glass with a similar level of curiosity. “I … you just. You seem so free now that you don’t have to pretend to be human anymore. I noticed it earlier, when you came home and changed. Then you did the dishes. And … you just.” Sam sighed. “It’s funny that you mention figuring out flying. It’s like one minute all my powers felt new and crazy, and now it’s just a few months later, and slowing myself down all the time has just become such a fucking drag, you know?”

Kara’s eyes narrowed, but she didn’t say anything. For maybe five seconds. Then she wagged her finger at Sam. “Okay but you know that like everyone is in so much more danger just so that I can flit about at full speed, right? Right?! ” Her tone was so scolding, but her face was so cute. Sam couldn’t help but grin back.

“Babe, we’re going to get through this. You’re going to be okay. We’re going to be okay. Lena will protect us.” Lena snorted, not seeing the joke coming. But there was a subtle shadow to her features. Something was going on there. She filed away the thought before turning back to Kara. “Seriously. It was incredible tonight, getting to see you just be yourself. Especially with Ruby. She was so delighted by it all.”

“She’ll get used to it before long,” Kara reassured. “You watch, by this time next week, she’ll be all like ‘what took you so long?’ if I’m not instantaneously in a room when she calls me.” All three of them chuckled.

“I’m still not 100 percent used to it myself, darling, and I’ve been living with you for months.” There was definitely a note in Lena’s voice that didn’t quite match up with the otherwise delighted tone. But her point was dead on.

“Lena’s underselling it. Kara, do you have any fucking clue how big a Supergirl fan my daughter is?” Kara’s smile could’ve lit the room in that moment. “She’s never going to get tired of it. I just wish …”

“That she could look at you that way,” Kara finished, her eyes wide and worried. “Oh sweetie, do you just want to tell her? I know it’s a burden, but she handled my--”

“No,” Sam answered firmly. “I’m not gonna make my daughter’s life more difficult just to make mine a little easier. In three years, she’ll be going off to college, hopefully somewhere far away from all this.” Sam’s heart broke at the thought of her baby girl so far away, growing up into a young woman so quickly. But she’d be safer. “Maybe we can tell her then. Maybe.” She
swallowed. “Things are going to be hard enough on her when it comes out that her mom is in a polyamorous triad with Supergirl and Lena Luthor.”

She winced. She just knew that Ruby would brazenly stand up to any bullies who tried to talk shit about her mom’s unorthodox love life. She hated that society treated anyone who was different with such derision and fear. She hated that her daughter would suffer for her choices, no matter how proud she was of her love for her partners.

The wave of guilt that hit Lena came out of nowhere. This was the first time Sam had ever admitted to her that she struggled with being Kryptonian while still pretending to be human. There was so much about Sam’s acclimation to life as a Kryptonian that she didn’t know about. So many adventures and experiences she had gone through with Kara while Lena shunned her.

“Ruby’s a strong kid,” Kara reassured Sam. “And she’s so proud of you, even if she doesn’t know the half of what you’ve been through. She’s so strong. She’ll be just fine, and we’ll protect her. All of us. *El Mayarah.*”

Sam snorted. “Even I know that one.” She smiled a little, then turned a concerned eye towards Lena. “So, you gonna tell us what’s bugging you, Lee?”

"I’m just … realizing that I didn’t … I mean, I missed …” She sighed. May as well be out with it. “I missed *everything.* All of your training. All of your adjustment to life with powers. All of it.”

Kara looked at her knowingly. “And you’re suddenly feeling very guilty about it, because that’s what Lena Luthor does.” Sam rolled her eyes.

“Kara, darling, you’re not seriously mocking me right now, are you?”

“You’ve done the whole guilty thing enough already, Lee. It’s tired. We’re all very over it.” Sam’s wry smile was almost gorgeous enough to distract Lena from how taken aback she felt. “Don’t give me that look,” Sam scolded. “Look. It’s all good now. We’ve been over this too many times. I’ve forgiven you. We’re drinking wine, in bed, completely naked, with Kara.” Lena snorted. “Everything is fine. Let it go.” Kara started humming the tune from *Frozen,* and Lena and Sam rolled their eyes in unison.

Sam set her glass down and took Lena’s hand. “Look, we’ll start here. Ask me something. Anything. About that time.”

“Ooooooo yes!” Kara jumped in. “We’ve got stooooories!”

Lena smiled. How did she get so lucky? She knew this was something she continued to struggle with, her tendency to saddle herself down with guilt and blame and to wallow in it alone. Maybe she should schedule another session with Dr. Letamendi … but that would have to wait until *after…* For now, maybe laughter was the best balm for her guilty conscience. “What was the most embarrassing part of adjusting to your powers?”

Sam exhaled dramatically. “Wow, you’re really just gonna start there, huh?” She paused, before offering a very strange admission. “Well, there was all that egg on my face.”

Lena’s eyes narrowed. “You mean … figuratively?”

Kara giggled. “No, she absolutely means literally. You see, when I first came to Earth, that was
what Eliza thought up for how to train me to be gentle. I was so terrified to touch *anything* for fear of breaking it with this uncontrollable strength I wasn’t used to. I mean … you saw how Sam nearly destroyed the balcony at the DEO when she landed that first time.” Lena remembered the incident vividly. She had still been in a bit of shock, having trouble believing that she had actually exorcised Reign from Sam, and then all of a sudden just as Kara was setting her down inside the DEO, that massive crack had startled her. Followed by Sam’s shriek as she plowed right through the concrete and steel and balcony. Kara had to catch all the rubble, and J’onn had immediately saddled Sam with several kryptonite bracelets to try to lessen the damage she could do.

“You left, and once Alex ran some tests on me to be sure Reign was gone despite leaving her powers intact, Kara had to run me through a crash course before they could send me home to Ruby. Couldn’t have me accidentally hurting Ruby or giving myself away.”

“So, I got a bunch of eggs. And she didn’t leave until she could take one out of the carton, grip it firmly, toss it in the air and catch it, and return it to the carton without a crack.”

“Hence all the egg on my face,” Sam quipped.

“Jesus fucking Christ, how many eggs did you go through?” Lena couldn’t stop smiling at the thought of some basement level DEO room, covered in splattered egg yolks.”

“I tallied it up as I cleaned once we were done. In total, Sam broke 155 eggs before she was able to handle that last egg without damaging it. Alex actually figured out a way to remove the yolk with a needle, and then fill the egg with some sort of material that solidified to strengthen the shell and hold the shape. Then we decorated it with the crest of the House of El in black and red to symbolize Sam’s accomplishment.”

“The colours just felt right, and that’s actually where I got my idea for Power Girl,” Sam added. “The costume, not the stupid name.” Sam smiled. “I’ve still got the egg.” Lena’s chest filled with pride, followed immediately by the return of the guilt she felt as though she could never escape.

“I wish I had stayed around for that… except that I don’t suppose I would’ve really appreciated it then as I do now.” Lena frowned, looking down at her hands. She sucked in a startled breath as Sam’s finger was immediately on her chin, lifter her head into a firm kiss.

“Seriously, babe. Cut it out. You missed out on fun egg adventures. That sucks. Whatever. There will be more adventures. You will be there. And for now, we have stories to tell you. It’s a win-win really.” Lena nodded, and now there was nothing but affection flowing through her. Kara and Sam both smiled brightly at her, and she felt a fierce protectiveness for them. These magical beings loved her, and she loved them back with all the considerable ferocity a Luthor was capable of. She would die for these women. If it came to it, and she suspected it might soon, she would also *kill* for them.

“Leeeeeena let me tell you about Sam’s early misadventures with heat vision,” Kara squealed, dispelling the brief darkness from Lena’s mind. Sam groaned.

“Fuck me, Lena is going to love this bullshit.” She took a sip of wine before waggling her eyebrows at Lena. “Our dear sweet innocent Kara is actually a huge perv, it turns out.”

Kara blushed intensely. “You hush! You’re making it into something it wasn’t.”

“Am I now?” Sam challenged. “Tell Lena the story then; we’ll let her decide.” She took her wine glass and hovered over to the other side of the bed, ostensibly so that she could watch Lena’s reactions. Kara shook her head theatrically, then launched into the story.
“So, obviously our initial training focused on flight, strength, and tuning out all the distractions forced on us by having super senses.”

“Fuck me, I didn’t love that.” Sam spat. Lena had some idea, based on what Kara had told her about her first few days on Earth. Trapped in a world bursting through the seams with sights, sounds, smells, and even tastes. With all of it dialed up to eleven. It sounded nightmarish, and she hoped Kara had helped Sam adjust to that part quickly.

“Fortunately, you caught onto that pretty quickly. Maybe some sort of latent muscle memory from Reign. Trust me, it could’ve been much worse,” Kara assured her. “Anyway, heat vision and freeze breath—”

“I still think those names are dumb, and I’ll tell Kal’s hickville parents that if I ever get a chance,” Sam interrupted, earning a harsh, scolding glare from Kara.

“The Kents are from Smallville, and they are sweet, decent people. Even if they’re a little small-minded. You will leave them alone, Samantha.” She turned back to Lena, face instantly melting from hard to soft in that way that was unique to Kara. “When we finally got around to heat vision, Sam couldn’t quite figure out how to get it to work. It’s actually one of the more difficult powers to master. And even more difficult to explain.”

Sam hummed in agreement, grinning impishly as she waited for Kara to try. The blonde continued, ignoring her. “So ummm… it’s a little bit tied into emotions. I mean … not really, but it’s like adrenaline and stuff right? Like when you can run faster and hit harder when you’re angry or scared. Heat vision is the same way. The easiest way to summon it is to get worked up.”

“That’s not quite how you phrased it then, Blondie.”

“Ugh. Fine. I may have told Sam she needed to get hot and bothered.” The laughter escaped Lena swiftly and shrilly. Kara sighed as Sam gloated. “I didn’t mean it like that.”

“Yes you did!” Sam apparently couldn’t hold back anymore. “She told me that the easiest way for her was to get mad.” Lena could confirm this. She had seen Kara’s eyes light up with that terrifying orange glow when her rage threatened to overpower her. “But I wasn’t mad about anything, and I couldn’t force it. So, she suggested that I get hot and bothered in some other way. I swear to god, Lena, that’s exactly how she phrased it.” Lena snickered.

“Hey! It worked, didn’t it?!” Kara looked like she was about to die of embarrassment.

“Yes, you didn’t exactly have trouble getting me hot and bothered once you put your mind to it,” Sam purred. “Though that did make it hard to focus on shooting lasers out of my eyes.”

“It’s just … it’s like you have to feel the heat inside of you, then direct it out. And that’s what you did! … Eventually.” Lena’s mind danced with thoughts of Kara getting Sam all worked up, while trying to teach her at the same time. “Wow, I wish I hadn’t missed that.”

“I wish I could know what you mean,” Lena thought aloud, wistfully. The wine was starting to get to her, and all her barriers were down now. “It’s hard for me, sometimes, always being so painfully aware that I’m the only human in this relationship.” A dark cloud passed over Sam’s face, then she scooted closer.

Sam took the wine glass from Kara’s and set it down, before scooting even closer, wrapping her legs loosely around Lena so that they were face-to-face. Sam’s eyes flooded with emotion, though Lena couldn’t quite place it. Guilt, maybe? But why? She cupped her hands around Lena’s face.
“Hey, I know I told you we’re past all that stuff, but you know I’m sorry too, right?” Lena’s face crinkled a bit in confusion. “I didn’t do it intentionally, but I know I got really wrapped up in the superhero schtick at first. I know you took it personally. That you thought I less of the good we were doing together at L-Corp.” She smiled, almost reassuringly. “But I didn’t. I don’t. Yes, you’re human. But, Lena, you’re incredible. You’re the biggest hero of the three of us.” She reached out to Kara, who had scooted closer herself. “You’re our hero.”

Lena hadn’t been fishing for praise, but it still felt pretty nice. Kara jumped in with some praise of her own. “Lena, your mind is going to change the world. All we can do is punch bad guys and stuff.”

“That’s not nothing. You know, I could always build myself a suit like Lex had—minus all the kryptonite of course. Really get out there and punch people with my girls. Fly around.” She grinned. “Ooo! I could tint it gold. We could call me ‘Goldstar.’” Sam laughed, immediately catching the joke that went straight over Kara’s head. “But you’re probably right. My talents will be more effectively utilized in the lab and the boardroom. My point is just that I will do anything it takes to protect you both. And Ruby. You’re my family.” Her smile fell away. “And that means I’ve gotta do something about Lillian, immediately.”

Kara was instantly worried with the turn their conversation had taken. Lillian had been on the edge of Lena’s mind all day, and she wasn’t sure how much longer she could ignore the barely concealed venom in Lena’s voice when she said her mother’s name.

“Kara, don’t look at me like that. You know I’m right. Every time we’ve tried to do the right thing with her … she always gets away. And leaves more bodies in her wake.” Lena closed her eyes, leaning her head back against the headboard. She didn’t want to have this conversation any more than Kara did. When she reopened her eyes, she met Kara’s anxious gaze. “How long do you think it’ll take for someone to discover this?” Lena gestured to the three of them.

“I don’t know, a week maybe?” Lena’s lips pressed tight, her brow furrowing.

“I’ll be surprised if we have that long, frankly.” Lena traced her finger across Sam’s collarbone. “And when that happens, it isn’t going to take my mother long to put two and two together. She knows Supergirl and Power Girl are together. While there’s not any high-resolution shots of Reign’s face, her mask wasn’t exactly full coverage. My mother’s smart. She’s going to figure out that Power Girl is Sam.” Lena’s hand moved from Sam’s clavicle, as she placed a hand firmly on each of Sam’s shoulders. “And I’m not letting her have you. She won’t get an opportunity to hurt you or Ruby. I refuse to let it happen. I’m going to catch her before then. Starting first thing in the morning.”

Kara knew that Lena was right. But she hated the dire implications. The threat Lena couldn’t quite keep out of her tone. If she got the chance, she wasn’t talking about taking Lillian into custody. In Lena’s mind, that’s too big a risk at this point. Anxiety gripped her chest, worming its way icily out into her limbs. She didn’t know if Lena was right. She didn’t know how she felt about how willing Lena was to consider this. Murder.

But now wasn’t the time to have this confrontation. Not in the bed they all shared together. Not when tonight had been so happy. She couldn’t bear it. So, she changed the subject. “We’re not letting anything happen to Ruby.” The anxiety didn’t go anywhere, but it was joined in her chest with the white hot passion she always felt when it came to protecting the people she loved. She leaned her head against Sam’s shoulder. “You know that I love her too, right? I feel like … gosh,
sometimes I feel like she’s mine too, you know?”

Kara’s eyes went wide, and her whole body shot up straight. That had just sort of come out. She absolutely hadn’t meant to say it out loud. Sam grinned at her, watching her carefully out of the side of her eyes. It was absolutely way too early in the relationship for her and Sam to be having this sort of discussion. *How much wine did I have??*

“Calm down, Blondie.”

“Sam, I’m sorry. I … I … wow, that just sort of came out. I didn’t mean… I *don’t* mean. I am not, I mean, maybe more like an older sister, you know? That’s what I meant! I just … I’m just saying I love her, and I will never let anyone—not bullies, not the press, and certainly not Lillian Luthor—hurt her.”

Sam ran a hand through her hair softly. “Stop freaking out. It’s okay. I know how you feel about Ruby. It’s nothing to be afraid of.” She shifted her gaze to Lena, then back to Kara. “Hell, it was just this morning—*fuck me*, this has been the longest day ever, hasn’t it?—that the three of us were just chatting casually about the idea of marriage. I think it’s okay to admit that we’re all in this for the long haul, right?”

Lena nodded, and Kara did too. Emotions were running high, and it wasn’t solely because of the wine. Sam kissed Kara’s forehead before adding, “Ruby’s *my* daughter, but she looks up to you both as mentors and yeah, parental figures. You don’t have to take on any more responsibility than you’re ready for, but trust me, I know you both would do anything for her.” Lena and Sam exchanged a worryingly cryptic look “And I think we’ve all had enough wine for the night.”

“You’re right,” Lena agreed. “It’s been a long day. We should probably get some sleep. You staying the night?”

Sam shook her head. “I should get home. Need to stay close to Ruby the next few days while everything is still up in the air.” She kissed Lena, passionately. “I’ll see you at work in the morning?”

“I’ll be there, bright and early,” Lena promised. “But I’ll need you and Kaziah to handle the day-to-day. My focus will be *elsewhere,*” *Meaning Lillian,* Kara thought.

Sam turned back to Kara, leaning in to kiss her goodbye. Sam’s lips were soft and warm against Kara’s. “Night, Blondie. Get some rest.”

“I love you.”

Sam sped into her clothes, tossing an “I love you, too,” back towards her girls before taking off down the hall.
Descent into Hell

That’s it! Lena hadn’t slept much the past three days, but it was now definitively worth it. She had found what she was looking for, even if she had already received a scolding from Kara on three separate occasions about being too obsessed with finding her mother. But there was no telling when it was going to get out that Kara and Lena were dating Sam, and there’s no way that Lillian wouldn’t figure out Power Girl’s identity at that point. Her only hope of protecting Sam and Ruby from that public revelation was to find—and stop—her mother before the press caught wind of the full extent of their relationship.

If Lillian figured out that Sam is Power Girl, she would immediately leak that information. And it wasn’t hard to imagine how things would escalate from there. Lillian would muddy the waters, claiming that Power Girl was still Reign. Cadmus would claim that Lena and Kara are protecting a known murderer, calling her a danger to society. Worse, a danger to Ruby. Lena didn’t know how much weight Lillian’s words would carry, but it could very well lead to inquiries from child protective services. Power Girl had been making progress, but Reign was very much still a terrifying spectre in the recent memories of the citizenry of National City. And even if Sam’s custody over Ruby was safe, neither Sam nor Ruby would be. Power Girl had many enemies: Cadmus and other anti-alien extremists, the rogues’ gallery she and Supergirl face, and anyone who still feared or wanted vengeance against Reign. Probably others. Ruby would instantly be a target. At best, her life would be fundamentally changed—Lena was thinking home schooling in the DEO. That’s best case. Worst case was that Ruby got kidnapped, tortured, or even killed, just to get at Sam.

No. I can’t let that happen. It won’t happen.

She had exhausted every possible avenue she could imagine trying to track Lillian down. She had worked closely with Lucy and Vasquez at the DEO and with her own private detective. They had poured over tons of information, interviewed everyone at the news channel, and had continuously turned up short. Lena had dealt with the very real anxiety that everything was about to fall apart. Lillian would get away with something, again, and while they had handled the crisis she threw at them admirably, with every passing moment, they risked giving her the opportunity to create a much more dangerous one.

Lena had solved the problem at a moment when she had least expected to blow the investigation wide open. Frustrated, and on a whim, she had rewatched Lillian’s video, on the largest screen possible. By this point, she had practically memorized the speech, and the subtle movements of her mother’s face. The cold eyes expertly drawn into a façade of believable emotion. Hair and clothes befitting a woman of means, rather than a terrorist on the run from the law. Over and over, Lena had watched this monster decry her girlfriend and betray her most closely guarded secret.

And then, finally, she noticed it. The background. Something about the video had nagged at her from the very beginning, and she finally placed it. She recognized the room in which Lillian had filmed the video. It was all in the little details. The hint of a windowsill at the right corner of the screen. The lighter brown wood of the wall behind her. That one painting that looked like it could be equally at home in a stodgy law firm’s conference room or a stodgy rich person’s third mansion. This particular room was closer to the former than the latter.

Lillian Luthor was apparently holed up in a family vacation home. Just not a Luthor one. You got cocky, Mother. And now it will be your downfall. The house was one of the lesser known (and never used) vacation properties of Lillian’s birth family, the Hamiltons. It was an older home,
equal parts mountain lodge and lake house on a fairly isolated lake in the northern Cascade Mountains in Washington. In made for a smart hideaway, given its remoteness and proximity to the Canadian border. Lena would’ve expected Lillian to cover up the background of the room she was in when she filmed her video for public consumption. The woman was many things, but sloppy wasn’t one of them. Either she believed the room was nondescript enough that no one could find it, or she intended to leave behind a clue, however slight. But the only person for whom such a clue would make sense was Lena, and she was quite certain that Lillian had no idea Lena even knew about the property.

She had been there only once before, while traveling with Lex during summer vacation after she graduated from MIT. The couple nights the siblings had spent there had been a secret part of the itinerary, which only made it stick out that much more firmly in Lena’s memory. Not that her nearly flawless recall needed much help. Late spring and early summer of that year, Lex had become fascinated by their family history, and apparently some of his research had turned up the old property. He had always had an obsessive mind, but a single project rarely captivated him for more than a year, at the very most. Many of them turned into interesting adventures when Lena would let herself get swept up in his mania, and this was one such occasion.

That entire trip had been special. They had jumped across the entire globe for the better part of two months. Lex had insisted that she deserved something special for graduating from MIT with degrees in mechanical engineering and biochemistry, all at the ripe old age of nineteen. Lillian hadn’t supported the idea, calling it an indulgence that would distract Lex from his continuing rise up the ranks of LuthorCorp, but he had refused to take no for an answer. And he had conducted plenty of business along the way. Lena could still remember the pleasant feel of pride and affection in her chest when Lex had so dismissively shut down Lillian’s final attempt to talk him out of the trip. The gleam in his eyes when he talked about the wonders that the Luthor siblings would accomplish together. The pride on his youthful features. Despite the added burdens that had been heaped upon him after their father’s tragic death the year prior, Lex had always found time to nurture Lena back then, to mentor her along her ‘path to greatness’ (as he always, not so jokingly, referred to it).

The final leg of the trip was along the west coast of the U.S. and Canada, starting with National City and ending with a short stop in the Vancouver area before heading back to Metropolis. The old Hamilton home had been a complete surprise to Lena. The car ride there—just Lex and Lena in a rented convertible, enjoying old rock and roll classics as they made their way through the winding mountains—had been such a delight. Lena’s heart fought a strange battle in her chest as she swam through the memories. That might have been the happiest period of her life prior to meeting Kara. The sheer joy and nostalgia of the recollection threatened to overwhelm her, but it was so confusingly mixed with all the familiar pain she felt when she thought of Lex as he used to be. Their exploration of the lodge and the surrounding nature had been so peaceful. One of the few truly laidback moments of the trip. Lex had confessed that he hadn’t talked to anyone about the place—hadn’t even confirmed that it was truly as unused as he believed it to be—before swearing Lena that the excursion would remain a secret between the two of them, come what may.

She wondered if Lex had remembered it as fondly as she did. To the point of making it one his remote bases in his cold—and then decidedly not cold—war against Superman. Maybe Lillian hadn’t been the one to convert the place to a Cadmus base at all; maybe she had simply inherited it from her son. He wouldn’t have had much use for multiple west coast facilities, but a couple of them would’ve made sense, especially if he was working in conjunction with Cadmus.

Was there a vault of anti-alien horrors hidden in some secret underground basement Lex had installed years after their trip together? Her heart leapt into her throat, fully feeling that same panic that had gripped her when Lillian had revealed the other vault after framing and kidnapping her.
The haunting memories of that traumatic night grabbed at her. That sterile glass and steel box rising out of the ground. Lillian’s glee at the assorted instruments of xenophobic violence contained inside. An image of the creepily pulsing Black Mercy sprung to mind. She didn’t even know what it was at that time—Kara explained that disturbing story much later—but it made her shudder just to see it. The memories of what Lex used those items for. His battles with Superman. How close the Kryptonian was to being defeated. To being killed. The possibility that Lillian could do the same to Kara.

The stuff Lex would keep in those vaults—Lena still had nightmares about it sometimes. Things that had the potential to hurt, maim, or possibly even kill Kara. And maybe Sam. Weapons that were otherwise beyond Lillian or Cadmus’ capabilities. Lena’s chest tightened further. No! She won’t get them. She won’t take them from me. We will survive you. She cursed herself for failing to remember the lodge when she had begun her efforts to unearth and dismantle Lex’s off-the-books weapons projects. Maybe her heart couldn’t go there, couldn’t tarnish one of her favourite memories. And now the people she loved were in danger again. Fuck. I have to get away from my family. I have to end this.

Lena grabbed a nearby stack of bright pink post-it notes and threw it across the room in anger. None of her happy memories with Lex were fully happy anymore. They were all poisoned. By what he had done. Her proud, doting older brother had already tried to have her killed twice. How does that happen? She still couldn’t fathom how a person that caring could break so bad. How could Lex love her more than anyone else in the world, and change so radically that less than a decade later, he literally wanted her dead?

Get over your hang ups, Lena. You can be haunted by Lex again once Sam and Ruby are safe. She stood, smoothed out her skirt, and walked over to retrieve the item she had thrown. She had completed the most logistically difficult part of her mission—she had located Lillian. Now she needed a plan for the most emotionally difficult part.

Lena was under no naïve moralistic self-deceptions. She fully intended to kill Lillian. She no longer trusted the justice system to handle this problem. And ... even if Lillian could be captured, tried, convicted, and put away, like Lex—what were the odds they could accomplish all that without Lillian finding out about Power Girl? Without her finding a way to use that information as one last spiteful attempt to ruin their lives? No.

She knew what had to be done. And at this point, that wasn’t even the emotionally difficult part. Lena had killed before, more or less. She shot John Corben twice in the gut, and he would’ve died if her mother hadn’t turned him into an overpowered Frankenstein’s monster. But that hadn’t changed the feel of it in the moment, hadn’t lessened the moral consequences Lena had to wrestle with after learning that her decision would likely end someone’s life. She knew her way around firearms well enough that she had shot not to kill, but simply to free Alex and keep Corben from escaping. But she couldn’t pretend that she had gone out of her way to spare the life of the cold-blooded assassin hired by Lex to murder her. There had been no legal consequences of her actions then. She had never inquired too hard about that, but she suspected DEO intervention had helped ensure that she stayed off the NCPD radar, especially since Corben snatched from police custody on his way to the hospital.

Lena had every intention of shooting Edge when he had poisoned all those children. Sure, she was drunk and depressed, but those were thin excuses. The point was that she was perfectly willing to pull the trigger. She also shot a Daxamite guard in the back and killed who knows how many others when she irradiated the air over National City with lead. She was not new to the concept of taking the life of another. But none of those others had been her mother. Except that her white hot rage at Lillian wasn't all that different from how she felt about Rhea, just more powerful. She
could still remember how she had wished she could’ve been the one to kill Rhea herself. How poisoning her remotely was a pale consolation prize. Lena was struggling to avoid that lingering question she had so successfully buried in recent months. *Am I a true Luthor after all? What exactly am I capable of?*

She couldn’t lose herself down that hole. Not right now. She had to stay focused. There was too much at stake. *Will I be able to cover this one up?* Lena felt trapped between a rock and a hard place. She didn’t want Kara involved in this. Murder—and that’s definitely what Lena was contemplating—wasn’t something that Kara was capable of being okay with, under any circumstances. *She forgave Alex.* Kara, and later Alex, had told her the story of how Astra had died. The situations were comparable, but not exactly the same. Alex killed Astra because she believed it was the only way to stop Kara’s aunt from killing J’onn. The knife Lillian was holding at Sam and Ruby’s throats was metaphorical, but no less dangerous in Lena’s estimation. And this was no split-second decision, in the heat of battle. Lena intended to commit full-fledged murder, with malice aforethought. Careful planning. A cold, calculated decision.

But she couldn’t do it alone. There was every chance that Cadmus had ways of tracking Lena’s private jet, and even if she could get to the lodge undetected, there was no telling what sort of Cadmus presence was waiting there. She was a decent marksman and had taken a few basic combat classes with Alex, but she had no shot at getting to her mother, killing her, and getting out alive. Not that she wouldn’t sacrifice herself to protect Sam and Ruby. She absolutely would—but she couldn’t risk failing to get to Lillian first.

Besides, she couldn’t hide this from the women she loved. Once upon a time, maybe she could’ve buried this sort of secret deep down, hidden it behind her many icy emotional walls. But she wasn’t that person anymore, especially not with Kara. Lena couldn’t even imagine how she would do it. It was beyond reckoning. She had to tell Kara. And Sam. She couldn’t do this without them.

So then, the question was whether she could hide her full intentions. Could she convince them that the mission was to capture, and only kill as a last resort? Make it appear to be a split-second, heat of the moment decision. Was that something Kara would have an easier time stomaching? Forgiving her for? Lena couldn’t imagine a scenario where Kara would agree to help her break into a Cadmus base for the express purpose of killing Lillian. She would try to talk Lena out of it, would insist there was another way—but Lena knew there wasn’t. And every second spent arguing about the morality of the mission was another second closer to their secrets spilling out further to the public.

*I have to lie.* The thought of that physically sickened her. It’s not that Lena wasn’t capable of it—she was an excellent liar when she needed to be. Even Kara could attest to that, after everything that happened with the Medusa virus the first time they had managed to capture Lillian. But she didn’t *want* to. Things were so good with Kara and Sam. Lena was as happy as she had ever been. She had never been in love like this. Had family like this.

What would the fallout of this decision be? Could she lose Kara? Sam? Lena suspected Sam would have an easier time with the morality of this decision, but she certainly didn’t feel confident in that assumption. *Best case scenario is that I do what deception I have to in order to get us there, there’s some sort of firefight, and I kill Lillian in the battle. And I am able to live, forever, with the knowledge that I lied to Kara and Sam, manipulated them in order to protect them.* Lena wasn’t entirely sure she was capable of even that anymore, but she had to try. And even then, would Kara agree to cover it up? Or would there need to be a DEO investigation into an unauthorized mission against Cadmus? What would the legal consequences be?
All that was beyond Lena’s control. There was too much at stake not to risk it. She had to trust that her relationships were strong enough to survive whatever moral disagreements she and Kara might have about this. And if the cost of protecting Sam’s identity and keeping Ruby out of harm’s way was Lena’s relationship with Kara, that was a cost Lena would pay. Even though she knew it would destroy her.

*I love them. This is no choice at all. I’ll do what I must.*

Lena set about putting together the rest of her plan, and what she would tell her heroes. Then she called Sam.

Flying at these speeds was terrifying, even though she trusted Kara with her life. Lena had been instructed very authoritatively not to try to look down, so she kept her eyes on the sky and on the readout in her helmet. She was wearing one of the armoured flight suits Winn had created to allow DEO agents (almost always Alex) to accompany Supergirl or Power Girl on a longer distance flight. It was built to withstand speeds that would otherwise be incredibly uncomfortable and dangerous for humans. This particular suit was made for Alex specifically, and it hugged Lena’s curves a little too tightly. But it would keep her safe. It could even withstand some amount of bullet fire should things come to that. There was a small, high-tech handgun holstered on each hip, locked into place fluidly in the suit’s flight mode. In all likelihood, this was the closest Lena would ever get to being a DEO agent. Based on the short amount of time it had taken to get from National City to the Cascade Mountains of Washington, she calculated that they were moving somewhere just below 2000 miles per hour, which she knew was a piece of cake for Kara. The hardest part was actually not the cruising speed, so to speak, but the acceleration. The human body can’t handle more than three Gs of acceleration, and Kara had been careful to accelerate steadily for over a minute before they reached this speed. The scientist in Lena couldn’t resist taking a couple of minutes to think about what a marvel her girlfriends were. To wonder at the amount of care they had to take to protect her fragile form.

Kara and Sam had gone along with her plan, though Kara had strongly resisted Lena’s insistence that they keep the DEO out of this. Lena wondered if Kara’s suspicions about what Lena might do played any part in that. Her girlfriend was perceptive, and she had been sending signals the past few days that she knew exactly what Lena was in the mindset to do to Lillian. She had no doubt that Kara had every intention of stopping her from killing Lillian if she could, but she wondered if Kara also considered the possibility that she couldn’t stop Lena. That the fewer witnesses they brought along the better. Maybe if Alex wasn’t on her honeymoon, Kara would’ve insisted on at least bringing her. But as it was, Kara and Sam agreed that they were more likely to maintain the element of surprise if it was just the three of them.

She was pleasantly surprised that neither of them tried to talk her out of going. Under the mission parameters as Lena described them, there was no need for her presence. She could’ve simply given Supergirl and Power Girl the coordinates and left it to them to capture Lillian. But they knew better. Knew that this was personal for all three of them, and that Lena needed this final confrontation. There was never once any hint of an argument from either that Lena didn’t need to be a part of this. She loved them both so much for that.

Sam was the faster flyer of the two, so Kara had carried Lena while Sam flew ahead to scout the perimeter and scan the potential defenses Cadmus had installed. Her readout told her they were approaching the coordinates she had preprogrammed into their flight plan. Kara began to decelerate as Sam’s voice crackled to life in their comms.
“Babes, we’re going in a little blind on this. I can only see three armed guards in this place, but that’s because there’s a massive underground level that is completely encased in lead. Lillian has to be down there, but there’s no telling how many people are with her and what else is down there. I thought about superspeeding in and out to take a look, but I’m worried she’ll have sensors or alarms.” Go figure, even in a place Lillian assumes we won’t find her, she’s still overly prepared.

“We’ll have to risk it, but wait until we get there,” Lena responded. “We’re coming in hot.” Kara landed softly a few miles away, then ran them the rest of the way to where Sam was waiting for them just on the edge of the tree line. Sam’s face was indecipherable under her cowl, but Kara’s worry was written all over her features. Lena placed a hand on her face.

“Hey. Kara. We’ve got this. We’re in this together.” Kara swallowed hard but nodded. Her eyes, icy blue with concern, focused on Lena’s.

“Lena, I know that we have to do this. Lillian has it coming. But please.” She wrapped her hand around Lena’s, still resting on her cheek. “Please. Don’t do anything you are going to regret. We’ll do what we have to, but … just remember that you’re not her. You’re not Lex. You’re my Lena. Don’t forget that.”

Kara’s belief in her was like a shot of pure warmth into her system, but it didn’t change anything. Lena swallowed, keeping her focus on what had to be done, and she smiled and nodded. Then she kissed Kara, pouring all the love and assurance she could muster into it. Keeping her true intentions buried deep down. She hated herself.

“Okay. Plan.” Sam and Kara focused on her. “Sam, you sweep the perimeter of the basement level, as fast as you can. Avoid detection at all cost. If you’re not back here, in thirty seconds, Kara and I are coming in after you.” Sam nodded. “Depending on what Sam finds, we’ll divvy up any guards between you two, and you’ll incapacitate them, then the three of us will confront my mother together.”

“Okay,” Sam confirmed. “I’ll be back.” She wasn’t kidding. Lena barely registered that she was gone. “Okay, we’ve got your standard evil scientist lair down there. Like the L-Corp basement lab, but evil and much less pretty.” Lena grinned at Sam. Leave it to her to keep things light. “There’s another ten armed dudes downstairs, along with a few tech people. Good news: we’re not looking at any major weapons. We should be able to take Lillian without much trouble.” Kara seemed visibly relieved. Lena played along, but she knew better than to underestimate Lillian.

At least she doesn’t have Kryptonite. “Okay, Sam, you take out the guards upstairs, then meet us downstairs and clean up whatever Kara leaves for you. We’ll take Lillian in together.” She looked back and forth between her lovers. “This is it. I’m nervous as fuck. I don’t have to tell either of you this, but be careful. Lillian is a monster. A brilliant one. Don’t underestimate her. I know this seems like a simple mission, but nothing is ever simple with her. I can’t lose either of you. I know you’re practically goddesses, but please. Be on your guard No matter what. Promise?”

They all took each other’s hands. And squeezed. “I love you,” they all said in unison. And then she was in Kara’s arms on the way to the lead-lined basement lab of the old Hamilton lake house. Lena barely had time to take in her surroundings before Supergirl and Power Girl were back at her sides. The bunker was nearly two stories tall (deep?), and there was various tech, storage, and furniture scattered about. But none of that was important. Lena’s focus was firmly on the now isolated figure standing across the room.

She resists the urge to draw her gun and blow this woman away without a word. She isn’t sure she could get the shot off at this point—Kara would almost certainly stop her. Instead, she offers a
dark greeting. “Hello, Mother.”

“Lena, how good of you to show up.” Lillian’s face was hidden in shadow, and Lena definitely didn’t care for the way she phrased that. “And you brought your pet aliens, how wonderful.”

“Fuck you. Supergirl and Power Girl are more human than you’ll ever be, you monster.”

Lillian’s face came into focus just long enough for her to glower and retort, “Well, we’ll certainly see about that shortly, I can promise you that.” Then the lights went out.

*Fuck.* Supergirl and Power Girl took protective positions with their backs to her. *They can probably see just fine.* “What’s going on? Where did she go?”

“She retreated around the corner. There’s a lot of lead,” Power Girl growled.

“Don’t worry; she isn’t going to touch you,” Supergirl reassured her.

“I wouldn’t be too worried about my daughter right now, Kara,” *Fuck fuck fuck. I should’ve just shot her.* Lena’s hand was on the gun on her right hip. Her entire body felt tense. Her heart was pounding. Then a sickly green light began to filter into the room.

Lena’s entire body went numb. *No. No no no no no. How?* “Kara get out of here while you can,” Lena ordered, her voice thick with emotion. She registered movement from across the room and then she felt the blast of wind as Power Girl moved at superspeed in front of her body. She screamed in pain, and the overhead lights crackled back to life.

The situation had gone from under control to a complete nightmare almost instantly. Power Girl was down on her knees, a large dart sticking out of her just below the collarbone. Lena and Kara both moved immediately to check on her. The dart had been full of liquid kryptonite—based on the size of the dart, Lena had no doubt that the dose would’ve been lethal for Kara. Already, there was a green glow to Sam’s normally brown eyes. The kryptonite was already spreading through her system. Her body tightened as her system fought the poison. For the moment, neither Lena nor Kara could focus on anything else around them. They needed Sam to be okay.

“Kara watch out!” Sam cried out, and then Kara was being thrown across the room. Power Girl was on her feet, but she was clearly affected by the kryptonite. She still moved plenty fast enough to throw a hell of a punch at the glowing green robot that had Kara pinned to the wall.

“Power Girl, are you okay?” Lena tried to keep the emotion out of her voice.

“I’d say I’m at about half strength, but I’m also super fucking pissed off now. Find your bitch of a mom. We’ve got this.” Lena said a silent prayer of thanks to no one that Sam had been quick enough to jump in front of that dart. She had no doubt it had been intended for Kara; that Lillian had just tried to kill Supergirl. Lena was furious. Any doubts she had about what she came here to do were gone.

She stood, her right gun out with the safety off, scanning the room for Lillian. Lena’s heart was pounding. This woman raised her to be ashamed of herself. Psychologically tortured her. Verbally abused her. Shamed her. *Where did she go?!* Lena prowled the perimeter of the room, sure that her mother wouldn’t have escaped without a single monologue. She also knew that a single kryptonite dart couldn’t be the only weapon she was hiding. Lillian was out to kill her loves, and Lena was done sparing her.

*How did she get kryptonite?* The DEO must have fucked up. That was the only explanation. Lena was nearly certain she was the only person remaining on the planet who had the substance (or the
ability to recreate it in a stable form)—unless Superman was hiding some somewhere. And she had only opened her stores to the DEO for the battles with Reign. Cadmus must’ve had a mole in the DEO. And now Sam was paying the price. Kara had nearly paid with her life.

Lena’s mind continued to race as she explored the confines of the room, gun first. She glanced over and now there was a robot each for Supergirl and Power Girl to contend with. They had the same kryptonite core in their chests that Metallo had utilized, but these were definitely not human. _Finally admitted that our species isn’t the pinnacle of evolution, did you Mother?_ A small explosion occurred behind her, briefly startling her. Lena couldn’t let herself be distracted. Her girls had each other’s backs. She was focused. She had to stay focused. She had to get Lillian.

Her eyes registered movement in her periphery, and her gun followed the rapidly moving object. Another robot? Lena’s stomach flip flopped as she realized what—who—was floating between her and the battle going on across the room. She could feel the bile in her throat as panic threatened to grip her chest. Lillian had recreated Lex’s warsuit.

Lex had nearly killed Superman in that suit. Fully equipped with cutting edge (for its time anyway) technology, weapons capabilities, and artificial intelligence, the suit had allowed Lex to nearly match Superman’s speed and reflexes, while constantly weakening him with strategically placed kryptonite. This suit was Lena’s worst nightmare. One she had hoped she had eradicated from the face of the Earth. And now her mother was wearing it.

The armour plating of the suit appeared to create a more feminine silhouette, but otherwise, it appeared to be a perfect replica. _Let’s test that out._ Lena immediately fired off several rounds at Lillian’s chest, elbow joints, knee joints, and the neck of the suit, just under the helmet. Other than those fired at the chest, each round lodged into the suit. She even managed to cause a malfunction in the neck plating, causing the helmet to fully retract. _It isn’t nth metal._ This suit was a pale imitation of Lex’s. Lillian couldn’t find nth metal, meaning that whatever the suit was made of, it wasn’t Super-proof. Lillian still hadn’t been able to find engineers with half the skill and talent of her children.

And now her head was exposed. Lena aimed a kill shot right between Lillian’s eyes. An electric thrill shot through her spine. “Any last words, Mother?” Lillian glared at her, then she was hit from behind. The war suit was propelled into the wall. Kara’s body showed the tell tale signs of exposure to the kryptonite in the room, her veins standing out with a pale green glow in places. But she was still flying just fine, and clearly still had enough energy to quip, “Suit’s a bit much, don’t you think?”

Lillian worked to right herself amidst the rubble, growling, “Says the girl in the cape.” _No. Lillian is mine. I can’t let her hurt Kara._ Then Kara looked at her with that impossibly inspirational Supergirl look. She landed next to Lena, placing a hand on each shoulder.

“Lena. You don’t have to go this alone. She isn’t your burden to bear. There is another way.” Her sapphire eyes sparkled with concern. “We’re in this together. We’re a team, in all things. Please. Let’s take care of her, together.” Lena swallowed, hard. Her heart was still pounding with terror. But she had to trust Kara.

“The suit is vulnerable, if you can get past the shields. I know you’re in pain, love, but I’ll cover you, see if I can’t get in a lucky shot here and there. You’ve got this.” They glanced back, and Power Girl was still trading blows with the Metallo bot. Kara nodded at her, body language full of pride. Lillian couldn’t silence the voices in her head, but for now, she would do this Kara’s way. The turned to face the now upright Lillian.

“You really are a lost cause, Lena.” She stepped forward threateningly. There was a marked
difference in Lillian’s demeanor. Gone was her icy aplomb, replaced by a barely contained rage. Her uptight, regal posture warped into an aggressive stance as she took another menacing step towards them. Where Lillian of old would glower, the Lillian in front of her seethed. What changed?

“I have to know: why out Kara? What could you possibly gain from that?”

Lillian’s eyes narrowed. “I gave up. This alien whore betrayed you. And you still chose her over your family. Your species. You have all this talent, Lena. I see it now. You were the best of us, not Lex. But you’ve thrown it all away. You’re worse than her, in your own way. You’re not just the enemy, Lena. You’re a traitor.” Lillian leapt into the air and blasted Kara with a kryptonite beam, sending her flying backwards. Lena bristled. “It isn’t enough to kill you or your pet. You’ve all got to suffer. And some things are so much worse than death.”

Even once Lena had reached adulthood, and mostly freed herself of Lillian’s day-to-day torments, the woman had found new and increasingly more horrifying ways to maintain her dominance over Lena. She kept her in the closet until she was nearly thirty. She chose the child who proved himself to be an unstable monster over the one who proved herself capable of overcoming all odds to achieve career success. She used her to try to commit genocide. She kidnapped her. Gaslit her. And she left her to die.

And if you had asked Lillian, she would tell you she did all that for Lena’s own good. To bring her into the light. To free her from her delusions. To push her, no matter what it took, to become a Luthor. Not a Luthor like Lionel, but a Luthor like Lex. A real Luthor.

Now, having failed to do that—having finally accepted that she would never do that—Lillian’s sole goal had apparently become nothing more than spite. Sheer, unadulterated destructive lashing out at the daughter she couldn’t control. And the women Lena loved.

Fuck her.

Lena fired off another few rounds at the weak points in the armour, distracting Lillian’s attention away from Kara. *If Mother wants to wage psychological war, I’m about to blow her out of the water.* “That’s the difference between you and me, Lillian. You and Lex always were too emotional for your own good. Despite everything you’ve put me through, I’m more than happy to end you here and now.” Lena took aim, but Lillian dodged at the last moment, and the bullet just missed her head.

Lillian’s eyes practically glowed with rage. *She can’t stomach the idea that I might have the insolence to actually kill her myself.* She dove towards Lena, powering up a blast to fire off, only to be propelled back into the wall by Kara’s heat vision. The war suit’s shields absorbed the energy, but the force of it still knocked Lillian off course, saving Lena. Kara tried, and failed, to leap back into the air. *Kara.* Lena’s chest tightened. Her hero’s strength was waning. The kryptonite was taking its toll.

*I have to end this. Now.*

Lillian was up again, and she and Kara were facing off. With Lena caught in the middle. *How fitting.* But Lena had chosen her side long ago. There was a dangerous glint in Lillian’s eyes as raised a fist towards Kara, then flung her arm down forcefully, unsheathing a thin blade from the arm of the suit, made of pure kryptonite. She turned her head slightly, locking eyes with Lena.

“As usual, my dear, you’ve underestimated me. You lot deserve to suffer. But I am perfectly capable of evaluating my situation every bit as coldly as you can. And I will settle for death, if I
must.” Then she rocketed forward towards Kara, blade first.

“NO!” Lena screamed. The entire scene shifted, and Lena felt as though she was watching everything unfold in slow motion. But she had no control over any of it. Her arms moved of their own accord, tracking Lillian on her fatal course towards Kara. She fired off two shots, neither hitting its mark in Lillian’s skull. Lillian and Kara traded a couple of blows, and Kara was barely able to stand, suffering deep cuts on both arms but avoiding getting stabbed. The entire time, Lena tried to line up her shot, but they were moving too much.

Then Lillian grabbed Kara by the cape and slung her down to the ground. Now, as Lillian raised her arm to drive the blade down in a killing blow, was Lena’s chance. She aimed, confident that her shot would find purchase in Lillian’s brain this time. She could feel the kill in her entire body. But her eyes caught Kara’s. Her baby blues were firmly fixed on Lena. It felt as though Kara saw into her soul. In that moment, Lena made a decision. Her arm tracked down a tick, and just before the kryptonite blade could take the life of Lena’s love, she blew it away.

Thwarted, at least momentarily, Lillian released a savage cry of fury. But it was nothing compared to the sounds of agony coming from Kara. Lena’s bullet saved Kara’s life, but the fractured blade embedded small shards of kryptonite in Kara’s torso, neck, and arms. The biggest sliver plunged deep into Kara’s right forearm, just below her elbow, nearly severing her forearm entirely. Kara’s eyes shown with the sickly green colour, and her body writhed and tightened in overwhelming pain. Her cries were shrill and tight, cutting through Lena’s body as sharply as any blade. She had never seen Kara bleed like this.

I did this to her. Will she heal? Will she scar? Will she survive this? Lena couldn’t breathe. She felt sick. She should’ve taken the shot. Her half measure had saved Kara’s life only to plunge into her own physical hell. And Lillian wasn’t done with her. She moved to punch Kara in the face, beating her savagely. Kara was powerless to defend herself, and even as Lena began running towards them, she felt again as if she was moving in slow motion. I can’t save her. I can’t get there quickly enough. I shouldn’t have hesitated.

Out of nowhere, the lifeless metallic form of a now defeated Metallo hits Lillian with enough force to drive Lillian off of Kara, her suit scraping a path along the concrete floor before she crashed into the far wall in a small ball of flame. Sam was at Kara’s side in an instant, and Lena was there seconds later. Sam removed the shards of kryptonite at superspeed, tossing them far, far away from Kara’s body, which was still writhing in pain. Except for her right arm, which remained pinned by the kryptonite shard. It appeared worryingly still. Lifeless.

“Lee, I don’t know if I should pull this one out. What if she bleeds out? Is that even possible?” Lena didn’t know enough about Kara’s physiology to be able to say for sure. But she had to make another life or death decision there in that moment.

“Sam, I’m going to pull the shard. I’ll set her arm, and then I’ll need you to cauterize the wound.” Lena was hyperventilating. Terrified. “Kara, sweetie, you’re going to be okay. We’re going to get you out of this.” Kara’s breathing was ragged, and while her cries had dulled to tears and growls, she was still in incredibly obvious pain. Lena placed a hand on Kara’s arm, with the other on the shard. “Okay, go!”

She pulled it out, and the blood began to gush immediately. She held Kara’s forearm firmly to her elbow, and then found herself screaming as Sam used her heat vision to seal the wound. Lena’s own hands were burned slightly, like a bad sunburn, at the sheer proximity, but there was nothing else they could’ve done. Kara’s suit was burned away, and there was a hot red scar left behind. She had passed out from the pain at this point, but her body was no long writhing. Her veins had
lost the sickly green colour, and despite the cuts and stained tears down her cheeks, she looked almost peaceful now.

*I did this.* Lena tried to live up to Kara’s moral worldview, and as a result, she had plunged her girlfriend into a horrifying gauntlet of pain. She knew in that moment, without any shadow of a doubt, that she had made the wrong choice. She should have killed Lillian. Ended it all right then and there. She’d had no fewer than three opportunities since they entered this bunker to kill Lillian, and each time she had hesitated. Resisted her instinct, her gut screaming at her to end it. *And look what I have wrought.* Even though she had done what she thought Kara would’ve wanted, she felt almost as if she had chosen Lillian over her love. Kara’s pain was a direct result of Lena’s willingness to let the bitch live. She could only hope that the yellow sun could heal Kara’s arm.

Sam placed a hand on Kara’s cheek. “You’re going to be okay, Blondie. We’ve got her now. We’ll be free of this place soon.” Lena looked up at Power Girl and gasped. Lena’s heart nearly jumped out of her chest in a blind panic. **No no no no no.** Power Girl defeated the overpowered Metallo robot, but at great cost. The android had, at some point in the battle, torn apart her cowl. It lay in tattered white shreds around her neck, and her wig was completely gone. Lena was looking not at Power Girl at all, but at her oldest friend Samantha Arias. Lena felt as though her chest might collapse on itself from the sheer force of her anxiety.

“Power Girl, get out of here *now!*” Lena commanded Sam with all the authority and urgency she could muster. Her shout brought Kara back to consciousness, though she was still weak. Her breathing continued to be strained, but she gasped at Sam’s exposed face. Sam fixed Lena with a look of sheer confusion, while Kara immediately understood.

“*Go.***” Supergirl urged her partner. But it was too late.

Lillian’s warsuit was in tatters, but if anything it made her presence all the more ominous as she cast a shadow over the threesome. “Oh, this is rich,” Lillian cackles. “Reign, the single greatest alien menace we’ve ever faced, was the pathetic single *mom* you screwed around with, all along?” She spit the word out so violently, making the veiled threat against Ruby blatantly obvious. Sam and Lena stood up as one, each moving into a defensive position over Kara, shielding her from Lillian. “You lot are disgusting. You deserve each other. Your happiness ends here.”

Her devious grin was haunting. As Lillian blew a hole in the roof and then activated the couple of remaining functional rockets on her suit, Lena realized that she meant to escape again. That her plan to make them suffer a fate worse than death was again within Lillian’s reach. Lena berated herself mentally. *I should’ve killed her. I had my chance. No. NO, this cannot happen.*

The stakes flashed before her eyes one last time. Sam vilified in the press. Ruby taken by society from her loving mother. Violence. Bigotry. An inescapable cycle of hatred, chaos, and fear. The end of any potential for a happy ending. For any of them.

Simultaneously, her rage built as she again faced all the memories of her myriad personal tortures at Lillian’s hands over the years. Half a lifetime of abuse, oppression, distrust, manipulation, and dismissiveness. *Enough.*

Lena pulled the gun from her left holster, an alien energy weapon. And she aimed it for Lillian’s smug face. She got off three shots. Two were eaten by the remaining shields of the war suit, one cut a deep gash over Lillian’s right brow, drawing a furious scream of pain and agony. But Lena failed to kill her. Again.
“Sam,” came the strangled cry from Lena’s throat. “You can’t let her get away. She knows who you are. She knows about Ruby! Please, Sam. Please. You have to end this. Now.” Lena’s desperate eyes sought understanding in Sam’s. Her soft brown irises seemed tortured more by the abstract terror of possible futures than by the green shards of poison Lena could physically see shining through. To her credit, Sam didn’t hesitate. She knew what was at stake, and she felt it just as heavily as Lena. Probably more so. Green eyes met brown, and they were unified in both motivations and goals.

Sam’s eyes glowed red, then she ended the conflict once and for all. The red hot beams cut through Lillian’s chest, piercing the weakened shields of the war suit without resistance. In one second, Lillian was gloating as she escaped to further ruin the lives of her rebel daughter and her undesirable partners. The next, she was a lifeless corpse, falling back to the concrete floor. The heavy thud with which she hit the floor sounded almost pathetic.

Lena slumped forward, falling to her knees. It was finally over. She was free. Her family was safe. So why don’t I feel good about any of this?
Two weeks have passed, and Kara is coming to terms with her newfound fame while all three of our ladies struggle with Lena's decision.

“I mean, I know I shouldn’t be surprised, but gosh, Sam, I just … I guess I hadn’t really given much thought to it until Cat suggested it.” She loved Kara most in these moments. This beautiful, powerful angel befuddled to find that people were inspired by her. Captivated by her. Enamoured with her. She was brave and kind and fiercely protective of literally every single person. Yet here she was, reduced to a stuttering mess because she couldn’t believe that people were fascinated to know more about her. That people, especially alien refugees and queer folks, were in awe of her and how she had handled being thrust into the spotlight like this. Sam could only smile, pulling Kara’s hand up to her lips and kissing her knuckles.

It had been two and half weeks since Kara came out, and she had already done interviews with Autostraddle, GLAAD, and Out. Autostraddle had been the first because they were Kara’s favourite website, and she very adorably made sure they knew that fact. She had another interview in the works with Cat for CatCo Magazine, with all three of them, now that the rumours were out there about the Luthor and the Super’s so-called dalliance with a third woman in their relationship.

A dark cloud passed over Sam’s face but was banished just as quickly. Now wasn’t the time to have another conversation about Lena that would go nowhere. The items in her bag suddenly felt the tiniest bit heavier.

It was a big day, a bright, sunny day in National City, and she and Kara were walking arm-in-arm to go see their good friend Kaziah. Who would be cutting and styling their hair today. After everything, and without the need to try and hide her identity by styling her long curls up as Kara and down as Supergirl, the Girl of Steel had decided to make a drastic change. Fortunately for them, hair styling was one of the many, many skills in Ziah’s wheelhouse, and Sam had been quick to jump on the makeover train with Kara. She did wear a wig in costume, after all.

The two Kryptonians (Sam had finally decided to adopt the label for herself, as it was easier than trying to explain the much more complicated scientific truth of her biology) were dressed simply. Kara was wearing bright red tights, with neon blue tennis shoes that nearly matched her flowy blue racerback tank, which exposed her collarbones and shoulders in a way that Sam found highly distracting. Kara refused to admit that she was intentionally wearing more red and blue combinations lately, which only made the obviously calculated choice that much more precious. For her part, Sam was wearing simple black yoga pants, ballet flats, and a loose v-neck with “Ask Me About My Feminist Agenda” displayed in a bold font down the front. Both of them had their hair tied back in ponytails and were wearing very little makeup. They could easily have been going to a yoga class rather than “the hair salon,” as Kara kept jokingly referring to Kaziah’s apartment.

While it would’ve been simpler to fly, Kara had insisted that they walk. She was in a mood today and wanted to be among the people. “I want to just go for a nice walk with my girlfriend to the salon, just like anyone else. If it leads to another tabloid story about Supergirl being sighted with the mysterious brunette, then so be it,” Kara had insisted, winking a bright blue eye at her as she
enunciated. The tabloids hadn’t quite managed to identify Sam yet, thanks to a coordinated (and probably highly illegal) effort by Winn and Lena to hack each and every local and national media outlet who might be interested in such things. But it was only a matter of time, which is why the interview with Cat was so important.

Too bad I can’t get either of them to have a real conversation about what happened.

Sam was brought back into the moment by an excited follow-up from Kara. “Oh oh oh! I forgot to tell you!” Kara pulled them to a stop, taking both of Sam’s hands in her own as she faced her. Kara’s eyes sparkled with glee. “National City Pride asked me to lead the Pride parade this year!” Sam’s face broke into an immediate grin. Whether it was the yellow sun beaming down on her, the pure joy written across her features, or the oh so perfect cut of that tank top, Kara looked breathtakingly gorgeous in that moment. Still, Sam wouldn’t be Sam if she didn’t take the opportunity to give her gorgeous girlfriend some shit over this.

“Oh, and that just happened to slip your mind there, Blondie?” Sam snarked. Kara immediately rolled her eyes, but Sam’s sarcasm did nothing to dampen her excitement. Sam had to look up just slightly to keep her girlfriend’s gaze, a sure sign that Kara was hovering just slightly off the ground. It was a new habit lately, as Kara no longer cared about hiding the natural way her body tended to express delight or enthusiasm. “I’m Kara Zor-El Danvers, the mighty and famous Supergirl, and I just can’t keep track of all the amazing things going on in my life enough to tell my girlfriend that I’m leading the mother fucking Pride parade. How silly of me.” Sam was proud of how good her mocking Kara voice had gotten, and Kara’s eyes narrowed as the rest of her face began to form the tell-tale signs of her signature pout.

“Saaaaaaaaaaaam. I only found out this morning! And then you lured me into the shower, and then I was excited about our makeovers, and …” She shrugged, and it was too much. Sam put up her arms in capitulation.

“Fine, fine. You're forgiven.” Moving so much slower than she would if they were in private, Sam placed her hands on Kara’s cheeks, gently nudging her back on the ground as she pulled her in for a brief but warm kiss. “I’m proud of you, babe.” Kara’s looked pleasantly surprised by this kiss, then grinned and took Sam’s hand as they started walking again. Sam kept the frown off her face as she swallowed the question she wanted to ask.

Should Lena and I join you in the parade?

Instead, she suggested, “You should have Winn make you a fancy ass rainbow cape.” She could feel Kara’s feet threatening to leave the ground again, as the blonde literally squealed, struggling to keep her voice down. Sam couldn’t help but notice the onlookers, most of whom immediately recognized Kara, even with her glasses on. It’s the red and blue, Sam scoffed internally. Fortunately, no one tried to interfere with their privacy. Kara was obviously plenty aware of the attention she drew in public these days, and Sam was impressed with how well she was holding up to it. The little grin she always flashed to little girls who looked at her with such awe as they passed her in the streets was especially endearing.

They continued to stroll towards their destination, and Kara leaned in, talking low and soft against Sam’s jaw. “You’re brilliant, you know that?” sent a thrill down Sam’s spine. Then Kara hummed thoughtfully. “Maybe the bisexual pride flag would be a more appropriate cape though?” Sam glanced over at her girlfriend, who looked more than a little bashful as she weighed her options. “I mean, I know I’m very publicly in a relationship with a woman, and somewhat less publicly in a relationship with another woman, but I’m still pansexual. Mostly. Plus, bisexual erasure, you know?”

Sam raised an eyebrow, chuckling happily. “I don’t know if the pink, purple, and blue would go as
well with your normal colour scheme as the rainbow flag would, plus it’s more inclusive and symbolic of pride generally. But you do you, baby girl. You should be super proud of your super bi self.” She reached out and opened the door for Kara, who kissed her cheek on the way into Kaziah’s building.

Sam grinned, then surveyed the interior of the building. The coast was clear. “Race you up the stairs, Supergirl,” she whispered in Kara’s ear, provocatively. And then she was off.

“Wellcome to my home, Kara Zor-El Danvers.” Ziah hugged Kara warmly as they entered the spartan apartment. It was her first time here, and it was sort of exactly how she imagined it would look. Everything was stark, clean surfaces and crisp lines, with a lot of open, soft shades of blues and white. It was gorgeous in its own way, and Kara could feel Kaziah’s presence throughout.

“Ah! I’m so happy to be here!” Kara was genuinely thrilled, and she didn’t’-’t bother trying to pretend otherwise. The hints of a small smile danced at the edges of Ziah’s lips as she welcomed her two friends into her home. “I’m so excited, but also like stupid nervous about this.” She glanced back at Sam, who was watching her with a wry grin. She had been so supportive of Kara’s decision to chop all her hair off and jumped at the chance to join her on this journey, but it still felt just a little bit scary. Kara had never worn her hair short before.

A stab of guilt shot through her heart with a brief thought about who wasn’t standing there beside Sam. Kara shoved that deep down inside, summoning her nervous enthusiasm back to the forefront. Today was about fun and new beginnings. Sam rubbed a hand along the small of Kara’s back, as if sensing the momentary lapse in Kara’s sunny disposition.

“I am quite honoured that the heroes of National City thought of me for all their hair styling needs.” Ziah’s voice was as seemingly robotic as ever, but Kara did a double take anyway. It sure sounded like she could have been snarking. But the moment passed as they followed her into the living room of the spacious apartment. She had already set up a nice comfy office chair for the occasion, along with a full-length mirror set up against the wall. “Did you bring everything?” she asked Sam, while she gestured to Kara to have a seat.

“I did indeed,” Sam assured as she began pulling out the portable red sun lamp out of her bag. “Do you have like a standing lamp I can clamp it to or?” She glanced around. “I mean I can hold it over Kara’s head the entire time, but that would be a pain in the ass, you know?”

As Kaziah assured her that she had a tall enough shelf for them to attach the lamp to, Kara gasped, interrupting them as they set up the lamp that would temporarily make Kara’s hair vulnerable. It was already on when Sam knelt at superspeed, taking Kara’s hands in her own as they met eyes. “Babe, what is it?”

“I didn’t even think about it—I was too focused on myself,” Kara scolded herself. “The red sun lamp doesn’t do anything to you. How are we going to cut your hair?” Sam exhaled before chuckling.

“Way to freak me out, dum dum.” Kara’s nose crinkled. Sam seemed as excited about her own makeover as she was supportive about Kara’s—of course Kara would be worried about their complete lack of any tools capable of actually cutting Sam’s indestructible locks. Sam pushed herself up off Kara’s knees and reached into her bag. “We’ve got it covered.”

“Yes,” Kaziah confirmed. “Ms. Luthor and I were able to forge some spare nth metal into a workable set of sheers. They will be perfectly sufficient for me to cut Samantha’s hair in the style
she has described to me.” Kaziah hummed. “I would not recommend them for your hair under the red sun lamp however, even given how supremely deft my hands are.” Sam snorted at this, and Kara shot her a scandalized look as her overactive imagination took her brain straight into hazy moving pictures of Kaziah and Sam’s past exploits. Still, it was only a momentary distraction from the implications of what Kaziah had said.

Lena had obtained some of the rarest and most valuable substance on the planet and shaped it into a pair of scissors just so Sam could get a haircut. Kara’s whole body flooded with love and affection for this beautiful, complicated woman. Rao, I love her so much. She is just so ... good. Tears threatened to form under her eyelids. Everything in her was at war, conflicted about Lena. She had no idea how to reconcile the two sides of her. How can a person be capable of this, but also that? An image of Lillian’s lifeless corpse flashed through her mind unbidden.

As if sensing the discomfort growing between the Kryptonians, Kaziah placed a hand gently into Kara’s hair. “So, what would you like to do with this, Ms. Danvers?” Kara felt her cheeks immediately warm as her nerves blossomed again.

“I told you, it’s Kara. And I … umm, well I was thinking that… do you think it would look good if …” Kara’s voice drifted off. She gazed at Sam pleadingly for help, feeling so unsure of herself. Her girlfriend simply pursed her lips and shot her an eyebrow, as if to say ‘you know what you want, don’t overthink it.’ So she didn’t. Kara whipped out her phone as she began to ramble again. “I know this isn’t real and that real hair might not actually work like this but she’s just so darn cool and inspirational and I want to project this sort of cool, edgy confidence and I was hoping you could find a way to make me look like this…” Ziah took the phone, analyzing the image displayed there.

It was the cover art of Captain Marvel #1, with the eponymous hero posed in a wide legged stance, arms crossed in front of her with a fist meeting a hand, smirking in front of an epic background filled with the surface of a nearby planet and a fleet of Avengers space fighters. Her hair was radically short and styled in a windswept way that almost looked spikey because of the art design. Kara had never been very big into comic books until Winn introduced her to Carol Danvers. Between the last name, the colour scheme, and the power set, Kara had been instantly drawn to her. She had always wished she was brave enough to wear her hair that short—Rao knew it would make flying easier. And Lena had always sensed her unspoken desire; Kara was sure that was why the brunette had been subtly hinting about Kara cutting her hair off for a while now.

And her she was, brave enough to finally do it. But not brave enough to ask Lena to be by her side. That would require her to deal with her feelings, after all.

“Can work with this,” Kaziah assured her. “Are you ready?” Kara looked back at her through the mirror and nodded enthusiastically. She’d been under the red sun lamp for several minutes now, and it was such a weird feeling. Her head felt human—slow and dulled and quiet—while most of the rest of her felt normal. She let out a shaky breath as the first long golden lock fell into her lap with a loud snip. Sam grinned brightly at her, flashing a thumbs up. Ziah worked quickly but methodically. It felt so weird, in that it didn’t really feel like anything. Her head just slowly became less and less heavy. Before long, Kaziah had switched to her electric clippers, shaving off most of what remained of the sides and back of her hair. Kara refused to look in the mirror, but she
could feel her anticipation building.

“Kara?” There was a hand on hers, not Sam’s. “I understand if you don’t want to open your eyes yet, but I just need to lead you over to the sink to wash your hair before I finish up.” Kara grinned and nodded, allowing Ziah to lead her by the hand. As she left the warmth of the lamp, her senses slowly returned to her. Ziah’s hands were soft, but strong and skilled, as she rinsed the stray hairs from Kara’s heads, and she quite enjoyed the sensation.

“You have lovely hands,” Kara complimented, then winced at how sultry her tone might have accidentally sounded. “I hope that’s not weird to say!”

Her hearing had returned well enough that Kaziah’s response came in loud and clear through the towel she had over Kara’s head. “Certainly not, Kara. I’m pleased to know that I calculated the correct amount of pressure and movements to provide a pleasurable experience. Certainly, pleasure is not my primary purpose at the moment, but—” she paused just slightly, and if Kara didn’t know better she would swear it was for comedic effect, “—who says we cannot have a little fun?” Kara giggled as Ziah set the towel aside, briefly locking eyes with the Coluan before she shut them again and walked with her back to the chair and the heat of the red sun lamp. Then her magic hands were back on Kara’s scalp, teasing with the remaining hair there as she went back in with her scissors.

A few more minutes passed, then Sam’s voice came from beside her. “I can’t believe how amazing it looks, babe.” A pause. “I mean, obviously I can believe it, since I’m looking at it, and—” Ziah’s hands were tugging at Kara’s hair, styling it this way and that, “—besides, we all knew you’d look gorgeous no matter how you did your hair.”

Kara smirked. “Now who’s rambling?” She couldn’t feel Kaziah’s hands anymore, so she raised a quick eyebrow in question. A habit she had picked up from … “Can I look?” she asked excitedly.

She felt the sun lamp turn off, then some brushing around her shoulders, before she heard a firm, “Go for it,” from behind her. Kara felt a little embarrassed at the shrill shriek that escaped her lips, but she couldn’t help it.

“I look **SO good**!!” Her head felt so light and airy, and while it wasn’t exactly like the image she had in mind, it was absolutely perfect. Equal parts Ellen DeGeneres and Ruby Rose, and *all* Captain Marvel. She turned to smile brightly at Sam and Kaziah and realized she was floating again. In an instant, she was hugging Ziah. “Thank you thank you thank you!”

The Coluan returned her embrace warmly. “It was my pleasure, Kara. Sincerely. I am glad you are happy with it.”

Kara zipped over to Sam. “You really like it?”

Sam ran a hand over the shaved hair above her ear, sliding around to rest at the back of Kara’s head. Warm brown eyes met nervous blue ones. “I’d almost love it just for the expression it brought to your face just now, Blondie. But I also, you know, like it like it. You look so hot.” She bit her lip, just enough to emphasize the point, and Kara wasn’t sure if it was intentional or not.

“Do you think she’ll like it?” The words spilled out of her mouth before she had time to think about them, and her eyes went wide as she realized what she had just asked. But Sam didn’t seem surprised. If anything, her eyes were filled with that same knowing look, all warm and understanding. She wrapped her other arm around Kara’s neck, linking her hands behind Kara’s head.
“I know she’ll love it, whenever you’re ready.” Kara did tear up this time, but she quickly blinked
the moisture away. She didn’t look away from Sam though, holding her gaze as she wrestled with
her emotions yet again. Kara leaned her forehead in against Sam’s, holding her for a moment
longer. I don’t know how much longer I can keep avoiding this.

But it would be at least a bit longer. Kara kissed her girlfriend warmly on the forehead, then
grabbed her and pushed her gently towards the chair. “Your turn!”

They left Kaziah’s place less than an hour later. Sam’s hair wasn’t as drastically short as Kara’s,
but it was firmly off of her shoulders now. Still nice and wavy, but mostly back down to her dark
brown roots, with only a hint of her honey accents in her long bangs. As great as she was sure she
looked, Sam had eyes only for Kara.

She was curious if people would be able to recognize their hero now. She had a bet with Lena that
they would make it all the way back to the DEO without the looks that Kara always got out in
public these days. Sam’s heart hurt that Kara hadn’t invited Lena along for this. But Kara hadn’t
exactly been on speaking terms with Lena since the incident with Lillian.

Kara had been the one to call J’onn, once Sam had gotten her away from the kryptonite and into
the sun. Her arm had begun to heal from that grisly injury, almost immediately, but it took several
hours—and a good amount of pain—for it to heal fully. While Kara explained the situation to
J’onn, Sam had returned to the basement to check on Lena.

She hadn’t moved from where she had been seated on the concrete floor, the stains from Kara’s
blood beginning to dry in front of her. Lena’s cold green eyes were locked on the still form that
had once been her mother. Sam didn’t know if she’d ever be able to forget how Lena had looked
at that moment. She was so still, hunched over and fragile in a way that Lena Luthor never was.
She was like a shell of herself.

Sam had knelt in front of her, trying to catch her gaze, but Lena’s eyes refused to leave her mother.
“Lena. Babe, come on. You don’t have to stay here. The DEO is on their way.” Lena didn’t
respond, didn’t even seem to register her presence. So, Sam sat there with her, hands resting on
Lena’s in her lap.

After several minutes, Lena whispered, “I thought I would feel … I don’t know. Something.”

“Oh, Lee.” Sam cupped her hand around Lena’s jaw, and Lena leaned into it, finally seeming to
realize her girlfriend was there with her. It was haunting how empty Lena’s eyes looked as she met
Sam’s. Then she crumpled into Sam’s arms. The DEO arrived nearly two hours later—J’onn had
flown to the DEO base in Seattle and led a team from there. Once Lena had stopped crying, Sam
had set about destroying the remaining kryptonite in the compound. Lena didn’t move, and
apparently neither did Kara.

Sam found her seated at the edge of the lake, and it was clear that she had been crying. She hadn’t
been interested in talking either. At the time, Sam had assumed she was avoiding the Cadmus base
because of the kryptonite, but in hindsight, she was quite sure Kara had been avoiding Lena and
Sam.

J’onn had been furious. Sam wouldn’t let him anywhere near Lena—she had been through
enough. But he made sure that Supergirl and Power Girl knew how he felt about an unauthorized
mission that had resulted in the death of an enemy combatant. A human enemy combatant.
“Just promise me that Lena wasn’t the one who did this.”

“No,” Sam had responded, immediately. “It was me.”

“That’s something at least. I don’t think we could’ve protected her. A civilian. Killing her mother. While accompanied by two superheroes, one of whom is famously her girlfriend.” J’onn had growled the words at them. She didn’t know if she’d ever seen him so angry.

Ultimately, the DEO had covered the whole thing up. A DEO consultant with insider knowledge on Cadmus had worked with Supergirl and Power Girl on a highly covert mission that was so time sensitive they couldn’t make anyone else aware of it. They had been ambushed with kryptonite stolen from the DEO’s own stores, they had fought back, and had barely escaped with their lives. In doing so, they had to use lethal force to bring Lillian Luthor down.

She and Kara had been on unofficial suspension since then, but it wasn’t like the DEO could stop either of them from saving lives, even if it wanted to. But nothing had been the same between the three women since that day. What Sam didn’t understand was why Kara had been so quick to forgive her but had been stilted and cold towards Lena for weeks now.

She’d slept by herself at the loft the first few nights, but she had been staying with Sam and Ruby ever since. Even when Sam slept over at the penthouse with Lena, Kara stayed at the townhome with Ruby. Sam felt as though she was the only one trying to heal this rift, despite being the only one who didn’t seem to understand what was going on. She knew Kara had a thing about killing, but as far as Sam was concerned, they did the right thing. And there was no question about it. Lillian was a menace, and a direct threat to all three of them. To Ruby. To aliens everywhere. She also knew that Lena felt the same way, and yet, she couldn’t convince her to talk to Kara. Sam couldn’t make heads or tails of it. Lena had rebounded admirably, and she wasn’t cold or closed off like after the Reign situation had resolved itself. Lena seemed to believe that she deserved the cold shoulder. She just … refused to push Kara.

Try as she might, Sam couldn’t convince either of her loves to talk to the other. She hated it. She could see how much it hurt them both being separated from each other, but it was like there was this insurmountable chasm between them.

“Blondie?” She pulled Kara to a stop, about a block away from the DEO. Kara searched her with curious eyes. “When are you going to let Lena back in? I’m not stupid—I can see how much this is hurting you both. I can see how much you miss her.” Kara’s face fell, and she averted her gaze. She exhaled loudly, her whole body slumping.

“Sam … I … there’s nothing to fix, okay?” _Great, more denial._ “Lena and I are fine. I’m not avoiding her. There’s nothing to miss.”

Sam narrowed her eyes. “You haven’t slept in the same bed since we … since Lillian. You can both keep pretending like nothing is wrong, but don’t lie to me, Kara. It’s me. It’s us.”

Kara released her hand. “Just … leave it alone, okay? I’m not ready… I can’t.” Her eyes were brimming with tears, but her jaw was set in determination. “I just can’t.” Kara turned and flew away, knowing Sam couldn’t follow. Not in public. Not after Kara had just drawn attention to them. She walked the rest of the way to the DEO in stony silence, pondering the costs of doing what was right. Ending Lillian had been necessary. Sam just hadn’t realized that it might come between her girls.

She just hoped it wasn’t forever. It couldn’t be.
Found Family

Chapter Summary

Don’t be too hard on Kara! I love Lena Luthor an insane amount, so I get it. But I hope everyone will give our hero the benefit of the doubt, and try not to jump on her so much. She is struggling in ways that I haven’t fully fleshed out yet, and I promise we’ll get there.

Also, I am sorry for all the feels.

“Credit where credit is due, Agent Danvers, I am genuinely impressed that you have embraced the vegan lifestyle.” Lena lifted her voice just enough that Alex could hear her over the running water.

“Well, let’s not hand out too much credit there, Li’l Luthor.” Maggie chided. “There’s no lifestyle involved for Alex, but she’s trying.” Alex turned her head and rolled her eyes before shutting off the water and sliding the remaining plate into the dishwasher.

“It’s a hell of a lot more progress than I’ve gotten from my Danvers.” Lena’s heart ached as she said it, but she kept her pain off her face. Or she thought she had.

“Hey.” Alex’s hand was on her shoulder as she came around into the living room where Maggie and Lena were already seated, Gertrude resting comfortably against Maggie’s thigh. “She’ll come around eventually. She loves you.” Lena met her gaze and couldn’t hide the hurt in her eyes.

Alex stopped in her path around the couch towards Maggie and instead settled in next to Lena.

“We indulged in plenty of comfort food in Spain, Danvers, and Lena doesn’t process her feelings through her stomach like you and your sister.”

Lena did not have any interest in wallowing right then, so she quickly deflected. “Yes, tell me about Spain. Was Barcelona everything you imagined?”

Alex turned to her with an incredulous look. “I’m sorry. First of all, Maggie already told you about Barcelona.” Lena winced. “Second, I come home to find out that you led my sister on a secret solo mission to kill your mother and she’s barely said two words to you since then, and you what?—” her face scrunch up as she gestured wildly, “—think we’re just gonna casually discuss honeymoon adventures?”

“Alex,” Maggie cautioned, but Lena knew Alex had a point. She had just hoped maybe … honestly, Lena couldn’t pretend to know what she hoped, or what she wanted. She was of two minds. She felt like she had been of two minds ever since that day.

“No, Maggie, come on!” Alex’s tone was firm but not aggressive. Her shoulder brushed against Lena’s as she spoke. “We traded shallow stories and avoided the elephant in the room all through dinner, but—” Alex caught Lena’s gaze with a fiery look in her eyes, “—Lena, this is a big fucking deal, and we need to talk about it. You’re hurting. Kara’s hurting. You’re telling me you wanted to come have dinner with us—without Kara—because you wanted to hear how our trip was?”
Alex gave her that look, the one she and Kara and Eliza had all somehow perfected. It was a look of pure empathy, that asked 'come on now, sweetie, don’t you want to be honest with yourself right now?'

“Alex.” Lena sighed. “It just … hurts, you know? I don’t even know where to start with this.” Alex put an arm around her, pulling her into the warmth of her body. She’d never been quite this affectionate with Lena before, and she wondered what had changed for Alex. It was surprisingly nice.

“Hey. It’s okay,” Alex assured her. Maggie glanced back and forth between Lena and Alex with an odd look on her face. Perhaps she was also surprised by Alex’s behaviour, only pleasantly so. “We just want to understand what’s going on. Kara won’t talk to me about what happened, which is weird enough in and of itself. But the fact that she insists nothing is wrong, despite all evidence to the contrary—despite everything J’onn and Sam have told me about what happened—that’s never happened, Lena.”

Lena pulled away just enough so that she could look up into Alex’s eyes, searching. She found only sincerity there, mixed in with a healthy amount of concern and confusion. “Kara hasn’t talked to you?” Even the thought of it was shocking to Lena. It made sense that Kara wouldn’t disturb the honeymoon, but normally, Kara would have insisted on a Danvers sisters night the very first night Alex was back in the country, hoping to discuss absolutely everything.

“Yeah, no. That’s my point.”

Maggie added, “And between the way you and her are both moping around, it seems pretty clear that there’s something deeper here than shit going sideways in an ill-advised fight with your mom.”

“Not to mention that Sam’s getting pretty damn exasperated by the lack of communication between you two. It’s obvious she knows what’s going on, but she loves you both, so she won’t talk to us.”

“It’s a clusterfuck, and Danvers and I are already tired of it after only a couple of days. I have no idea how you’ve done this for two weeks.” Lena could hear the strain in Maggie’s voice, the frustration. “So … why are you and Li’ll Danvers fighting? What happened out there?”

Lena fought the heat behind her eyes. She’d done enough crying already. She knew the risks, and she did the right thing. The only thing. Right? “We’re not fighting,” she insisted.

“Did you break up?” Alex’s voice was soft, fearful almost. As if the thought was unfathomable.

“No.” The question did nothing to calm Lena’s nerves. “Of course not. But …” In some way, Lena did feel like maybe she had lost Kara. Or that was what the dark voice in the back of her mind wanted her to think.

“Hey. Seriously, kiddo, what’s going on? No judgment. We’re here for you.” Maggie and Alex both looked worried now. Lena took a deep breath, meeting Maggie’s gaze, then Alex’s.

“We’re not fighting. We just … don’t see eye to eye on what happened.” Lena tossed back the rest of the scotch in her glass. “I guess I’ll start at the beginning. Maggs?” She held out the empty glass to finish the question, and Maggie didn’t say anything, instead responding by getting up and taking the glass. Her source of warmth suddenly gone, Gertrude stretched languidly, then made her way over to Lena’s side. She put a paw on Lena’s thigh, as if considering climbing across her lap to get to Alex. She looked back and forth between the two women, as if considering her
options, before turning in a circle and settling down against Lena.

Lena felt something shift inside her. Maybe it had been building all night, or maybe she was just in a fragile emotional state. But a firm sense of belonging had suddenly settled deep in her gut. Being here with Maggie and Alex, by herself. Having Alex come sit beside her and actively try to comfort her. The smallest but most resounding vote of confidence was Gertrude. The tiny creature had previously been so frightened by Lena, but had in this moment chosen to sit beside her rather than her nearby Mama. And silly as it may have been, that meant something dear to Lena.

Maggie handed her the refilled glass of scotch, scowling at Gertrude before resuming her seat. “Looks like you’ve finally made it, Li’l Luthor.”

“Looks like I have,” Lena repeated softly, then she steeled herself for storytime “So, I guess you can imagine that the day after your wedding was a little hectic around here.” Alex’s eyes went wide, but Maggie chuckled. Lena put a steadying hand on Alex’s knee, just for a second. “It meant a lot to Kara that you didn’t come rushing back, by the way. I know that must’ve been hard for you.”

“I had to threaten her with divorce,” Maggie snarked. Lena had no idea if she was joking or not, but she wouldn’t be surprised either way.

“That first day was about supporting Kara, whatever she needed,” Lena explained. ”But I knew. From the minute I saw that video, I knew that I was going to have to do something about my mother.”

“Why not work with the DEO?” Alex’s question was quiet but incisive. It was a fair question, and Lena was certain they wouldn't like her answer.

“Mother made it personal.” Lena took a sip of scotch. “She’d known Kara’s secret for well over a year. She’d known that we were together for almost as long. But her previous actions against Supergirl were either part of her larger anti-alien agenda or were meant to come after me. To try to bring me into the fold. This video signaled that something had changed, fundamentally, with her priorities, and I knew that we weren’t safe anymore. Nothing was safe anymore.”

“You thought you were safe before?” Maggie gasped. “She kidnapped you twice. Kara once. She killed Jeremia—”

“Maggie, I know,” Lena cut her off. “We weren’t safe before, but it was … it was like a cold war, mostly. Her actions were twisted and often violent, but when it came to me—and even to some extent to Kara—she was almost playful in her own deranged way.” Lena shot a sympathetic look towards Alex. “And I don’t mean to make light of what she did to your father, Alex. You know I don’t.”

Alex nodded. The hurt in her eyes was clear, but she didn’t pull away from Lena at all. “I get what you’re saying. Even what she did with Dad—it was a chess move for her. And a last minute, retreating move at that. This video wasn’t that.”

“No, it wasn’t. She was done playing games.” Lena took a deep breath. “She said it was because she gave up on me. Despite everything, I think she never gave up on the idea that I would come around eventually. That I had some Luthor destiny to fulfill with her and Cadmus. After our last encounter, that ceased to be the case. She finally realized, in her own twisted way, that Kara is my family. Not her. And at that point, it wasn’t about Cadmus anymore. It wasn’t about human supremacy. She released whatever loose grasp on sanity she had, and her sole goal became spite. She just wanted to lash out at us, in all her vindictiveness.”
“So, why expose Kara like that? Why not just try to kill you both?”

Lena responded to Maggie’s questioning gaze with a soft shake of her head. “She wanted us to suffer. And Kara responded so beautifully to being outed like that.” Lena could feel the emotion building in her chest, hot and powerful. “I was so proud of her. But I knew that would only push my mother to take more radical steps. And with the eyes of the world now focused so tightly on us, I knew it was only a matter of time before someone found out about—”

“Sam,” Maggie finished.

“And Ruby,” Alex added, the overwhelming concern in her voice making it very clear she understood the gravity of what Lena had been contemplating.

“Yes.” Lena remembered that night in bed as the three of them had discussed their family, the future, and the fact that any of them would do whatever it took to protect Ruby. And she had done precisely that, even if Kara was struggling with it. “I spent the next three days scouring the Earth for her. I maybe slept four hours that whole time. I couldn’t—” Lena sighed. “We were all in danger. My family was in danger. And she’s always been my burden, my problem to solve. So, I did.”

“Once you found her, why not bring the DEO in? Why risk going it alone?” Maggie asked.

Lena was petting Gertrude softly as the little one slept comfortably at her side. “I couldn’t risk it.” She glanced over at Alex. “I already talked to J’onn about this, but there was a mole in the DEO. I didn’t know that at the time, and that’s not why I didn’t trust them with this mission. Honestly, if you had been here, I might’ve done things differently. I’m really not sure.” She looked back towards Maggie. “There was too much up in the air, and I was working on very little sleep. As far as I was concerned, the only way to be sure my mother didn’t know we were coming was to keep it between me, Kara, and Sam. I couldn’t risk her escaping again.”

“You went there with the full intention of killing her.” It wasn’t a question. Alex’s look was one of pure understanding and recognition.

“Of course I did.”

Maggie cleared her throat, rather pointedly. “Hello, cop here. Can we not go around admitting intent to murder, please?”

“Detective or not, Maggie, you’re one of my best friends, and I trust you enough not to lie to you. I realize that this may not line up with the letter of the law as you’ve sworn to uphold it, but I knew what I had to do. I’m sorry if that’s complicated or if you disagree with the morality of my decision. Kara did too, but that didn’t stop me either. Lillian had escaped too many times, and each time she did, someone else died. She had evaded the NCPD, the FBI, and the DEO. Not to mention Supergirl herself. Last time, Jeremiah died. It had to end, Maggie.”

The shorter woman sighed, still visibly uncomfortable, probably more with Lena’s certainty than with the ultimate question of whether killing Lillian was the right thing to do. Deep down, Lena thought Maggie got it. Lena was also cognizant of the continuing warmth of Alex’s presence, which she continued to find unexpectedly comforting. In some ways, she and Kara were mirrors of Alex and Maggie. One partner who often operated out of the shadows and understood that sometimes what was right was neither pretty nor easy, and the other a publicly visible enforcer of an identifiable, often black-and-white code. And as she locked eyes with the elder Danvers sister, Lena knew that Alex saw her in that moment, and believed in the necessity of what she had done.
“Lena, what happened when you got there?” Lena exhaled, almost painfully, at Alex’s blunt question, and her eyes widened in surprise.

“Kara really hasn’t talked to you about any of this?” A cloud passed over Alex’s face as she shook her head. This wasn’t like Kara at all. She isn’t talking to me. I know she isn’t talking to Sam about any of this. If she isn’t talking to Alex … It was a truly disconcerting thought. Lena felt helpless. Maybe if she could make Alex understand, she could talk to her sister. Get through to her. Help her process whatever it was that she’s struggling with. There was more here than she understood. It was deeper than Kara’s moral code.

*Kara sees what I see. That I have some of that Luthor darkness in me after all. That I’m capable of terrible things, when necessary. … And maybe she knows that she deserves someone better than that. Better than me.*

Lena shook her head, warding off her insecurities lest they begin to spiral. She looked at Alex as she answered the question. “Lillian was prepared. I don’t think she expected us, but she was ready. She had kryptonite.” Alex’s brow furrowed as her whole body tightened. She was every bit as furious as Lena had been. “The DEO told me that all the kryptonite I loaned them for the fight against Reign had been accounted for and returned. They were wrong.”

“Mother fucker.” Alex pushed off the couch, stalking towards the wall but stopping short of throwing a punch. She paced behind the couch, paced back, and then sat back down.

Lena put a hand on Alex’s knee again. “I already unleashed my fury on J’onn. No need to pile on—he understands, and he’s well aware of what it could’ve cost us. I don’t know what the status of his internal investigation is right now, but I’m sure he could use your help.”

Maggie caught her eye. “Sam was there too, though, right?” Lena understood her question immediately—they were all well-aware of Sam’s much higher tolerance for kryptonite in any form.

“Thank Rao and any other gods out there that she was.” Lena’s chest tightened again thinking of what might’ve been if Sam was a half-second slower. “We cornered Lillian in a large underground bunker area, but she caught us by surprise with a kryptonite dart.” Alex tensed beside her. “Sam jumped in front of Kara, but there was enough liquid kryptonite in the dart to kill Kara.” Alex’s hand was a tight fist now, knuckles going white.

“Look I get it. If someone tried to kill Alex, I’d be real tempted to murder them too.” Maggie looked down, before adding softly, “Especially if it was my asshole father.”

“Even then, Kara tried to talk me down from it. Lillian had a war suit and two kryptonite-powered robots. Kara and Sam took the robots, and I went after my mother. I managed to damage her helmet right away, exposing her head, but before I could take the shot, Kara interfered. Tried to convince me to take her in. She and Lillian fought, but the kryptonite exposure weakened her.” Lena’s voice cracked, and she paused, trying to regain her composure. "That was when Mother pulled out a retractable kryptonite blade.”

Lena’s voice caught in her throat again, and a tear escaped down onto her cheek, followed shortly by another, and another. She felt Alex’s hand on her bicep, rubbing soothingly, but Lena couldn’t look at either of them. She stared straight ahead. “I was weak. I … wanted to believe I could be better. I could live up to what Kara saw when she looked at me.” *Past tense.* “I could’ve killed Lillian in that moment, ended it, but instead, I tried only to disarm her before she could hurt Kara. I aimed at the blade, when I should’ve gone for her head. And I made everything worse.”
She couldn’t stop the tears now. Maggie moved closer, as Alex continued trying to comfort her. Lena still couldn’t face either of them. She drew in a deep, steadying breath, then let it out. “I tried to be something I’m not, and K-Kara suffered for it. The blade shattered, embedding shards of kryptonite all over her torso and arms. One nearly severed her forearm. Sam and I did what we could for her, but she was in so much pain. If I had just taken the shot …” Lena bit her lip, not hard enough to draw blood—just enough to focus her, to stave off the sobs that wanted to take her. “Sam’s cowl was in tatters, and Lillian saw her face.”

Maggie gasped, and Lena felt Gertrude’s head jerk up at the loud noise to her right. “Lillian tried to escape, vowing to end our happiness. Everything flashed through my mind then—my childhood, all the abuse, the psychological torment, the kidnappings, everything she’s done or tried to do to Kara—and I finally committed to the task I had intended from the beginning. But that fucking suit was too fast. I only grazed the side of her head, and I knew I couldn’t end it. So I pled with Sam to do it.”

“And she did,” Alex finished. Lena nodded, then closed her eyes. She focused on her breathing, willing her body to calm down. There hadn’t been a night since that she hadn’t had nightmares about that bunker. On nights when Sam was there, it was a little easier. Her warmth and steady breathing helped drive the sights and sounds of Kara’s agony away. But she couldn’t be there every night. And Kara’s continuing absence only confirmed what Lena knew to be the truth about herself.

“Lena, that’s … look, I’ve got qualms about a couple of supers and a billionaire taking it upon themselves to find justice outside the legal system, but … I can’t say you didn’t do the right thing. I can’t say I would’ve done anything different in your shoes. Hell, I don’t know if I could’ve done it, but I know I would’ve wanted to. And I know the world is a better place without her in it.”

She managed to steal a glance at Maggie, and there was nothing but kindness and sympathy in her warm brown eyes. “Thanks, Maggs. I just wish Kara saw it that way.”

“That’s the part I’m still not getting,” Alex mused. “This doesn’t sound like Kara. I mean, yeah, she feels strongly about killing, and she believes in the best of everyone, even monsters like Lillian and Rhea. But … you were in an impossible situation, and she loves you. Even if she disagrees with your choice, I don’t understand why she would shut you out like this. Things were tricky between us when I killed Astra, but it wasn’t like this. What am I missing here, Lena?”

“And why is she only treating you this way, when Sam is the one who did the deed?” Maggie pondered, clearly confused by Kara’s behaviour. Because she and Alex weren’t seeing the whole picture. And if Lena explained it to them, wouldn’t they react the same as Kara?

Keeping secrets wouldn’t get her anywhere. She had to own what she did. Even if Sam was the only one who understood, Lena knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that she did what she had to do. Whether it was right was too simplistic a question, and irrelevant on top of that. Right or wrong, it was necessary. Lena did what she had to do to protect her family, and she wasn’t about to start hiding from that.

“This wasn’t like Astra. And it isn’t just that we killed her.” Lena couldn’t keep sitting there, didn’t want to feel the pain when her friends inevitably recoiled from her. Stroking Gertrude’s head one last time, she pushed off the couch, picking up and taking her glass with her. She poured herself another drink, then came to a halt in front of the windows. Again, she felt as though she couldn’t face Maggie and Alex if she wanted to get all this out.

“I planned this. With Astra, you made a split-second decision in the heat of the moment. In battle. To save J’onn’s life. I knew from the moment I saw that video that I was going to kill her.
Maybe that makes me just like her or Lex—” *it does*, Lena thought to herself, “—but I don’t feel any guilt about that choice. It had to be done. It wasn’t a split-second decision, but it was every bit the same larger question as with Astra. I know Kara can’t see that, but … it was her or them. Ultimately, that’s what it would’ve come down to. So, I put a plan into motion, and I did what I had to do to carry it out.”

Alex’s voice came from the couch, and Lena was grateful that she was respecting Lena’s unspoken request for space. “Sweetie, I get that it’s a little different, and yeah, premeditation is a more complex issue. You and I both know that Kara struggles with the morality of these things, with questions of life and death, more than the rest of us do. She feels that she has to be better, has to be that symbol, and it is difficult for her to see the nuance, the darker necessities of fighting against evil on a regular basis. But that’s part of what we love about her, right? She forgave me for Astra; she’ll forgive you, too. Just give her time.”

Lena wanted to believe her. She couldn’t imagine a life without Kara. Not anymore. Kara was a part of her now. But … “I manipulated her, Alex. Both of them. In order to get them to come along with me, to go in without the DEO, I told Kara that we would try to take Lillian in alive. I lied. Because I had to. It was the only way to guarantee that I got to her in time. I needed Kara and Sam to get me there, and I needed them in case Lillian wasn’t there alone. But I knew full well that I was going to kill her, and there was nothing Kara could do to stop me. I was determined to accomplish my goal, and in order to do so, I treated the loves of my life as pawns rather than partners.”

The silence was deafening. Lena took another sip of her glass, steeling herself against the oncoming wrath from one or both of them.

“Jesus, Luthor.” Maggie’s use of that name was like a knife in her back, but not an unjustified one. Lena could hear the smaller woman approach her and she tensed in preparation. Whatever she had expected, it wasn’t Maggie’s arm wrapping around her waist. “Hey.” Lena looked down at her, searching her features in confusion. There was anger in Maggie’s expression, yes, but there was no disgust. No sense that she was going to push Lena away. “You fucked up, Li’l Luthor. But you’re not a monster. I promise.”

Alex’s arm came around her shoulder from the other side, and she took the glass from Lena’s hand, placing on the table before wrapping her in a tight hug. Maggie pulled in closer too. Lena couldn’t take it anymore. She let herself completely fall apart, sobbing into the arms of these women who had become like sisters to her. Alex and Maggie eased her to the floor as delicately as possible, and Lena had no idea how long they stayed like that, huddled together while Lena processed the emotions surging through her body.

Eventually, Lena’s sobs subsided. Maggie’s arms relaxed around her, but Alex continued to hold her tight. As if some unspoken communication passed between her and Alex, Maggie stood up and gave them some space. Then Alex too Lena’s hands, helping her up and leading her back to the couch. “I’m gonna take Gertrude outside,” came Maggie’s soft call, and the dog perked up and hopped down off the couch upon hearing the word ‘outside.’ As they left, Lena tried to wipe her face, still afraid to meet Alex’s gaze.

The DEO agent knelt in front of her, placing a hand on her chin to gently force Lena to look at her. “I’m gonna get real with you, Lena. Okay?” Alex’s voice was firm but kind, and she had that determined Danvers look on her face, making it clear that Lena could only answer that question one way. Lena nodded.

Alex exhaled, putting together her thoughts. “You and I got off to a rocky start. I didn’t trust you,
at all. And not just because of your name. You could’ve been named Lena Thorul for all I cared—you were still this fancy ass, mysterious, powerful billionaire with an inexplicable fascination with my sister. My sister who was a dorky, nothing reporter hiding—very poorly—the fact that she was actually an alien refugee who had seen more tragedy in her young life than anyone should have to. I didn’t trust your motives. And yeah, I’ve got this protective streak when it comes to family, especially my little sister.”

“I hadn’t noticed,” Lena joked, drawing an eye roll and a chuckle from Alex.

“But I think, ultimately, what changed my mind on you is that you have that same protective streak. You’ve been through your own shit, and it’s completely different from what Kara has been through. It’s hard to come from what you come from, even with all the many privileges and advantages you have, and not have some serious darkness inside. But listen, we all do. I do. Maggie does. Sam does. Kara does. We’ve all been through stuff that has forced us to struggle with that darkness, especially in the last couple of years.”

Lena wasn’t sure where Alex was going with this. Sure, everyone struggled with darkness, but Luthor darkness wasn’t the same. It felt a little silly to think that evil could be a genetic condition, but at this point, Lena couldn’t rule it out. Alex’s father had his issues; he made some bad choices that led to awful consequences for himself and his family. But he wasn’t a bad person. He wasn’t a genocidal maniac. Lena was related by blood to one and raised by another. Her darkness was of another magnitude entirely.

“Lena, you made a choice. One that you felt was necessary, and I can’t really disagree with you. But in doing so, you betrayed Kara’s trust. You took away her agency, and you manipulated her into being a part of something she was deeply uncomfortable with. As Maggie so eloquently put it, you fucked up. I get why she’s struggling with this. But …” A fierce resolve shone in Alex’s eyes, and she gripped both of Lena’s knees. “You’re not a bad person. You were in a terrible position, with no good options, and you made a choice. A difficult, horrible choice that hurt one of the two people you love most in this world. That choice had consequences. But you are not a bad person. You did what you felt what you had to in order to protect Kara. And Sam and Ruby. Of all people, I understand being willing to do awful things to protect those you love.”

Alex’s words cut right through her. It was as if the agent had read her mind, repurposing Lena’s own perspective on Jeremiah and turning it against her like a light in the darkness. But still she resisted. “Alex, I’m not … I think you’re being too generous. As bizarre as that sounds.” She swallowed. “You say I have a darkness in me that we all struggle with, that a bad choice doesn’t make me a bad person.” She shook her head. “But it’s more than that. My darkness isn’t …” Lena struggled with how to phrase this, how to make Alex understand that try as hard as she had over the years, Lena knew the truth now. Knew that no matter how hard she tried, she would never be good in the way Kara and Alex and Sam were. She was tainted by her family’s affliction. “Whatever darkness Lex and Lillian have, it is not what normal people face. It is something more, something more awful. More toxic. And I see now that no matter what I do, it is inside me too. I have the capacity for that same evil.”

Alex immediately grabbed Lena’s face in both hands and forced her to meet Alex’s blazing gaze. “No, you don’t.” The words weren’t shouted, but they had all the force of a maelstrom. Alex spoke with certainty and passion. “You are not like them, and I don’t know how to convince you of that, but trust me when I say that Kara could never fall in love with someone like that. I could never accept someone like that into our family. And don’t think I don’t see you for exactly who you are, Lena Luthor. I see you.”

Eyes stinging with a new round of unshed tears, Lena wanted so desperately to believe Alex. But
deep down, the doubt was still there. The fear and loathing, and ... Why else would Kara have pushed me away? She sees it, just like I do. Even if Alex doesn’t.

“Fuck, you aren't gonna make this easy on me, are you?” Alex sounded exasperated, and she stood, moving to sit next to Lena. “If you ever tell Kara I said this, no one will find your body.” Lena turned her head, eyes narrowing as she examined Alex quizzically. “You’re the best thing to ever happen to Kara. I love her, and she’s grown so much since coming to this planet. But she’s just, fucking blossomed since you came into her life. You’ve pushed her and supported her and seen her in ways no one else ever has. In ways even I haven’t. You’ve seen her as a hero in every aspect of her life—you always saw Kara Zor-El, I think, from the very beginning.” Lena was crying again, but her heart was warm now. “You did what you had to do. I don’t love how you went about it, but I would’ve killed Lillian too. I can’t say whether Kara will ever fully understand your decision in the way that you and I do, but I do know that she loves you. Every bit as much as she loves me. You are her partner. Her rock. You are family, Lena Luthor.” Alex smiled softly, and then leaned forward to kiss Lena on the forehead. “Give her time. I promise this will pass. You are who Kara has always known you to be, and I promise she hasn’t forgotten that.”

She sat there, staring into Alex’s eyes. The woman was resolute and accepting. Family. Maybe she is right about me. For the first time since that day, Lena felt some measure of hope inside. Hope that her family wasn’t permanently broken. That Kara wasn’t lost to her forever. That they would heal from this. Together.

Lena nodded, then leaned in to rest her head against Alex’s shoulder. “You know, once upon a time, Lex was a wonderful brother to me.” Alex stiffened for just a moment, then relaxed and slid an arm around Lena. “But I always wanted a sister.”

Alex laughed softly. “Well, we’re not in-laws, not yet anyway. But you’ve got a sister now.”

“Two,” Maggie corrected, and Lena jumped in surprise. She hadn’t heard the detective reenter the apartment, and she had Gertrude in her arms so that there hadn’t been the tell-tale clicking of her little claws against the floor. Maggie and Alex laughed at her, and she glared at them both. “You aren’t so damaged that you’re gonna scare us off, kiddo. Now, I’m finishing off this mint vegan mint chocolate chip ice cream that Alex won’t touch. Please tell me that you will help.”

Lena smiled brightly. “I think I can do that.” As she got up, she shot off a quick text, on a spur of the moment impulse.

[10:04 p.m.] I love you.

Her phone dinged with the response as she and Maggie settled onto the couch with two spoons.

[10:07 p.m.] I love you too.
Conversations with Cat

“So, we’re all agreed that everything is on the record at this point, unless stated otherwise?” Sam glanced over at Kara, who flashed a confident smile at her and then at Lena, who was sitting a bit more stoically on her other side. They all nodded their consent. Each was dressed in their usual work attire. Sam was in a flowy blush-coloured blouse with dark slacks and a matching dark blazer with three-quarters-length sleeves (because it was summer in National City after all). Lena was in a white sleeveless button-up blouse tucked into a form-fitting belted off-white pencil skirt, her makeup perfect as always and her hair in a high and tight ponytail. Kara was in a more business casual outfit, a simple, sleeveless plaid navy dress.

“Alright then, ladies, let’s start with terminology. When I’m talking about your relationship—” Cat cocked an eyebrow, “—relationships?—what words should I be using? Girlfriends? Partners? Help me understand the appropriate language here.”

Kara and Lena began speaking at the same time, then immediately silenced themselves, looking awkwardly at each other before Kara gestured for Lena to continue. Lena flashed her a soft smile, and Sam’s heart warmed at her continuing attempts to get through to Kara. “Relationship, singular, is probably best at this point. While our relationships started separately, they have grown more and more overlapping over time.” Lena shrugged playfully. “No, it’s not exactly simple to describe the various dynamics at play between us, but for the ease of storytelling, it makes sense to refer to ours as a three-person romantic relationship.”

Kara looked a little uncomfortable with the way Lena explained that, which made sense given the current disconnect on one side of their little triangle, but any disagreement definitely wouldn’t look great for this interview. Sam immediately stepped in with a hand on Kara’s thigh and a bright, distracting smile to catch Cat’s attention. “And girlfriends or partners is fine. Personally, I’ve always found the word ‘paramour’ quite romantic.” She winked at Cat playfully, trying hard to sell the picture of a happy throuple.

For the moment, at least, Cat seemed to buy it. As she glanced down, jotting a note to herself, Sam whispered to Kara, sublingually so that only she could hear her, “Kara, remember. Unified front here.” Kara nodded to signal her agreement, then Sam smiled as she intertwined her fingers with those of the woman on either side of her.

Sam wasn’t worried about Lena, who winked at her reassuringly. She’d been doing much better since her dinner with Maggie and Alex, and it had warmed Sam’s heart to hear what Alex had said. Lena was still struggling with her own insecurities and doubts, but more than anything, she just missed Kara. She needed her partner back. Things were improving, but very slowly. At least Kara was talking to Lena now, even if only about shallow things. The problem was that it only made Kara’s avoidance of the deeper conversation that they all knew was inevitable that much more jarring. But Kara still wasn’t ready to admit that something was wrong. And Lena still wouldn’t push her on it. Fortunately, they were finally on decent enough terms that the three of them could risk opening themselves up to the journalistic scrutiny of Cat Grant, who had been pushing Kara for this interview.

So here they were, ready to expose themselves to the world, and proclaim their unique and unusual love for each other. All the while trying to hide the fact that their love was beyond strained at the moment. They needed to get ahead of the rumours.

“Alright then, ladies. Now, I am of course a woman of the world, and polyamory is not exactly
anything new to me. But it is certainly—hmmm—let’s say modern, shall we?”

“Call it what you will, Cat, but love is love, right? That’s the very thing that Kara herself stood for when she led the Pride Parade last week, is it not?” Sam wasn’t pulling any punches here, even if she kept her voice bright and cheerful. Was their relationship style common? No, but it certainly wasn’t some freakish sideshow either.

Lena jumped in. “We’re all fairly private people, Ms. Grant, as I’m sure you can imagine. A billionaire from a tragically infamous family, a single mother, and an alien refugee—we all have our reasons for wanting privacy. But … for people like Kara and myself, that isn’t exactly possible. We live in the public eye, and because of that, those we love are forced to do so as well, to some extent.” She squeezed Sam’s hand, and they shared a warm smile. “Sam didn’t ask for any of this—not that Kara or I did either—but one thing I’ve learned in my life is that true happiness and genuine connection are rare. When you find them, you hold onto them, come what may. I love Kara, and I love Sam. To me, this is a remarkable thing, because I haven’t had much love in my life. But as far as I’m concerned, the fact that all three of us happen to love each other at the same time, or the fact that all three of us happen to identify as cisgender women, is hardly remarkable in the least.”

“But certainly you must realize that the general public doesn’t quite see it that way?” Cat interjected.

“Of course not,” Kara answered, and Sam was pleased to see her glance quickly at Lena with a look of cautious affection. “Unlike Sam and Lena, I am an alien.” Sam stifled a grin at the blatant lie. “I am accustomed to the idea that I will be looked upon as different. A curiosity at best, and a threat at worst. It comes as no surprise to me that our love might be looked upon with varying amounts of interest by the largely heteronormative, two-person, monogamous culture prevalent in modern American society. I do not regret loving my girlfriends. Finding them has been the most astonishingly lucky journey I could’ve ever imagined for myself. I only regret that my own fame might cause them difficulty, simply because our family doesn’t necessarily look like the norm.”

Sam grinned, kissing Kara lightly on the cheek as she finished her answer. Then, as she glanced to her left, she noticed the brief moment in which Lena’s eyes were a bit more watery than usual, but the CEO blinked herself back into her normal façade in an instant. Cat finished another note, then looked straight at Sam. “Ms. Arias. The public is by now fairly knowledgeable about the epic Luthor-Super romance between your partners, but I’m curious how you fit in. First, I’d like you to talk about how all this started.”

Sam’s brow furrowed just slightly, more out of consideration than frustration. She gave thought to her answer, not letting Cat’s watchful eye goad her into a hasty comment. “So, first of all, I do want to push back on your third wheel comment.” She gave Cat a sly grin. “Respectfully, of course. I’m not a third wheel, nor is my relationship with Kara and Lena secondary to what they’ve built together. The bonds the three of us have built together are nuanced and complicated and beautiful, though I do apologize for my failure to fit neatly into the flashy Super-Luthor romance story. I should compliment you on your first interview with Kara on the subject; I found it tremendous.”

Cat smiled at her, but she could see the wheels turning in the crafty journalist’s head. Sam had no intentions of making this easy on her. “Well, I’m always happy to receive praise from a fan,” Cat purred, twisting Sam’s words ever so slightly to her advantage. “Perhaps you could tell us a little about how all this started.”
Lena rubbed Sam’s knee, indicating her desire to tell the first part of the story. Sam grinned and waggled her eyebrows at her girlfriend. “Sam is my oldest friend,” she explained. “We met as young women working up the ranks at LuthorCorp. I was—”

“How interesting,” Cat interrupted. She gestured between the L-Corp executives. “So, you two were actually a thing first, before either of you met our resident superhero?”

“In a word, yes,” Lena answered, hiding any frustration at the interruption. “We were both driven young women in Metropolis. This was—what, Sam?—seven, eight years ago?” Sam nodded. “I was the prodigy heiress trying to prove there was more to me than my name, and Sam was the hardworking single mom who had to fight and scrap for everything. I’d like to say that opposites attract, but Sam will tell you that I had to work really hard to get her attention back then. I think she was hesitant to look past my perceived silver spoon.”

“It got easier once I had seen you naked the first time,” Sam quipped. Cat and Lena chuckled, while Kara turned bright red.

“Well well, I take it then that you two were more than friends?” Cat inquired.

“Yes. We had something of a whirlwind romance that first year. But I blew it,” Lena admitted, and she and Sam shared a meaningful look. “I was deeply in the closet, trying to prove myself in a male-dominated company as the overlooked adopted sister to LuthorCorp’s golden boy. I’m not really interested in getting into it, but my mother strongly disapproved of my sexuality, and I was terrified of what being out might mean for my future. Meanwhile, Sam was an honest-to-goodness adult, trying to make a genuine, worthwhile life for herself and her daughter, and she needed someone who could commit. That wasn’t me, not back then.”

“And yet, I take it you remained friends after the break up? If I’m not mistaken, Ms. Arias, you have remained with L-Corp this entire time, working your way steadily up the ranks until you rose to the level of Chief Financial Officer at the old LuthorCorp—is that right?”

“Yup,” Sam answered. “It was tough for a while, but Lena and I were able to move past our issues, and we became best friends. She’s been my family all these years, practically an aunt to my daughter. And I’d like to think she felt similarly—”

“I certainly did,” Lena confirmed. “The Luthors took me in, raised me, gave me every advantage in life, but I can’t exactly say that they ever loved me. I didn’t have the best concept of what family truly meant until I met Sam.” Sam rubbed Lena’s thigh soothingly. She knew that wasn’t exactly true—Lena had been close to Lex before he went off the deep end, but there was no need to really get into that in this interview. Lena and Lex’s relationship was too complicated for the public to really understand. “And when I was thrust into leadership over the entire company, Sam was the person I confided in. She was the only person I trusted with my fledgling plan to change the name of the company and move our headquarters across the country. And she was the only person I could trust to keep things moving in Metropolis while I set things up here in National City.”

“So, how did Ms. Danvers enter into this dynamic? We all know that you and she became acquainted shortly after your move, but how did that working relationship become a romance, and how did Ms. Arias fit into that?”

Now it was Kara’s turn to speak. “Sam wasn’t really that involved, until after Lena and I had started dating—”

“Well, that’s not exactly true,” Sam demurred. “I was the person Lena called to gush about the
amazing, beautiful, delightful blonde reporter she simply couldn’t get enough of.” Sam flashed them both a shit-eating grin, and Lena rolled her eyes.

“So, Ms. Luthor didn’t tell you about Supergirl’s secret identity?” Cat asked.

“She did not. She would never do that to Kara.” Lena’s pale green eyes were soft with appreciation for the phrasing. Sam’s comment had been as much for Kara as it was for Cat. She needed Kara to remember just how much Lena loved her. How Lena would do anything to protect her.

“Lena had talked about Sam every now and then, but I didn’t meet her until Lena and I had been dating for a few months.” Kara grimaced adorably. “I have to admit, I was terribly intimidated by her at first. She knew Lena better than anyone, better than me. And they were just so comfortable with each other.”

“Was jealousy an issue early on?”

Kara frowned. “I wouldn’t say it was an issue. I haven’t really dated much since I’ve been on Earth; Lena was my first serious relationship. So, the sensation of jealousy was new for me. But I never felt … um, possessive over Lena. The comfort she and Sam shared was obvious to me, and like I said, it was daunting. But Sam was so gorgeous and cool and funny, and it was so easy to just slip into their dynamic, even during that first dinner.”

“Things were a little awkward, for sure, but it was never uncomfortable,” Sam added. “I don’t think any of us quite realized it then, but things just sort of clicked. Things have always been so natural and organic between the three of us, when we don’t get too much in our own heads.” She grinned wickedly. “Which has been difficult for these two, make no mistake.”

“Hardy har,” Kara snarked.

“What do you mean by that?” Cat pushed.

“Well, the concept of polyamory wasn’t new to me,” Sam explained. “I haven’t really ever felt love as deeply as I did with Lena that first time—not until I met Kara—but monogamy has never been something that made sense to me. People can maintain multiple close, intimate friendships, and no one blinks. No one questions the idea that we can love two parents and multiple siblings deeply without any contradiction or jealousy or issue. So why not multiple romantic partners? That idea always seemed obvious to me.”

She met Lena’s eyes, and they both smiled. “Lena always knew that about me, but I don’t think it really mattered much, since she wasn’t looking for anything serious. Not until she met Kara. And Kara … I think she learned some confusing lessons about romance when she came to Earth.” Kara shrugged, smiling softly. “So, when I moved to National City and started to get to know Kara better, I didn’t think twice about the immediate connection I felt with her. It felt natural and lovely and right. But I was well aware that Kara and Lena might not find the concept so easy to grasp, and I certainly wasn’t looking to get in the way of their relationship or hurt either of them.”

Cat swung an extended index finger between Kara and Sam. “So then, this was the instigating factor that changed things?”

Sam chuckled, but left it to Kara to answer, curious how she would explain. “Er, uh, yeah.” Kara bit her lip nervously. “Sam was such a flirt, though she was a perfect gentleman about it. She made it very clear that she never wanted to make me—or Lena—feel uncomfortable. But she’s right, the connection she and I shared felt almost instantaneous once we started getting to know
each other.”

Kara shifted in her seat, her shoulders back a little and her chin raised just slightly. Sam could recognize that she was evoking her Supergirl posture, and she could see where Kara was about to take the conversation. “On Krypton, romance and family bonds were quite a bit different than here on Earth. I explained this a little when we first talked about my relationship with Lena, but monogamy wasn’t exactly the norm in my culture. Many of the great houses entered into two-person marriages for the purposes of strengthening dynasties and maintaining traditions, but marriage wasn’t the same there as it is here. It was a transaction, and it didn’t limit anyone’s ability to pursue love in whatever forms they might find it. In many ways, Kryptonian society was more rigid and traditional than modern American society, but when it came to love, sex, and family, things were much more fluid and nuanced.”

“So then, the idea that you could fall for Sam while still being in love with Lena wasn’t particularly challenging for you then?” Cat was riding a fine line between pushing the conversation forward in a way that was respectful to Kara and her partners, while still digging for all the juicy information her readers were sure to wonder about.

“Not conceptually, no,” Kara answered. “But Lena was my priority. Sam is one of the most remarkable people I’ve ever known, but Lena was the love of my life. I refused to take any action I believed would hurt her. Once I realized how I felt about Sam, Lena and I took the time to really have an open and frank conversation about my feelings and her feelings. Sam was Lena’s family, and I wanted her in my life too—the only question was what that would look like.”

“I could see how great they were together, very early on,” Lena added. “I won’t pretend I didn’t have my concerns at first. I’ve certainly struggled with a good many insecurities throughout my relationship with Kara, but loving someone means wanting them to be as happy as possible. It wasn’t hard to see that Sam and Kara clicked in this beautiful, lovely way. That they had the potential to really increase each other’s happiness. It was just a matter of seeing that their shared happiness didn’t have to detract in any way from my own.”

“You all make it sound so simple,” Cat remarked, the insinuated question unmistakable.

“Nothing about it has been simple,” Sam assured her. “But it works, because we love each other. And because we have always committed to open and honest communication. We don’t keep things from each other.” She met Lena’s eyes, then Kara’s. She wasn’t being subtle in her own implications here, but it wasn’t like Cat would have any idea about her hidden meaning here. “We don’t lie to each other, and we never shy away from uncomfortable or challenging discussions. We’ve all grown so very much since we committed to a full and frank exploration of the connections between us all.”

Cat hummed thoughtfully, writing furiously. After a few seconds she looked back up, her eyes drifting between Lena and Sam. “So then, you and Kara start dating. You’re telling me that didn’t create any sort of antagonism or competition between you two, sharing a girlfriend?”

Lena laughed—and no mere chuckle at that. Sam found the reaction a bit mystifying, given that they couldn’t exactly delve into the whole Reign saga. Be careful, Lee. Cat, for her part, merely raised a curious eyebrow and waited for Lena to explain herself. “There was a lot going on then, and more than a little friction between the three of us, let me assure you. Kara and Sam started dating around the same time that Supergirl was facing off against her most terrifying and powerful foe yet.” Cat’s eyes flashed with recognition, but thankfully, she didn’t immediately push them on the question of Reign. Everything was challenging at the time, and all of us suffered. All of us experienced pain and fear and worry for each other.”
Sam interlaced her fingers with Kara and Lena both, squeezing tightly as Lena continued. “But to answer your specific question, Ms. Grant, no.” Lena shook her head derisively. “There was certainly no competing for Kara’s affection. I love Kara, and I loved seeing the joy that she experienced as she began dating Sam. And I love Sam, though I didn’t quite realize until recently the full extent of those feelings. I never once felt like Sam and Kara’s relationship detracted from mine and Kara’s. There were certainly lessons learned as they grew together, and we all adapted, but it was never antagonistic.”

“And what led you to take that final step?” Cat inquired. “What was the ‘aha’ moment when you realized Sam was more than just a friend for you, too?”

Sam and Lena had prepared for this question beforehand. Obviously, they couldn’t tell that full story without revealing Sam’s secret identity. “We realize this answer is probably pretty boring, but things just sort of evolved organically,” Sam explained.

“Things became somewhat uncomfortable once Kara and Sam started to get serious, which was confusing, since the three of us were spending more and more time all together.” Lena made a face, an absolutely adorable expression where she raised an eyebrow and ever so slightly bit her lower lip at the same time. It conveyed a sort of jovial uncertainty. “I suppose that at some point, we realized the source of the tension was that Sam and I were trying to pretend we were just friends when there was still so much more between us. When you get in the habit of being radically honest with each other, it becomes a lot harder to keep anything hidden, even from yourself.”

“We had this one particularly charged moment,” Sam continued the story. “And it was just so intensely sensual, and we just kissed. It was so electric and inevitable, and everything just sorta fell into place. We talked to Kara about it, and she was so thrilled.”

“I had been hoping it would happen,” Kara confessed, practically bouncing in excitement. In this moment, it was like she was the Kara of old, every bit as excited as she had been when Lena and Sam first told her that they had kissed.

Lena finished the story. “And after that, it’s just been a matter of feeling each other out. Taking things slowly and developing new dynamics. Figuring out the extent to which we have some things that are for any two of us and others that the three of us share all together.”

Cat nodded, her eyes on her notepad as she continued to write. “Well, that is exciting,” she muttered, clearly more focused on connecting dots and crafting an angle on their story as she caught her breath and assessed what else she wanted to know. “Now, I have just a few quick questions, and I do hope you won’t hold it against me if any of them feel too invasive. Feel free to decline any answers you’re uncomfortable giving.” She eyed them all, waiting for them to nod their consent.

“First, we’ve mentioned a couple of times that you’re a single mom, Ms. Arias. I have no interest in prying into your daughter’s privacy, but I am curious to hear how she has handled everything and what she thinks of your relationship.”

Sam appreciated how respectful Cat was when it came to Ruby, and she knew from Kara that it grew out of her own intense protective streak for her son Carter. “Ruby’s been great,” she assured the journalist. “I think she struggled with it the least of any of us. She’s always loved Lena, and Kara grew on her really quickly. Ultimately, she just wants me to be happy, and while Lena has always been a part of our family, it’s also been good for Ruby to get a taste of what an extended family is like. She has a particularly lovely relationship with Kara’s adopted mom.”
“They like to bake together,” Kara added, her voice thick with affection and pride.

“That leads nicely into my next question. Obviously, both Lena and Kara are involved in Ruby’s life. What is the living situation like? Have the three of you given any thought to making this unorthodox family more official in any way?”

Kara’s eyes went wide, and Sam did her best to remain calm as Lena watched Kara cautiously. It was hard for them to think about their future after everything that had happened with Lillian. Questions of marriage and adoption and family had been left by the wayside after that video dropped, and things between Lena and Kara weren’t even close to being fully healed yet.

Sam knew she was going to have to be the one to try to give a measured response to this question. She drew a thoughtful breath, placing a hand on the knees of both her girlfriends on either side of her, then released it. “Obviously, we’d like to maintain our privacy as much as possible, Cat. So, we aren’t going to get into our living situation in any detail. Suffice to say, we spend most of our time outside of work and, uh, superheroing duties, together.” She glanced at Kara, who was starting to regain her composure, and then Lena, who was gazing wistfully at Kara. “As for the future, that’s hard to say. Obviously, there isn’t a jurisdiction in the United States that recognizes three-person marriage, so legally, things are complicated. But we are very much in love, and very much a family.” She smiled at Lena before offering a wicked grin towards Cat. “And I’m sure you’re well aware that Lena has all the best lawyers in the world at her disposal. I’m sure we’ll figure something out.”

All four women chuckled at that, and the tension eased a little between them. “I appreciate your candor, Ms. Arias. Such a delightful conversationalist you’ve snagged for yourself here, Kara.”

“Oh, you have no idea,” Kara assured her. “Are we done?”

Cat flipped through her notes, analyzing them for a good thirty seconds. “I believe so.” She met each of their eyes in turn before saying, “Thank you for your time ladies, and for sitting through any awkward questions on my part. I’ll coordinate with Kara as I get the story together, and I’m sure she’ll let you know when the interview is going to be published in CatCo Magazine.”

Kara hung back after Lena and Sam headed back to L-Corp. She’d given each of them a kiss goodbye, but she had lingered with Lena. She’d had to hold onto Lena, who had been expecting an obligatory peck, lengthening the kiss into something soft but warm. When she pulled back, she held Lena’s face in her hand, and they shared several moments of unspoken communication, gleaming cerulean eyes trying to convey a mix of affection, concern, and desire for reconciliation as they fixed onto wary emerald ones. She had kissed Lena once more, this one just a peck, then Lena had wordlessly followed Sam out of the building.

“I hadn’t gotten a chance to tell you how much I love the new haircut. How very butch,” Cat purred, as the two of them walked out to Cat’s balcony. She didn’t hesitate to pour them both a glass of brandy, as they took seats together on the far couch. Kara grinned nervously.

“You really like it?” Cat shot her a droll side eye, to indicate that Kara should know better by now than to question her sincerity. “It felt like a good time to take a risk, make a change. Can’t pretend I wasn’t a little inspired by the offer to lead the Pride Parade.”

“Ah yes, putting your gayest foot forward. Sensible,” Cat chuckled. “The rainbow cape was a nice touch.”
“Were you there or did you just see the photos?” Kara asked, trying her best to be sly. Cat saw right through her attempt.

“You know, Supergirl, if you wanted to ask if I’m out and proud about my bisexuality, you could just do so.”

Kara fought a grin, then turned conspiratorially towards Cat, eyebrows waggling as she asked, “Hey Cat, are you an out and proud bisexual?”

Cat rolled her eyes and shook her head in exasperation. “You’re such a dork, Supergirl. And don’t think I’m going to let you write some scoop on the secret queer lifestyle of the illustrious Cat Grant.” Kara pouted, and Cat shoved her lightly. “Suffice to say that I’ve been going to the National City Pride Parade for two decades now, and I wasn’t about to miss my favourite superhero leading it.”

Kara bounced a little in excitement, both at the revelation that Cat was a regular attendee at the Pride Parade and that she was her favourite superhero. Not that it was in doubt, but it was nice to hear anyway. But then Cat shifted the tone of the conversation.

“So, what’s the deal with you and the Luthor?” Cat asked, all subtlety out the window. Kara frowned, taking a long sip of the brandy to avoid having to answer until she could gather her thoughts.

“What makes you think there’s a deal?” Kara inquired cautiously, not willing to give anything away. It went without saying that this conversation was off the record, so she wasn’t concerned about that. She was, however, a little thrown off that Cat had picked up on something during the interview.

Cat pursed her lips impatiently but elected to play along with Kara’s game. “Well, we could start with how fluid and dynamic and comfortable your girlfriends seemed with each other, and how stiffly you interacted with them in comparison.” Cat raised an eyebrow at her, peering over the rims of her glasses. “Then there was Sam’s fidgeting and glances anytime you came close to saying something uncomfortable or looking at Lena with anything other than adoration.” She waved a hand casually in the air. “And there was how you chose to arrange yourselves—a subtle thing, and likely nothing in and of itself, but in the context of everything else, it spoke volumes that Sam had to sit as a barrier between you two.” She pulled her glasses softly from her nose, then placed them on the table in front of them. “Should I continue?”

Kara sighed. “No, you’ve made your point.” She ran a hand through her hair, feeling that familiar thrilling sense of momentary shock when, instead of the heavy locks her hand expected to find, there was only shaved little hairs and swooping bangs. She smiled softly, eyes searching the horizon lackadaisically. “You know, the haircut was Lena’s idea.” Kara pressed her lips together as she blew a loud breath through her nose. “After Alex dyed her hair purple, she started dropping hints about how cute I would look with shorter hair. But I didn’t like the idea of wearing a wig as Supergirl. Didn’t know how to get one that could hold up to the rigors of flying.” A few seconds passed, and Kara could feel the tell-tale warmth of tears forming in her eyes. “Now … I don’t even know if she likes it. I haven’t asked her. We’re not talking, all because I …”

“I didn’t get the sense that she was particularly upset with you, Kara. So what is it that she did to cause this rift?” Always so insightful.

“I can’t … it’s classified, Cat.” Her mentor twirled her finger in the air sarcastically, and Kara shrugged in answer. She didn’t know how to tell any part of this story—not only was she under strict orders from Lucy not to, she didn’t know the extent to which any of them might be open to
some sort of legal or criminal action if the truth came out. It wasn’t that she didn’t trust Cat, but there was a lot to consider.

“I really can’t tell you any of it. All I can say … is that she manipulated and lied to me in order to do something … ugh. This thing she did—we did, since she roped Sam and me into it—wasn’t something that I am at all comfortable with, and it scares me to think what her willingness to do this thing, and to manipulate me in order to get me to help her with it, says about her. About what she’s capable of. About what she believes is right.”

Kara could feel Cat considering her, but she couldn’t bring herself to look at her. Cat cleared her throat. “This thing that Lena did, that you find so troubling—did it make you love her any less?”

“No,” Kara whispered, her voice speaking the truth before her mind could even fully register the question.

“And … if this thing was so awful, but not enough to make you love her any less, then why would she do it? I assume she knew the affect it would have on you. So, what could’ve motivated her to do this?” Cat’s voice was kind but probing.

“She did it to protect us.” Kara’s voice cracked a little, but she sucked in a steadying breath, willing herself to calm down. “There was a clear and present threat to me, to Sam, to Ruby … to everything we’ve built together. Everything we care about.”

Cat put a hand on her knee. “So—” Kara finally met her gaze, and Cat smiled softly at her, “—let me be sure I’m perfectly clear on this. You’re telling me that you’re girlfriend, who you just sat there in that room and told me was the love of your life—”

“They both are,” Kara corrected.

“Fine, fine. One of the two loves of your life,” Cat conceded, eyes narrowing at the interruption. “The Lena Luthor, whose work and charitable contributions have done more to improve the lives of humanity than any other human being in modern society, who has gone over and above the call of duty in proving that she is not like her mother or her brother, who has won the heart of not one demi-goddess, but two—” Cat raised her eyebrows for emphasis, and Kara just looked at her, waiting for the actual point. “You’re trying to tell me that this annoyingly good person made a morally challenging decision, which she knew might cause problems between the two of you, because she earnestly believed it was necessary to protect you and your family?”

Tears welling in her eyes again, Kara struggled to answer. Instead, she nodded softly, and Cat continued. “Kara, take the morality out of it. Take the manipulation out of it, even though I agree that you have every right to be upset about that part. Just tell me this: do you agree that this thing Lena did was necessary to protect all of you?”

“Yes!” Kara blurted out, springing up and pacing forward as she chewed on her lip in thought. She paced back and forth, shaking her head as her body tensed with pent up confusion and frustration. “But that doesn’t make any of it any easier, Cat!”

“Don’t you think it should, though?” Cat tossed back the remains of her brandy, grimacing ever so slightly before she stood to face the disgruntled young journalist. Kara pouted, but relaxed a little as Cat put a hand on each shoulder. “It sounds to me like Lena did something really difficult, at the risk of everything she holds dear, to protect the people she loves.” The older woman’s lips quirked into a puzzled expression. “And that makes you doubt her goodness? Really, Supergirl?”

Kara’s head dropped, the tears flowing freely now. Cat pulled her into a hug, holding her as she
cried into the older woman’s probably very expensive blouse. Once she had let it all out, Cat pulled away and leaned onto the balcony railing, like she always did when they had these talks. Wiping her eyes and swallowing hard, Kara turned to go stand beside her.

Cat hip-checked her lightly. “Don’t take what you have for granted there, Kara Danvers. I can’t even tell you how much I admire the life—the family—that you’ve built for yourself. You’ve got two great loves, two women who would do anything to protect you. A daughter—and yes,” Cat waved her hand dismissively, “I know she isn’t your daughter, but it’s obvious you care about her as if she were your own. You have a mother and a sister and a sister-in-law and two lovely homes and a great job with an excellent mentor, and ultimately, the only thing that really matters is you all love each other. She protected you, and you have protected her on any number of occasions. What you have is real, and not all of us are lucky enough to have something like that.”

She turned and faced Kara, placing a hand softly on her cheek. “Don’t screw it up, Supergirl. Go talk to your girlfriend.”
Lena had just settled into her work for the day when she heard a gust of wind and the muffled sound of feet touching down onto the balcony behind her. A fresh pang of sorrow stabbed through her chest at the realization that it had been weeks since she had heard those tell-tale sounds of Kara coming to visit her at work.

That kiss had given her hope, and she wanted to hold onto it. She could still feel Kara’s lips on her own, and at the time, she had believed Kara’s soft but insistent look as she held Lena’s face in her hands spoke of a desire to reconcile. But that didn’t stop her nagging, anxious brain from trying to convince her otherwise. Why is she here? Did I say something wrong in the interview? Did I misread the kiss? Was it a goodbye? Is she going to—

The balcony door opened, breaking into Lena’s spiral. She turned to face Kara, who took two steps into the office and stopped, a nervous little smile on her lips. “Hey, ummm, could we talk?” Kara’s eyes widened, just a little, and she tensed up. She made a few adorably wild gestures as she added, “I mean, if you have time! I know you’re really busy, and your work is very important, and I don’t want to impo—”

“Kara, calm down.” The blonde’s rambling put Lena at ease, somehow. Despite everything, Kara was still Kara. But is she still my Kara? “Please come in.” She stood, noticing that the balcony door had seemingly shut itself. Kara’s increasing use of super speed in her everyday life was still something Lena hadn’t adjusted to yet. “What did you want to talk about?” Lena asked hesitantly.

Kara blushed slightly, stuttering, “Well, I just … I mean I hoped … oh Rao, can I just hug you? Please?”

All it took was a surprised, “Uh … yes?” for the superhero to close the distance between them in the blink of an eye. A still very much stunned Lena just stood there, her arms at her side, as strong arms held onto her as fiercely as they could without hurting her. A couple of long seconds passed before Lena’s body caught up to her brain, and in a jerk, she wrapped her arms around her girlfriend. As they held each other, Lena was overwhelmed by the physical sensation of being this close to Kara again—the familiar shape and feel of her body, the smell of her hair, and the soft sounds of her breathing were all so perfect. For the first time since Kara had been outed, Lena felt in this fleeting moment that everything was right again. She never wanted this hug to end, because she was terrified of what might come next.

The moment lasted an eternity, and yet it was over too soon. Lena tensed again, almost immediately, as Kara pulled away and paced away from her. The blonde looked as though she had no idea what she wanted to say. Lena could see the concentration and conflict on her face, with that little crinkle between her brows and the corners of her glossy pink lips turned ever so slightly downward. Kara was so lost in thought that she seemed unaware of the uncomfortable silence that began to build between them, but with every passing moment, Lena’s anxiety grew. By the time Kara finally turned back to face her, Lena had already spiraled back into her fear that Kara, despite her warmth, had come here to end things.

Which made Kara’s words that more surprising. “I can’t take this anymore. I miss you so so much, but I don’t know how to get past this. But we have to. I can’t be happy without you in my life. And I … gosh, I’m sure I’m gonna mess this up, and it’s gonna hurt, but can we just talk this out? I want to find a way back to us.”
Lena frowned. *You’re the one who shut me out,* she thought, careful not to voice her opinions without careful consideration. *And we both know that you’re right about me.* Despite Alex and Maggie’s pep talk, Lena still couldn’t shake the voice in her head that told her she was a Luthor deep down, and she didn’t deserve Kara. Much like Kara, Lena couldn’t get past it either.

Before either of them could say more, Lena pressed a button on her phone, and Jess’ voice popped in. “Yes, Ms. Luthor?”

“Jess, no one is to come into my office until I say otherwise.”

“Yes, ma’am. I’ll take care of it,” the assistant confirmed cheerfully.

“Thank you, Jess.” Lena hung up, having ensured their privacy, and then turned to face Kara. “Kara … what exactly is there to talk about? Where would we even begin?” Lena continued standing beside her desk, the tense distance between herself and Kara a perfect symbol of the seemingly insurmountable emotional rift between them.

“Somewhere,” Kara blurted awkwardly. “I d-don’t know! But we need to talk about it…” Her eyes implored Lena to start things off, as if she hadn’t come to Lena’s balcony looking to talk. As if she wasn’t the one who had distanced herself and pushed Lena away.

“Kara, you’re the one who has a problem. You cut me out of your life, not vice versa. I don’t think it’s fair to expect me to able to just read your mind and know what it was that made you so repulsed by me.”

“I’m not,” Kara corrected in a barely audible whisper. “I just … I needed space. Needed to figure out why this hurt me so much. And I still don’t understand—”

“Understand what?”

Kara blew out a frustrated breath. “Do you have any idea how much it hurt when I realized that you had lied to me? Manipulated me? Treated me like a pawn in your ongoing war with Lillian? I know you think you had to, that the ends justified the means, but Lena, you used me. I never … that wasn’t the Lena I fell in love with. It was like something…” Kara’s voice trailed off, as if she was afraid to say the name.

“It’s okay, Kara. It was like something Lillian or Lex would’ve done. You can say it.” Lena’s voice was tight, only just barely under control. “You and I both know it.” Lena knew she should admit how much it terrified her, how much it hurt her to do that to Kara and Sam. But she didn’t see another way. And she certainly didn’t regret it—her family was safe from Lillian, now and forever.

“How could you do that to us?” Kara demanded, cerulean eyes suddenly watery. “How could you treat us like that? Lena, you’re my partner, my love, my h-home. I just don’t understand why you to treat me like an object—an object of violence—instead of just talking to me.”

“Because I knew you wouldn’t be okay with it!” Lena shouted. “It was the right thing to do to protect our family, and I think deep down you know that. But it had already been several days since the video, and I didn’t have time to try to convince my idealistic hero girlfriend that it was morally acceptable for me to murder my own mother!” Lena paused, exhaling loudly as she blinked back some tears. “And yes, I was insanely sleep deprived and obsessed, probably not in my right mind, but those are just excuses! And I’d do it again if I had to, because you and Sam and Ruby and Alex and Maggie and Eliza are safe now. That is what matters most to me!”
Kara turned away from her, resuming her pacing. Lena could read the stress and tenseness rippling through the hero’s body. She kept fidgeting with her cape, and after a minute or so, she just removed it, letting it fall to the floor in a heap. Lena just waited, afraid of pushing the Kryptonian any further. Kara would talk when she was ready.

Finally, Kara dropped herself heavily onto the couch, her legs wide and her elbows coming to rest on her knees as she hid her face in her hands. The entire time, she had studiously avoided looking at Lena, and now Kara just looked so broken and lost. “You killed someone.” Her voice was weak and haunted. “You treated us like weapons, even in that last moment when you had Sam do the killing for you. I don’t know how to get past that.”

Lena’s heart leapt to her throat. The accusation was no worse than the ones she had leveled at herself since that awful day, but it hurt so much more hearing it come from Kara’s lips. Everything—her fears, her doubt, her self-hatred—were so much more real with the confirmation that this really was how Kara saw her. Why Kara had pushed her away.

Her body felt numb, matching the internal sense of powerlessness Lena was experiencing. “I’m sorry,” she whispered. “This was all too good to be true. I should’ve known.” She walked over to pour herself a glass of scotch. The burn of the liquor on her throat calmed her a little, but it didn’t change the harsh reality of where this conversation had to end. “I don’t deserve you. Never did, I suppose. I’m just sorry I let it get this far. That you had to find out this way. That deep down, I really am a Luthor after all.” She was no longer facing Kara, and as much as a part of her wanted to break down in this moment, to let loose the anguish in a storm of sobs and tears, Lena had already locked those emotions tightly into a box, guarding herself from them with walls of ice. If this was how it ended, she had to shut off those emotions if she was going to survive. “A creature of darkness can’t hope to hold onto someone as good and light as Kara Zor-El.”

“Is that … is that what you think?” Kara’s voice was still quiet behind her, but now it took on a puzzled, frustrated tone.

“There’s no need to hide from it anymore,” Lena scoffed, unable to resist the self-loathing flooding through her chest. “That’s why you pushed me away. That’s why you can’t stand to be with me anymore. You finally see it as clearly as I do. No matter how much good I do, my baser nature is still there, and there’s no telling when it will come out. Today, I killed my own mother; tomorrow…” She let her voice drop off. No doubt Kara had already imagined all the horrors Lena was capable of if she slipped into the same madness that had consumed the kind and protective brother she had known as a child.

The silence set in again, and Lena couldn’t bring herself to face Kara, who was no doubt steeling herself to say those last words. Lena braced herself for the pain, the end that would fundamentally alter her life and potentially break up the only real family she had ever known. But it was what she deserved. The love and happiness she’d experienced over the last year and a half were a gift, fleeting but incompatible with Lena’s fundamental nature.

“You’re an idiot, Lena Kieran Luthor.” Lena gasped, spinning around so quickly that she nearly fumbled her glass. Kara was standing again, hands on her hips, and she looked every bit the part of Supergirl even without the cape. Lena just gaped, completely caught off guard.

Kara continued. “Lillian was a spiteful, abusive bigot. Lex is an egomaniac who never learned humility or empathy, and he let his darkest emotions control and corrupt him into a destructive lunatic.” Kara ran a hand through her short hair, practically growling in frustration. “You’re nothing like them. Rao, how could you even think that? You’re one of the best people I’ve ever met, Lena. You’re so good, and that is why this all hurts so much.”
Lena’s brow furrowed. “But then why—”

“Because I still love you!” Kara roared, all her inner fire and passion coming to the surface. “You did this horrible, hurtful thing to me—and to Sam—and I don’t know how to get past it, but through all of it, I still freaking love you so damn much. I don’t understand it! You killed someone! And you were so cold and calculating about it! And you manipulated me and Sam to make us a part of it… a-and I don’t know what that says about you. I don’t know what it says about me that it didn’t lessen the strength of my love for you at all.”

Kara sunk back down onto the chair. Lena felt frozen in place, trapped by her own uncertainty. She seems so sure that I’m not like my mother or brother, and yet she still sees me as a bad person, capable of something she considers abhorrent. She loves me, but maybe she wishes that she didn’t? What am I missing here? She sat her scotch glass down on the credenza, but she didn’t know what to do or say next. Kara watched her, looking just as lost, and then the words fluttered past Lena’s lips before she even realized she was talking. “I love you too.”

Those four quiet words somehow shattered the distance between them. Kara looked up at the ceiling, continuing to blink back tears but failing to catch them all. Lena felt a strong urge to go and wipe them away, to kiss Kara and apologize and tell her everything would be okay. But she still didn’t think they would be, and she didn’t know if Kara would be okay with Lena touching her right then. Then Kara pleaded, “P-p-please c-come sit by me.”

Lena wasted no time in moving around the opposite end of the coffee table and settling down next to her girlfriend. She was careful to still leave a few inches of space between them. Tears slid down Kara’s cheeks, but Lena resisted her instinct to comfort the blonde, still unsure of herself. Kara sniffed, then looked away from Lena as she confessed, “I d-don’t think I’m the upstanding pillar of morality everyone sees me as.” She sounded terrified, and that was when Lena’s barriers broke down.

Scooting closer and putting a hand on Kara’s knee, Lena gently asked, “Why do you say that?” Kara continued to look away, but her body relaxed into Lena’s touch, instinctively.

“That’s what bothered me so much. Yeah, the way you treated me was unacceptable, and it hurt. A lot. But that isn’t why I p-pushed you away. It was because I didn’t want to face the things you made me see in myself.” So that’s why she hasn’t talked to anyone about this, not even Sam or Alex. But why?

“Love, I’m … um, I’m here if you want me,” Lena offered hesitantly. “It isn’t good for you to hold this in. What things?” Kara didn’t move, and Lena got that much more worried. Making the decision to let go of her own hurt and uncertainty, she reached out to Kara. She gently turned the blonde’s face back towards her, before running her hand up and along the soft, shorn hair just above her ear. Lena stroked soothingly, her gaze imploring Kara to let her in. For a worrisome moment, Kara’s jaw remained set, but then finally she let go, nodding her assent to Lena. The CEO pulled her hand back, setting it back on Kara’s knee while she waited for her to explain.

When she did finally speak again, Kara’s voice had a wariness to it that was so unlike her. “How you were when you were searching for Lillian, the ferocity you showed when you threw yourself into battle with her …” Kara paused, her eyes momentarily distant. “I could read it all over you, that rage and determination and certainty that you would end her.”

Tears began to fall again, and Lena couldn’t fathom what Kara meant. “I have all this inner anger and violent tendencies. T-thought I was past it, but I don’t know if I ever will be. I watched my
planet and everyone I had ever loved die, and I’ll carry that weight until the day I die. I have all this rage and fury at the unfairness of it, and you reminded me of that. What happened with Lillian just drugged up all these memories and feelings that I didn’t want to face. So I avoided all of it.”

Lena moved to rub Kara’s back, but the hero recoiled from her. She sprang to her feet, her internal turmoil propelling her into agitated pacing. “I killed my uncle Non. Yes, it was necessary, and yes, he left me no other choice. But that didn’t make it right that it felt so good. He hurt so many people that I care about, including Astra, and it felt good to end him. It felt right.”

Kara shook as she began to sob, but she held up a hand to stop Lena when she rose to go comfort her. She just held herself, crossing her arms and gripping hard onto her elbows until she could gain some amount of control over herself. It took all the willpower Lena had to respect Kara’s silent request for space. Kara sucked in a deep breath and released it shakily.

“And that wasn’t the only time. The red kryptonite brought it out most, and I nearly killed Cat and Alex. I wanted to. And I didn’t have the excuse of red K when I nearly killed Edge for framing and then trying to murder you. I came so close to beating Rick Malverne to death when he kidnapped Alex.” Kara closed her eyes, trying and failing to choke back her emotions. “Whatever d-darkness you think you have inside, I have more inside of me. I have the sorrow and fury of an entire dead world in my soul, and I’m scared that one day I won’t be able to hold it in anymore.”

This time Lena couldn’t stop herself from going to Kara, and she wrapped her in a tight embrace as the blonde fell apart in her arms. Lena just held her and stroked her hair as she sobbed into Lena’s chest. She had no idea that Kara had this turmoil inside her, or that her actions would’ve had this sort of effect on her. Lena didn’t know what to do other than to hold her, trying her hardest to pour all of her love and affection through touch. She didn’t care about the tears and snot on her blouse. She didn’t care that Kara held on so tightly that it hurt a little. All that mattered was getting through this, and coming out on the other side, together.

Eventually, Kara began to settle down, her energy spent. Lena led her softly by the hand back to the couch. They sat down together, Lena’s arm sliding over Kara’s shoulders and pulling her close. “I had no idea you were carrying all of this inside you,” Lena whispered into Kara’s ear. Kara turned to face her, leaving only a few inches of space between their faces. “I don’t know what to do about it,” she muttered, voice still weak and afraid. “And you … the way you went after her so single-mindedly, without any thought to anything other than ending her—it was just too much like my own inner darkness. And I couldn’t face it.” Kara’s hand found Lena’s cheek. “But it wasn’t fair of me to take that out on you.” She leaned forward tentatively, and Lena met her halfway for a brief but meaningful liplock.

Kara broke the kiss but didn’t pull away, resting her forehead on Lena’s. Her eyes remained closed. “I’m s-sorry I abandoned you,” she whispered. “I never thought about what you were going through, that you could’ve imagined that I would see you like that.” She kissed Lena, this time frantically. It felt like Kara just needed something real and trustworthy to hold onto, and she kissed Lena as if she were the only thing keeping Kara tethered to the world.

Lena kissed her back with equal ferocity. She had missed Kara so much, and she had been so scared that they wouldn’t be able to find their way back to each other. In between kisses, she managed to gasp out, “I’m so so sorry, Kara.” She began to kiss along Kara’s jaw, continuing her apology as she went. “I shouldn’t have treated you that way. Shouldn’t have become so obsessed with finding her. Shouldn’t have manipulated you. Lied to you. I was just so frantic. So scared about what she might do next. I had to protect you all, a-and I didn’t let myself think about
anything else. I am so sorry.”

Kara cut her off then, with another searingly passionate kiss. “Creampuff, I forgive you.” She pulled back to search Lena’s eyes. “I’m still terrified, but…” She kissed Lena. “But we can figure it out together. I’m so sorry I pushed you away. I never ever want to lose you.”

“You won’t.” Lena assured her before returning another kiss, pulling Kara in closer and allowing her hands to wander a bit. “But let’s not do this again, okay?” Kara pulled away to shoot her a questioning look, and Lena answered quickly, desperate to get back to the kissing. “No matter how scared you are, or how angry, please just talk to me. I’d rather be fighting with you than to have you push me away like that again. I don’t think I could handle it again.”

“I promise,” Kara murmured, trailing kisses along Lena’s neck. Lena’s skin felt like it was on fire, and she needed to feel Kara against her. After weeks apart, all she wanted was to be wrapped up in her love again. They took their time undressing each other, finding it difficult to keep their lips off each other. They both laughed a little as Lena struggled to extract Kara from her Supergirl outfit while refusing to go without kissing her again every few seconds. But it didn’t matter. Neither was in a rush, and they savoured the various sensations as they slowly got reacquainted with each other’s body.

Sex was every bit as much about emotional release as it was about a physical one. At first, everything was aggressive, with the two women frantically trying to satiate the intense hunger and longing they felt for each other. After that first shared climax, they continued to move against each other slowly, languidly exploring each other with tremendous affection and raw emotion. As they made love to each other, Lena and Kara cried as much as they orgasmed, and by the end of it, Lena felt completely spent, in every meaning of the word.

Kara was holding her tightly, Lena flush against the Kryptonian’s body. Their heads rested on a couple of pillows from Lena’s couch, and Kara’s cape was draped haphazardly over their naked forms. Lena felt like a mess—her mascara and eyeliner staining her cheeks and her hair completely out of sorts, but it was so worth it. She flipped over to face the love of her life and kissed her softly. “I missed you,” Lena breathed. Kara’s eyes turned watery again, but pleasantly so. She kissed Lena’s forehead.

“Aleeex? What happened? What did she do?” Kara propped herself up on her elbow, giving Lena an eyeful before reaching out to run her fingers through Lena’s now thoroughly messy ponytail.

“I had dinner with her and Maggie, and we talked. She was more affectionate and comforting than I’d ever seen her. Gertrude too—she actually cuddled up against my leg!” Kara smiled brightly, even as a shadow of guilt passed over her face at the thought of having missed that. Lena felt another pang of sorrow at the time they spent apart but continued with the story. “I told them everything. Confessed all my darkest thoughts about myself. It was … god, Kara it was so hard. But in a way, it was good. I bonded with your sister.” Lena paused, her heart full of warmth at the recollection of how genuinely sisterly Alex had been.

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“Shhh, darling. Don’t do that to yourself.” Lena pressed her lips to Kara’s skin. “Being shut out from your life was hell, and I let myself wallow in all of my worst insecurities and self-loathing. But in a way, it was good. I bonded with your sister.” Lena paused, her heart full of warmth at the recollection of how genuinely sisterly Alex had been.

“I missed you too, baby.” Lena pulled closer, nuzzling into Kara’s collarbone. “I’m sorry,” Kara whispered, a phrase she had already uttered multiple times. “It was miserable, keeping you at a distance. Questioning my love for you. It made my heart hurt, but I couldn’t stop myself. Rao, I can’t imagine what you were going through, and I just went and made it worse.”

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“I had dinner with her and Maggie, and we talked. She was more affectionate and comforting than I’d ever seen her. Gertrude too—she actually cuddled up against my leg!” Kara smiled brightly, even as a shadow of guilt passed over her face at the thought of having missed that. Lena felt another pang of sorrow at the time they spent apart but continued with the story. “I told them everything. Confessed all my darkest thoughts about myself. It was … god, Kara it was so hard. But in a way, it was good. I bonded with your sister.” Lena paused, her heart full of warmth at the recollection of how genuinely sisterly Alex had been.

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you this, so you have to keep this between us.”

Kara nodded enthusiastically, but that guilty look still lingered in her eyes. Lena continued, leaning in conspiratorially with a swaggering smirk on her lips. “She said I was the best thing that ever happened to you.”

“Really?” Kara’s grin had turned into a full-blown, open-mouthed smile. “Alex Danvers really said that to you?”

“She really did,” Lena confirmed amusedly.

“Leeeeeeena, this is a big deal!” The hero practically vibrated with excitement, but then she remembered the context and sobered up. “I’m just sorry it took me being horrible to you for that to happen.”

“Kara, no. You didn’t hurt me anymore than I hurt you, and I get now what you were trying to work through. I wish you had just talked to me about it, yelled at me if you had to, but—” She took a long, pointed look down at her nude form and then at Kara’s, raising an eyebrow when her gaze came to a rest on Kara’s face. “—I think we’re getting past it nicely now.”

Kara giggled uncontrollably, a bright blush rising to her cheeks. “That was quite an experience, Ms. Luthor.”

“Oh was it now?” Lena mused. “Personally, I think it was just what we needed, Ms. Danvers.” She leaned forward and kissed Kara again, savouring the taste of her lips and the faint, lingering scents of their afternoon activities. As she pulled back, Lena ran a hand along the back of Kara’s head, and the soft fluff set Lena off. “Your hair!” Kara’s eyes went wide and questioning, her expression adorably self-conscious. “I love it, darling!” She ran both hands through the short sides of Kara’s hair and then up into the messy length on the top of her head. As she scratched and massaged Kara’s scalp, enjoying the silky feel of her now much shorter hair, Kara practically purred at the sensation. “You look amazing.”

Kara flashed a cocky grin. “Well, it was your idea, now wasn’t it?”

“Well, I am a very smart woman.”

“Yes, you are,” Kara smiled, leaning in for another kiss. And finally, Lena felt herself let go of the burden she had been carrying for so long. Finally, she was home again. Then Kara surprised her yet again. “We need to talk to Sam about all this, don’t we?”

“That’s a brilliant idea, darling.” The thought of the three of them together again had Lena emotional again. The interview together that morning had been a step forward, but it was nothing like this. Sam would be so happy that they had figured their shit out. Lena could already picture the bright smile on her face, followed by a jokingly exasperated ‘it’s about time.’ Lena couldn’t stop grinning like an idiot. “Let’s surprise her with dinner. You text her not to cook dinner for her and Ruby, and I’ll arrange everything else.”

“She’s going to freak out,” Kara beamed.

“I know,” Lena answered, grinning wickedly at her partner. “So let’s really do it big.”
The Future and the Past

Chapter Notes

A little over a month since the last chapter

Alex looked up from her paperwork at the unexpected knock at her office door. Greeting her was the familiar smile of her overly peppy sister, still in her Supergirl attire and carrying several bags of takeout food. “Hey there, workaholic!”

“National City’s most famous hero is doing deliveries now?” Alex asked dryly.

Kara giggled. “Only for her favourite people on Earth.”

“Mhmmm,” Alex hummed, standing up to take the offered bag of food. “So… what do you want?”

Blushing, Kara stuttered, “Aleeeex! C-can’t I just bring my awesome, married sister lunch out of the goodness of my heart? Despite her innocent tone, Alex’s eyes narrowed. Kara hadn’t meant to slip ‘married’ in there, and she knew Alex would focus in on the odd adjective choice. So Kara looked away and went about opening various containers and digging into her own lunch.

Alex followed her lead, forcing Kara to wait nervously for her to say something. But then the agent just grinned, leaning back in her chair with her wrap in hand as she soothed, “Kara, just talk to me. What’s on your mind?” Alex’s soft smile and affectionate tone put Kara at ease.

“Okay, but you have to promise not to freak out.” Alex’s smile immediately shifted into a slight grimace, her eyes narrowing. “It’s nothing bad!” Kara rushed to assure her. “It’s really, really good, I think.” Alex just watched her with an overly pointed look of curiosity, and Kara immediately spilled the beans. “I want to propose to Lena and Sam,” she squeaked in one quick stream of words.

The look of shock on Alex’s face was not quite what Kara had expected, but Alex cut her off before she could launch into a flustered, rambling explanation. “Okay, Kara, I’m not raining on your parade, not at all, you understand?” Kara nodded, trying to hold back the small flush of anxiety that was now mingling with her previous nervousness.

Alex took her hand. “I love you, and I am so so so happy that you’ve found your people. Whatever else, Lena and Sam and Ruby are family now, and I want to be sure you know that I get that.” The sentiment banished Kara’s anxiety, and she smiled back at her sister.

“So, what’s the issue then?”

Alex squeezed her hand, then released as she leaned back a little. “I guess I’m just surprised. It feels fast, especially with Sam, and all three of you have been through so much the last year. I just wanna be sure you’re not jumping into something you’re not ready for.” Alex winced. “Not that I’m saying you’re not!” She groaned. “How about I stop right now, and you tell me more about what you’re feeling.” Alex emphasized her point by taking a very large bite of her wrap, mouth so comically full that she couldn’t possibly say another word.
Kara rolled her eyes at her sister’s antics. “I’m not rushing into it, Alex. It’s been on my mind ever since our last trip to Midvale. I mean … I wasn’t planning anything, but you just kinda have this realization, you know? That this is my family, and that whatever happens, these are the people I want to build my life with.”

She took a thoughtful bite of her second sandwich, taking the time to chew and swallow before continuing. “You and Eliza gave me a new home when I lost mine. You supported me and guided me and taught me so much. You both are a fundamental part of who I am as a person. I think some part of me realized Lena was someone like that from the first time I met her, even if it took me a long time to catch onto that. And Sam … it was like she just fit, instantly, with what Lena and I were already building together.” Kara inhaled softly, then released the breath with a smile. “I remember thinking I would never feel at home on Earth. And even though I felt at home with you, that feeling lingered. It’s gone now. Because of Lena and Sam and Ruby.”

“So what’s different? You had time to really think about what you want your future to look like, now that you’ve had a month of peace since you and Lena buried the hatchet?”

Kara blurted out, “No,” without thinking, but she stopped herself and considered. “Well, yeah,” she corrected, “but not entirely.” It was more complicated than that, but Kara wasn’t sure how to put her thoughts into words. “So yeahhh, a month of happiness and comfortable domesticity has helped, for sure. But … I think it was something about my identity becoming public.”

Alex almost choked on a bite of food, coughing for a few seconds before waving for Kara to continue. “Sorry, that surprised me a little. Go on.”

“It’s … Alex, I had no idea how freeing it would be, to just be able to be myself. All the time. No more secret identities. No more hiding parts of myself while playing up others. I don’t think I realized how much that took out of me until I didn’t have to do it anymore.” Though she had already figured this out for herself, sharing it with Alex filled Kara with joy. “And it gave me clarity on some things. There’s something powerful about being open with who you are. A-and who you love. Nothing has changed about how I feel about Lena and Sam, but I want them to know. I want everyone to know. That I love them. That they are a part of me. That they are every bit as much my family as you or Eliza or Kal or my parents.” She looked down at her hands, playing with her food. “And yeah, after everything we’ve been through, I want to celebrate that love.”

Alex had the most brilliant, beautiful smile Kara had ever seen, and it was in full effect now. She pushed herself out of her chair, and it was only because of superspeed that Kara was standing quickly enough to receive Alex’s enthusiastic embrace. “I am so happy for you,” Alex gushed, choking up only a little. “I’m so proud of you and who you’ve become.” She pulled away, lingering long enough to kiss Kara gently on the forehead before heading back to her seat behind her desk. “Now, let’s talk game plan. That’s why you came, right?”

Kara answered with a hearty laugh. “You see right through me.”

“It’s a big sister thing,” Alex quipped, and Kara believed her. “Well, out with it!”

“Alex, I don’t knowwwww!” Kara blurted. “That’s why I need my big sister. There’s nothing on Krypton or Earth that could prepare me for proposing to two amazing women at the same time. I have no idea where to start!”

“Damn, you’ve got a hell of a point there. You’re gonna propose to both of them at the same time? How’s that going to work? Are they going to—” Alex shook her head and waved her hands in the air, as if to dispel that train of thought, if only momentarily. “Nevermind, we’ll get there.
Let’s start with your culture. What does a Kryptonian proposal look like?”

Kara snorted. “Like a corporate merger. Not exactly the most romantic thing.”


“Hey!” Kara defended. “That was just the formal stuff. Don’t forget we had much healthier ideas of romance, sexuality, and family than most humans do. It just … wasn’t particularly connected with marriage.”

“And American traditions aren’t exactly tailored with queer women in mind, much less polyamory.” Alex made a face. “But that’s okay. We’ll figure it out. Just think of it as a reason to get creative.”

“Alex, I’m the last of my people. At least here on Earth.” Alex looked confused, so Kara elaborated. “Kal was born on Krypton, but he was raised human. He can’t even speak the language very well. And I have to assume the remaining Kryptonian prisoners from Fort Rozz left the planet.”

“We haven’t heard a lick from them since Myriad, so that’s a safe bet,” Alex confirmed. “But what does being the last child of Krypton have to do with how you choose to get married?”

“My people live on through me,” Kara explained. “It’s an important burden and right that only I can carry. I want my life, my family to reflect that in some way.” Kara shrugged before finishing off the remains of her lunch. “Anyway, it’s something I’ll discuss with my mother’s hologram. But I want to know what you think. I know Maggie was the one who proposed, but I know you were thinking about it too.” Kara’s mind had already raced through several dozen ideas. Should she get them rings? Would it be better to ask them separately or together? Big romantic gesture or something simple? In private or public? Should she talk to Ruby first? Roses? Dinner? An impromptu fight to Paris or Greece? Kara felt lost in a sea of possibilities, and she desperately needed Alex to ground her a little. “Come on, gimme some of your amazing romantic Alex ideas!”

Alex giggled, Kara’s enthusiasm revealing that mushy side that Alex kept carefully hidden away from all but a few. “I mean … I had a few ideas—”

The mood was broken by a loud boom, and tremors shook the room around them. Kara tried to scan the building, and she was once again frustrated by the DEO’s decision to line all the walls with lead. “Alex, I can’t see what’s going on. I’m gonna check it out.” She heard Alex’s usual demand that she be careful as she darted off towards the sounds of shouting and gunfire in the main lobby of the DEO. She was moving so fast that she only barely caught sight of thick black hair, trailing behind a dark woman flying past her at the same speed as Kara.

What the heck?

Kara froze. A human wouldn’t have registered that she did so, but for Kara it was long enough to stop and analyze the situation. Someone had broken into the DEO—slammed through a wall, by the sound of it—and she could fly and move nearly as fast as Supergirl. Why? Who is she? What does she want? And why was she going that way—Alex! Kara surged back down the hallway and back into Alex’s office, just as the mysterious woman broke through the exterior wall of the office. Alex struggled against her vice-like grip, shouting obscenities and working in vicious blows with her knees and boots where she could.

“Alex!” Kara burst through the new hole in the wall and into the open air, hot on the woman’s tail. Her hair trailed behind her in thick waves of darkness. She was a little shorter than Alex, with slightly broader shoulders and the build of a fighter or soldier. Even as she fought with the struggling agent in her arms, the set of her jaw, her posture and movement, and her tactics all
indicated a long history of military training. She wore a simple, dark red leather jacket, with black pants and combat boots—nothing that would reveal her affiliation or motivation. Unsettlingly, she reminded Kara a little of her aunt Astra. But Kara didn’t recognize the woman.

She pushed a little harder, trying to gain on Alex’s abductor while she activated her comm. “Supergirl, what is going on?”

“Vasquez, she’s got Alex! I’m in pursuit, but she’s just as fast as me. Maybe Kryptonian, maybe not, but I need backup on my position with the best anti-alien gear we’ve got!”

“We’ll be there,” ey assured her. “Director J’onnz isn’t here, but I’m scrambling a team now.” With the DEO alerted, Kara shifted the frequency over to the private line between her and Sam.

“Power Girl, I need you here now.” There was a couple second pause, then Sam’s worried voice filled her ear. “Kara, baby, what’s wrong?”

“Someone has Alex! She’s a flyer, fast and strong. I need you here right now!”

“On my way, Supergirl.”

Lena looked up at the quiet sound of her office door opening, lips breaking into a wide smile at the sight of her girlfriend bearing several containers of food—most of them for her, Lena knew. Not that she was surprised it was Sam; she was the only person besides Kara who could get past Jess unannounced. “Alright boss, put down your work. It’s time for a lunch break.”

Making a face, Lena glanced down at her computer screen. “Oh. Darling, I completely forgot it was Tuesday. Just give me a few seconds to square this last thing away.” Somewhere along the line, Sam had established a hard and fast rule that they would have lunch together on Tuesdays, just two girlfriends enjoying each other’s company, no work allowed. It was a very Kara thing to insist on, and Lena loved noticing little details like that, signs of how each of them rubbed off on each other the longer they were all together.

So Sam set about getting the food laid out on the coffee table, and Lena finished up her work before kicking off her heels and padding over to the couch. “There now. How has your morning been?” She pecked Sam on the lips before sitting down.

“No work talk!” Sam scolded fondly.

“And who said anything about work? I simply hadn’t seen my girlfriend since yesterday and wondered how your morning was?”

“Mnhmm, and I’m sure the question was in no way meant to include an inquiry into how Ziah and I are progressing with the budget numbers for your latest clean energy project.” Sam shook her head as she took a very large bite of her burger.

“Samantha, you wound me. I trust that Ms. Dox will have those numbers for me as soon as they are ready. I simply wanted to know how you slept.” Lena offered her most sincere pout, and Sam immediately cracked a grin before kissing Lena on the tip of her nose.

“How horrible of me to assume the worst of you, Ms. Luthor.” They both chuckled, then Sam finally answered the question. “I slept well, though not as well as I would have snuggled up to you and Kara.”
“Obviously,” Lena inserted playfully. “How is Ruby? Has she had any other issues at school since—”

“No,” Sam assured her. “You know how bad it was that first week after the Catco article on us. But Rubes hasn’t gotten into any other fights or been the victim of bullying lately.”

“Not since Kara appeared out of nowhere and told that bully to go to hell?” Lena offered, grinning wickedly.

“Hah, no. It was more like—” Sam cleared her throat, placing her hands on her hips in a joking impression of Kara’s Supergirl persona. “Young man, violence isn’t the answer. You should never judge someone for their family or who they love. And anyway, if you have a problem with me or my so-called ‘creepy alien lifestyle,’ it still doesn’t give you the right to take it out on Ruby here. I suggest you think about your actions and make some changes, because if you’ve got a problem with her, you’ve got a problem with me.”

Lena managed to hold off on her laughter until Sam finished. “And of course she then turned around and waved goodbye to Ruby, like the precious ray of sunshine she really is inside.” They both laughed, loving their girlfriend’s antics and protectiveness over Sam’s daughter, who they were all more or less co-parenting at this point.

“Speaking of over-protective—” Sam coaxed, leaning in conspiratorially, “—when are you finally going to tell me what the deal is with Jess?”

“I’m sure I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Lena demurred smugly. Sam had been poking and prodding about Jess’ background for years, but especially since she had moved to National City. Lena loved the little game between the two of them, where Sam insisted that Jess was more than just an assistant, and Lena played dumb.

“Lee, what the fuck? I’m your girlfriend, your best friend, you’ve practically helped raise my kid her entire life, and we share a girlfriend. You’re really going to continue keeping this from me?”

“Someone sounds grumpy,” Lena teased, and Sam did her best to imitate Kara’s pout. “Sorry darling, but neither of us is as good at that as our peppy blonde counterpart.”

“I know,” Sam groaned. “It’s really unfair. You’d think one of us would be able to tell her no, but she makes the great and powerful Lena Luthor melt just as easily as she does the dark and mysterious Power Girl.”

“Well, that’s why we keep Alex around.”

“Hey!” Sam furrowed her brow. “Don’t change the subject!”

Lena took a sip of the kombucha Sam had brought her. “Does it really bother you?”

“I mean … no, of course not.” Her eyes darted around a little. “Okay fine, yes! It’s driving me crazy. I’m like 95% sure she’s some sort of secret ninja or something, and I just need you to tell me. Don’t you think Kara and I would like to know for sure that you’re safe here at work when we’re not around?”

“As if there’s more than an hour or so here and there in which one or both of you doesn’t have an ear on me,” Lena retorted.

“We just love you a lot, okay?” Sam shoved her playfully. “Now tell me, Lee. Don’t make me beg.” Lena thought about turning that into a double entendre, and the only thing that stopped her
was Sam putting up a scolding finger in the air, already anticipating her response.

Lena bit her lip, then grinned. “Fine, I don’t see any harm in it. You already know anyway. You’ve never been wrong about Jess. Though she isn’t a ninja.”

“But she has martial arts training?”

“She is a well-trained bodyguard, fighter, tracker, and tactician. The fact that she is also an excellent assistant was a massive bonus. I was looking for someone with her skills the minute after I finally decided that I would testify against Lex at his trial. I knew better than to underestimate my brother, and though she would never speak of it, I’m quite certain Jess has foiled an assassination or blackmail plot against me on no fewer than a dozen occasions.”

“I knew I liked her,” Sam quipped, rubbing Lena’s thigh supportively at the mention of Lex. She was the only person who really knew how close Lena and Lex were, who had been around him before everything went south. But Lena had no intention of dwelling on that, not while they were having such a nice lunch.

“Oh before I forget, how close are we to finalizing the Sunderland acquisition?”

“Lena Keiran Luthor, what part of ‘no work during our girlfriend lunch’ is so confusing for you?” Sam poked her with a french fry, which would’ve been comical if not for her tone. “Keep it up, and I’ll tell Kara about the gorgeous redhead who flirted with you at the bar last week.”

“Sam, no, please don’t do that.” Lena added a little teasing plea to her voice, as if genuinely begging. “We wouldn’t want to endanger the safety of every gorgeous redhead in the city.”

Sam couldn’t help but laugh at that. “Oh please, Kara is endearingly possessive over both of us, but she wouldn’t go that far. At worst, she’d commandeer a news camera and threaten the city’s eligible ladies to stay away from her girlfriends.”

“Which would be a PR nightmare. Alex and Lucy would kill us.”

“Hey, I’m invulnerable.” Lena just fixed her with a withering glare. “Okay fine, Lucy scares me a little when she goes into full director mode. We’ll keep this dangerous little secret to ourselves for now.” Sam’s lips twisted into a mischievous grin again, and they both broke up into laughter. Doing so pushed Sam’s body that much closer to Lena’s, and she couldn’t be entirely sure that wasn’t intentional. “Hey so… don’t you think it’s weird that after all this time, you and I have never fooled around on this couch?”

Sam slipped a knee between Lena’s thigh’s, gently nudging her into a more horizontal position. Lena leaned up so that she was in Sam’s bubble of personal space. “We haven’t, have we?” She smirked, then took Sam’s bottom lip in her teeth, tugging ever so slightly before she let go with a devilish sparkle in her cool green eyes. Then she purred, “That’s on you, my dear. Kara’s certainly made very good use of this couch on any number of occasions.”

“Fuck, that’s hot.” Lena blinked, gasping at the sudden feeling of cool air on exposed skin. Her blouse was completely untucked and undone, and her knee-length pencil skirt was hiked up all the way to her hips. Sam gazed up at her from a perch between Lena’s thighs, pupils dilated and eyebrows waggling seductively. “No time like the present, right Lee?”

Lena blushed, the electric thrill of this unexpected twist curling through her. Instantly, she felt desire pooling between her legs. “Take me,” she hissed, not wanting to waste any time with foreplay. But just as Sam moved her hair back to lower her lips to Lena’s body, she jerked upright,
staring out into the distance. Lena had seen that look enough times from both her girlfriends to know that sexy fun times were going to have to wait.

“Kara, baby, what’s wrong?” Lena could hear the concern in Sam’s voice, and she pushed up into a fully seated position, hand resting on Sam’s back. “On my way, Supergirl.” Sam turned to Lena, fear in her eyes. “It’s Alex. I’ve gotta go.”

“Go!” she urged. “I’ll call Maggie, and we’ll head for the DEO.” Sam kissed her goodbye, and then she was out of the building before Lena could even registered that she had changed into her suit.

Power Girl locked onto Kara the second she took off from Lena’s balcony. It took her a full ten seconds to spring up far enough from the city skyline that she could safely move at full speed and catch up to them. As she approached, she could see a small, dark woman with thick, long hair holding tightly onto a viciously struggling Alex, with Kara trailing her by about 20 feet. Sam moved quickly, adding a burst of speed to pass by them as they began moving out of the city and coming down right into the path of the fleeing kidnapper.

The woman’s eyes went wide, but she was moving too fast to avoid Sam at this point. Power Girl smirked. “Hey bitch, that’s a good friend of mine.” Right before she swung a punch, she added a quick, “Catch!” to Kara. Her fist caught the woman solidly in the jaw, and she dropped Alex at the shock of it. Supergirl grabbed her sister as Power Girl continued her assault on the mystery woman. She was ready this time, and she got in a few powerful blows before Sam wrangled her and drove her swiftly downward, slamming her into the ground.

“Supergirl, she’s strong!” The punches had winded her a little, though she was swiftly recovering. She turned back to the woman she was holding to the ground by the throat, herself more than a little winded and bruised by Sam’s attack. “Who are you?” she demanded in the deeper, threatening tone Power Girl reserved for her enemies. “And what do you want with Agent Danvers?”

“Release me, creature, and I will tell you,” she growled. Sam looked over at Kara and Alex, unsure of how to proceed. The woman used her moment of hesitation to shove Power Girl away, kicking off of her and floating to her feet. Unfortunately for her, Kara moved at the same time, catching the woman off guard with a knee to the gut that doubled her over.

“She asked you a question,” Kara insisted, but the woman disregarded her. She shrugged off the pain and blurred towards Alex again. Power Girl beat her there, and now the woman was getting angry. Her eyes went white hot, which pretty much confirmed Sam’s growing suspicion that she was Kryptonian.

Sam lit up her own eyes, feeling the heat of the bright red glow as she warned, “Don’t test me. You can’t defeat both of us, so you may as well explain what you’re doing here.”

“I am Zora Vi-Lar, and I am here to seek justice from that murderer,” she spat. “If you have any honour, creature, you will move out of my way.”

“Calling me ‘creature’ isn’t exactly winning me over here, kiddo.” Power Girl narrowed her eyes, which continued to brighten as she focused her heat vision and prepared to fire it. “Now stand down, before I put you down.”

Unfortunately, Zora decided she was going to test Power Girl’s patience. She jerked her head and
took a side step at superspeed before firing her heat vision straight at Alex, forcing Sam to jump into the path of the energy rather than retaliate. Supergirl tackled her again, as Sam laid on the ground, her gut searing where the heat vision had hit her.

“You okay?” Alex asked, kneeling beside her. Sam flipped to her feet faster than Alex’s eyes could track, checking to see that her body had already healed.

“Fine and dandy, Agent Danvers. You wanna tell me why a pissed off Kryptonian wants you dead.”

“Not a clue,” Alex answered, training both her guns on the blurry, flitting mess that was the battle between Kara and this Zora Vi-Lar. “Let’s take her down first, ask questions later.”

“Agreed.” Power Girl entered the fray again just as a swift kick to the face sent Supergirl flying. Red heat vision tore a hole in the Kryptonian’s shoulder, disabling her arm long enough for Sam to charge forward and pin her again to the ground. She utilized her training from Alex to keep her leverage, her weight holding Zora down as she rained superfast blows along her head and torso. When she relented, the woman was beaten and bloodied. Sam fought back flashes, fragmented memories of Kara in a similar state, crawling weakly at her face. Not now!

The haunting thought distracted her just enough that she didn’t notice the sounds of incoming flyers, and she was caught off guard when someone new slammed into her, grabbing onto her and throwing her hard. Unfortunately for them, there was nothing around them for Sam to collide with, just dirt and a bit of scrubby foliage. She caught herself still in flight, everything slowing to a stop around her as she analyzed the battlefield in the blink of an eye.

Two more Kryptonians had joined the fight, both dressed dark pants and simple black t-shirts. It was weird, seeing two dudes in basic, nondescript casual wear just drop out of the air and join a battle of literal titans. One had engaged Kara, and the other was preparing to attack Sam again. Meanwhile, Zora was back on her feet, but clearly struggling with her wounds. She was gathering her strength to grab Alex again. Sam made a snap decision.

She moved at full speed, clothes-lining her attacker hard enough to collapse his throat. Hopefully, she hadn’t killed him, and the yellow sun would allow him to live after a few minutes of agonizing pain. Again, she intercepted Zora before she could get to Alex, flying far and fast away from the battle. Behind her, Kara continued to struggle with her foe, evenly matched with the oddly dressed warrior.

“Why are you doing this?” Power Girl demanded, holding Zora tight as she struggled to free herself. The soldier fought her with skill and efficiency, but it was clear that she had realized by now that Sam was more powerful than her.

“I do not owe you an explanation!” she shrieked. “Tor! Take the murderer!” Sam realized a few moments too late that Zora was no longer shouting at her. She released her, turning to fly back to protect Alex. But she had already flown them several miles away, and Zora dragged her back, a firm grasp on her cape. It wasn’t enough to enough to stop her, but it was damn sure enough to slow her down.

“I’ve known you for all of five minutes, and I’m already tired of your bullshit,” Power Girl snapped, flipping around to free herself of Zora’s hold before grabbing both her arms in a vice grip behind her back. The warrior continued to struggle, but Sam focused all her strength and energy to propel them forcefully back to the fight. They had been gone a couple of minutes at most, and yet still, she was too late.
Kara continued to fight with the Kryptonian who had attacked her, shrieking Alex’s name as her blows grew more savage and angry. Alex, however, was nowhere to be seen, and as good as Sam’s eyes were, she could only barely make out a dot in the distance over the horizon, flying away. “I’ll get her,” she screamed out to Kara, but again, Zora just barely managed to delay her with a swift kick to the back of her head. It was disorienting, and it took the last of the dark woman’s strength. But it was enough to throw Sam off. She lost sight of the fleeing Kryptonian and his human prisoner, and at this point, she couldn’t even be sure which direction they went.

Power Girl could hear the DEO vehicles approaching as she roared out in anger and frustration. Her eyes burned as she turned back to Zora, but she remembered Alex’s training. They would need this woman if they were to find Alex. She took a steadying breath before lifting Zora Vi-Lar off the ground. “You won’t get away with this,” she hissed, then flipped the woman’s weak, powerless body around, wrapping her arms around her neck and throat just so. She applied pressure in a move that Alex had taught her, cutting off circulation and air with deliberate precision. Zora slumped into unconsciousness in her arms, and Sam dropped her to help Kara.

But Kara had already beaten the man unconscious, and Sam had to pull her off of his still body as the Humvees came to a halt around them. “Supergirl, stop!” Sam tried to wrap her into a hug, but Supergirl was lost to her anger and fear.

“They took her!” Kara shouted, fighting against Sam’s arms.

«I know, sweetie,» Sam whispered in a soothing voice, tentatively utilizing the Kryptonian language Kara had been teaching her. «Do not fear. We will get her back.» The language was a good choice, and Kara began to calm down. The watery cerulean eyes that finally met Sam’s were familiar, having traded wild anger for palpable fear.

Vasquez seemed to know better than to disturb them, simply whispering the question, “Kryptonians?” from a distance. Power Girl nodded, and the agents began dragging out red sun containment units for the two unconscious combatants. Sam kept her focus on Kara.

“You have to be strong. We have their leader, and Lena and Maggie are meeting us at the DEO. If they wanted to kill Alex right away, they wouldn’t have bothered to escape with her, okay?” Kara nodded, hope and reason beginning to seep back into her expression. “We’ll get her back. I promise.”

Again, Kara nodded, and now that Supergirl fire was back in her posture. Internally, Sam sighed in relief. They would need Kara’s head in the game for this, since she was the only real Kryptonian left to try and communicate with these people. But there was no doubt in her mind that the blonde hero she loved would save her sister.

That’s what family did for each other.
The Prisoner

Power Girl escorted the agents and their prisoners back to the DEO, in case there were any other unaccounted for Kryptonians. Kara, meanwhile, flew ahead to meet Maggie and Lena and get the DEO working on the search for Alex. As they arrived, she could see Kara huddled up with Lena and Maggie, with the diminutive detective gesticulating as she hissed in frustrated, hushed tones. Kara broke away from the conversation the second she and Sam locked eyes, stalking towards the agents escorting the prisoners in sealed red sun chambers. “Wake her up! Right now!” she bellowed, one hand pointing emphatically at the chamber containing Zora Vi-Lar as the other balled into a tight fist. A couple of the agents visibly shrank, and behind her, Lena shouted her name. Vasquez, however, stepped right into her path.

“Stand down, Supergirl.” Eir voice was compassionate but firm. Sam moved forward, at full speed, and placed a hand on Kara’s shoulder, hoping to de-escalate the situation.

“Kara, let them do their jobs. They’ve gotta get the cells set up, and we need to talk first anyway.” As she spoke, Lena caught up to the runaway blonde, slipping a hand under her cap and along her back. Even so, Kara remained tense.

“They took Alex!” All Sam wanted was to wrap Kara up in a tight embrace, soothe away the raw emotions she could hear in her girlfriend’s voice. But this was the DEO, and Sam couldn’t risk any action that might suggest the true relationship between the two heroes. Besides, the focus had to be on Alex right now.

“The quicker they get these assholes in their cells, the sooner we can start the interrogation. I know this is difficult, but don’t take your emotions out on Vasquez or the others.” Kara blinked back tears and swallowed, then her entire body language shifted. Gone was the brash, worried sister, replaced by a steely superhero. She nodded and allowed Lena to lead her back to where Maggie was waiting. Power Girl nodded for Vasquez to carry on, then followed a few paces behind her girlfriends.

“You didn’t answer my question, Kara. Where did these Kryptonians come from?” Maggie seemed in control now, but her use of Kara’s name instead of her usual moniker was telling. But the question was valid. Sam had been under the impression that Kara and Kal were the last.

They all turned to Kara, who blew out a frustrated breath. “Fort Rozz.”

“The alien prison you tossed into space?” Maggie asked incredulously. Sam and Lena exchanged a look. Kara had mentioned it before, but neither of them had been in National City at the time. They only had bits and pieces of what happened between Kara and her aunt and uncle. As her eyes drifted back to Kara, she noticed the non-descript silver briefcase in Lena’s other hand.

“Yeah. It’s a long story, Maggie.”

“Then give me the short version,” she demanded. Lena looked like she wanted to intervene, but Kara waived her off.

“Short version: there were a bunch of Kryptonian soldiers contained in Fort Rozz and under the command of my aunt. We defeated her and her husband, but there were still several Kryptonians left on Earth when I got rid of the prison to stop Myriad. The DEO confirmed that the remaining soldiers obtained a ship and left—with Myriad stopped and their commanders dead, there was nothing here for them, I guess. But we never knew exactly how many of them there were. Looks
like at least three stayed behind.”

“But why did they want Alex? This doesn’t make sense!” Lena moved to comfort Maggie, but the question sparked a memory for Sam.

“She kept calling Alex a murderer. She seemed really pissed.” Kara’s eyes went wide in recognition, and she immediately spun away towards the cell block.

“I have to see her now!” Kara shouted, drawing Lucy’s attention away from the communication she was having with some of the agents from the retrieval team.

“Kara, the prisoners have been transferred to the red lamp cells, but if you think I’m gonna let you charge in there half-cocked and angry, then you don’t know me very well.”

“I’ve got it, Lane,” Maggie assured her as the rest of them caught up. “Li’l Danvers isn’t an interrogator, but she’s Kryptonian. We need her in there, and I can make sure nothing gets out of hand.

Lucy gave her a long, discerning look, then rolled her eyes. “Power Girl, go with them. Make sure emotions don’t get out of hand. We need this to go right. The prisoners are our only link to Agent Danvers’ whereabouts.” She nodded at Lena. “We’ll watch from the monitor outside the cell.”

Oddly, it was Lena who protested. “She shouldn’t have to go in there.” There was too much concern in her voice—as if she cared about Power Girl, more than she ought. Sam didn’t know why Lena was concerned, but now was not the time to let emotions risk her identity. It was beyond strange for Lena to mess up like that, and Sam rushed to cut her off.

“I’m going with Supergirl and Detective Sawyer. It’ll be no problem, Director Lane.” Lucy nodded, and both of them shot Lena a befuddled glance. Then they both followed an already moving Supergirl down the hallway with the Maggie and Lena right behind them.

Sam could see Kara’s impatience written all over her, and it gave her pause when Maggie stopped her in front of the door to the cell. “Kara, I know you’re angry, and you’re scared for Alex. I am, too. But we’ve gotta be a team here. You know what happens when we’re not.”

Kara swallowed hard, and Sam knew the story of Alex’s previous abduction, the emotional toll it took on Kara and Maggie. The look the two shared spoke to the shared trauma and understanding. It was amazing how much things had changed in a little over a year. Where they had previously been at odds, the new girlfriend butting heads with the overly protective sister, now they were family—sisters themselves. The two most important people in Alex’s life. Sam knew they would get Alex back, because there was no universe in which these two would let anything happen her.

After a reassuring kiss from Lena, Kara disappeared into her Supergirl persona and stepped into the room housing the reinforced glass cell. The door slid firmly shut behind Maggie and Power Girl once they joined her, and Sam suddenly realized what had Lena so worried. The prisoner was being held in the same cell that had held Reign months ago. No, that’s not right. This can’t be … that was in the desert base. Still, the cells were identical, and Sam worked hard to stifle the feeling of revulsion that threatened to overtake her. She was glad for her cowl—in the moment, it felt like a protective shield to hide behind, like she could sink into her superhero persona and pretend she wasn’t the same terrified, broken woman who had woken up in that other cell.

Several seconds passed before Sam refocused back on the people in the room rather than the room itself. Kara’s eyes caught hers, and for the first time since Alex was taken, her attention was firmly focused on something other than her sister. She knew exactly what was happening behind
Sam’s mask. But now wasn’t the time. Alex needed them, and Sam couldn’t distract from that. She shook her head as subtly as she could, then stepped forward to cast a critical eye over the prisoner. Supergirl followed suit, and Sam could instantly feel the intensity of her glare resting solely on Kara.

«Traitor,» spat Zora Vi-Lar, and Sam was glad she had really dug in on her Kryptonian lessons. The woman stood tall, with her arms clasped behind her back. Her posture left little doubt that she was sure of her moral righteousness, but Kara didn’t back down from the accusation, pacing around the curved wall. Her face had shifted to a harsh glare to match that of the prisoner, the glowing red light of the inner cell’s sunlamps casting harsh shadows across her face.

“Does she speak English?” Maggie asked snidely, and her tone nearly caught Sam off guard. She knew it must be an interrogation tactic, but it was still a marvel that she had that sort of control over her emotions with her wife’s fate in the balance.

Zora’s eyes did not leave Kara. «I have nothing to say to the human or your pet monster, Kara Zor-El. I will not bother utilizing their primitive language.»

Sam was already very tired of the woman’s insults, but she remained calm. “Miss Priss thinks she’s too good to lower herself to our level. Don’t worry detective; I’ll translate as necessary.”

Zora scowled. «You taught it our language? You have truly forsaken all honour. Do you care nothing for the great history of the Houses of El and Ze?»

«She is no monster,» Kara growled back, matching the warrior’s Kryptonian tongue. «And you know nothing of honour. Who are you, and what do you want with my sister?»

«Don’t you remember me, Little One?» Zora’s tone twisted sarcastically, and Kara’s shocked expression told Sam that the nickname held deep meaning for her. Kara stepped right up to the glass, sapphire eyes glinting with newly sparked outrage.

«Who are you? How did you know my aunt?» she demanded. Zora bristled at that before Sam could try to translate for Maggie.

«Astra In-Ze was the love of my life, you miserable little girl! I was her partner, her second-in-command. I honoured and loved her until the day she was murdered by the worthless savage you chose over your own family!» Her soldier’s posture broke as her voice became increasingly harsh and aggressive, and the final word was punctuated with a sharp pound of her fist against the wall. Sam was sure the blow was enough to bruise the woman’s hand, if not break a bone or two. But after the outburst she instantly resumed her controlled stance, her arms clasping behind her again as if she were completely unaffected by the pain.

Kara was blindsided by that, and Sam leaned over to whisper to Maggie, “She and Kara’s aunt were lovers. She wants revenge because Alex killed Astra.” Maggie immediately stepped forward.

“That was war! She didn’t have a choice!”

Zora glared at Maggie, then turned back to Kara without a word to the detective. «Do you share the human’s viewpoint, Kara Zor-El? Did Astra die a warrior’s death?»

«Yes!» Kara insisted. «I was there! Alex is a soldier. Astra respected her!»

«I don’t know if you are lying or deluded, little one. But there is nothing honourable or respectful
about stabbing an enemy in the back. Astra deserved better! That bitch is a murderer, and she will pay.»

Power Girl stepped in. «If you and Astra were so close, then where were you that night? How do you know what really happened?»

Zora rounded on her with the fury of a storm. «I was her most trusted soldier! I was the only one she trusted, and because of that I was not there when that fucking idiot Non went behind her back with the Black Mercy.» She turned back to Kara and pounded on the glass with both fists. «I should have been there! I could have protected her!»

“She had a different mission, and she blames Kara’s uncle for getting them into the fight where Astra died. Maybe blames herself for not being there to protect Astra,” Sam whispered to Maggie. Zora shot her a death glare, her military polish completely gone at this point. Kara, however, was still processing the information. Maggie made as if to engage with Zora again, but Sam put a hand on her elbow, shaking her head. They needed to let Kara handle this, now that they knew it was a family matter of sorts.

Finally, Kara stepped back towards the glass. Her body language had noticeably softened. «Zora, she wouldn’t want this.»

That was the wrong thing to say. Zora screamed as she slammed a fist against the wall, and this time there was no doubt. Sam could hear the shattering of bones to match the blood that now darkened her hand. «Do not presume to know what Astra would want, you treacherous child! She wanted nothing but to save this precious rock that you call home, and you would treat her murderer like family! She loved you, and you betrayed her!»

“Where is my sister!?” Kara screamed right back, this time in English. Sam moved as fast as she could, only barely fast enough to catch Kara’s fist before it struck the glass. The glass was insulated such that the red sun lamps only affected the inside of the cell. They exchanged a meaningful look before Sam released Kara’s hand, and they faced Zora together.

“She asked you a question,” Maggie barked, earning another scowl from the Kryptonian.

«Tor has the murderer, and trust me, you will not find them. He was there. He saw her stab my Astra in the back with that nightmare blade. He and Mur were the only ones who remained loyal to Astra after Non went off the deep end. They are just as committed to avenging her death as I. He will find a way to free us. Your sister’s life is forfeit.» She spat the word ‘sister’ with enough venom that Sam nearly flinched away from her.

“Supergirl, we need a word.” Lucy’s voice cut through the tension, and her tone left no room for argument or insubordination. Not that anyone in the room were technically DEO employees. Even so, Maggie, Kara, and Sam complied, leaving the room with only a few glares back at Zora.

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“Lena, what is this?” Lena had to move swiftly to catch Kara’s hand as she reached for one of the vials of faintly glowing golden liquid.

“Don’t touch it!” Lena hissed, her voice tight with fear. The vials were made of the same shatterproof glass that the DEO used for its cells—or rather, a much more reliable L-Corp version—but Lena wasn’t taking any risks. Kara withdrew her hand as if bitten by a snake, and Lena slammed the briefcase shut again. “It’s a highly concentrated, brand new variety of kryptonite.”
Immediately, Lucy and Maggie glanced between Kara and Lena, as if expecting the revelation to cause tension between them. Lena found herself biting back a harsh comment, but Kara responded first. “Guys, calm down. I knew.”

“I would never experiment on kryptonite without Kara’s—and frankly, Sam’s—consent. But I knew there was a chance of other Kryptonians being out there, or god forbid another Worldkiller, and we need to be prepared. Not to mention, if I could find a way of curing Kara and Sam’s weakness to the substance, I’d sleep a lot better at night.”

Lena smiled softly as her girlfriends each put an arm around her soothingly. “Okay, so what does this gold K do?” Maggie asked impatiently. “Will it get this bitch talking?”

“Perhaps,” Lena answered tentatively. “The fact of the matter is, I believe I’ve succeeded in creating something that will completely eradicate a Kryptonian’s susceptibility to all forms of Kryptonite. The only problem is that it does so by rendering Kryptonian cells incapable of processing solar radiation any longer.”

“You’re saying it’ll make them human?” Lucy gasped. “Take away all of their powers?”

“Effectively, yes. Or … I believe so. Obviously, I haven’t been able to test on anything other than a few hair, skin, and blood samples. And I cannot be sure the effects would be permanent. I’ve learned a lot about Kryptonian genetics and biology over the last couple of years, but I’m still an engineer at heart. I hadn’t had a chance to consult with Alex or Eliza yet—they’re the xenobiologists, not me.”

“You think she’ll tell us where Alex is if we threaten to take her powers away? Because I kind of doubt it.” Maggie’s tone remained under control, but her tense body language betrayed the stress and fear she was carrying.

“I’m with Maggie,” Kara agreed. Unlike her sister-in-law, she wore her emotions on her sleeve. “Zora is a soldier without an army, a purpose, or a home. All that drives her now is vengeance. She lived most of her life without powers; she’ll consider them an easy sacrifice to obtain her goal.”

“Yes, but without her powers, she’ll hopefully become more susceptible to other methods of interrogation. I don’t understand how J’onn’s powers work, but it’s possible he would be able to read her. If not, I have little doubt the DEO has ways of making her more susceptible to coercion or persuasion.” Lena locked eyes with Kara and found nothing but resolve there. Any worry she had that Kara would be reluctant to employ such methods melted away. It was certainly a more humane strategy than torturing her with green kryptonite.

“I’m all for that,” Sam said. “There’s a lot that she’s not telling us. Even if we find Alex, we have no idea what these guys are capable of. I mean, Astra died like two and half years ago, right?”

“So why now?” Maggie finished the thought. “If vengeance is so damn important, why wait so long? And why wasn’t the DEO aware that there were other Kryptonians still on Earth?”

“We thought they all left,” Lucy snapped a little too quickly. Tensions were high, but she clearly didn’t like the implication that her people had missed something. “There’s been no indication of any Kryptonian presence or activity on Earth beyond Kara and Clark, and later Sam. Wherever they’ve been, they were completely under the radar—”

Lucy’s voice trailed off as Kara disappeared from the room. In the next instant, so did Sam, and Lena could hear them talking outside as everyone else rushed to follow.
“Where are you going?”

“Back in there. We need to know what she knows.”

“Power Girl, it’s fine,” Maggie called out. “She’s right. See what else she’ll tell you, then make the threat. If she doesn’t give up Alex’s location, we’ll go from there.”

Kara turned back, placing a gentle hand on Maggie’s arm. “You’re not coming with me?”

“Nah, that bitch refuses to speak English, so I’m not exactly of any use. Besides, I don’t think my or Sam’s presence is helping anything. You’ve got this, Kara.” The exchanged a moment, then Kara turned back towards the door.

“You’ve got this,” Lena encouraged. Kara didn’t smile, but Lena could see the tiniest bit of weight lift off her shoulders as she nodded and headed back inside. The rest of them gathered around the screen to the side of the door’s keypad lock. Zora Vi-Lar’s rigid posture did not appear to have changed at all, and her glare fixed back on Kara from the moment she entered.

“I have nothing else to say to you,” she growled in Kryptonian.

“Why are you here now?” Kara demanded, pacing around the cell as if Zora hadn’t said anything. “It’s been over two years. Where have you been?” Lena wouldn’t have thought the soldier could stand any straighter, but she went impossibly stiff at the question, every muscle in her body tensing. Several tense moments, during which Lena translated the Kryptonian for Lucy and Maggie. Kara seemed content to wait and see how Zora would respond, without pushing any further.

After more than a minute, Zora answered. She spoke so quietly that Lena almost missed what she said. “Why do you trust these humans, Little One?” Lena translated as she watched Kara’s expression closely, her brow knitted with confusion and exasperation. She seemed at a loss for words, caught at a loss by the unexpected question. And then, just as suddenly, she wasn’t.

“I love them. They provided a home to a refugee who watched her entire world burn. They are good and brave and caring. And Alex Danvers is the best of them. She is the strongest person I have ever known, and she has protected me from the moment I came into her life. She is my sister. She is my family. And you will not take her from me.”

Zora’s face twisted into a mocking smirk, responding before Lena could even finish conveying Kara’s answer to the others. “The humans are good, are they? Let me tell you what I’ve known of these humans. They are ruthless, amoral, and endless creative in their malice and bigotry. They fear anyone and anything that appears different and inflict pain upon their own for simply being themselves.”

The invective stunned Kara into silence, and Lena wondered how she would process Zora’s perspective. She wasn’t wrong, after all, and even the sunniest person on the planet knew what it was like to experience bigotry. She was, after all, a queer polyamorous woman on top of being a literal alien. But Zora wasn’t finished, nor was she ranting for ranting’s sake.

“Where have I been that has delayed my mission of vengeance? I was a prisoner. An experiment. I was tortured with evil green rocks.” Lena couldn’t breathe. She knew where this was going. “I was experimented on. Made to watch as my comrades suffered the same. Two of us died. The humans treated us like monsters, and in doing so, they demonstrated to me what humanity is at its core. They are the monsters. A primitive, savage people. And the Doctor was the worst of them. She oversaw everything, and though she interacted with us far less than her underlings, the hatred
and evil practically radiated off of her. I could see it in her eyes, hear it in her tone.»

«Zora, I—»

The soldier cut Kara off, not having quite reached her point yet. «I think of all the humans, this Doctor is the only one I might hate as much as I hate Astra’s murderer. And then, all of the sudden, she stopped coming. And the humans seemed at a loss for what to do with us. We used the ineptitude of the leaderless drones to finally make our escape. Now, finally, I am free to obtain justice for the woman I loved. The leader I lost. And that brings me to your sister. Your Alex Danvers is a cowardly murderer who stabbed Astra in the back. And I will not stop until I have my revenge.»

Lena’s mind shrank back from the revelation, no longer seeing or hearing the people around her. She knew too well who this Doctor was. Even in death, Lillian continued to haunt her. She had taken this poor, heartbroken woman, broken her down completely, and corrupted her into a hate-filled avenging angel. If anyone could understand, it was Lena. Two years as Lillian’s object of hate would warp anyone’s view of humanity, especially an alien with few other experiences with humans.

“Lena!” Maggie’s sharp tone brought Lena back to the moment, and she released a breath she hadn’t realized she was holding, gasping in air for depleted lungs. In front of her, Zora was speaking again, and Lena realized she had missed a good chunk of the conversation. Power Girl was translating in her stead.

«—does not frighten me, girl. I do not need these godly powers to achieve my ends. Your threats mean nothing to me. Do what you will.» Kara tried a few more times to push Zora, to get any additional information that could help them find Alex, but there was nothing. The now stoic warrior had gone silent, and finally, Kara gave up and left the room.

“Doesn’t seem like we have a choice,” she sighed, voice full of resignation as the door locked behind her. Lena only half-heard her, mind still whirring. She barely noticed as Kara searched her face and rushed to her side as she realized what exactly it was Lena was processing. “Can we have a moment?” she asked, as she led Lena back to the private room as Maggie and Lucy nodded their heads and wandered off in the opposite direction.

It wasn’t until Lena found herself sitting with two worried superheroes standing over her that she finally spoke again. “I need to talk to her.”

“T’ll be the one to administer the gold kryptonite, if necessary, but first I want to talk to her. Just the two of us.”

“Absolutely not,” Kara responded immediately. “Red sun lamps or no, she’s a trained soldier, and she hates humans.”

“She hates humans because the best example of them she’s seen is my mother,” Lena snapped
back, her tone harsher than she intended. “And I’m the only person who might have a chance at showing her that the humanity you spoke of is more than a naïve girl’s idealistic viewpoint.”

“Are you sure it was her?” Kara practically whispered, and Lena did her best to temper what would otherwise have been a withering look in response. “Okay, okay. I know we were all thinking it, but I had to ask.”

“Kara, I think we should trust Lena on this.” Lena shot Sam an appreciative half-smile before looking back at Kara.

“Darling, we’ll active the red sun lamps in the exterior of the room, and you and Sam can watch. If anything happens, you know that Sam can be in the room before Zora can take more than two steps towards me. If there’s any chance at getting through to her, at convincing her to stand down, I’m it. I speak her language. The loves of my life are both Kryptonian. And I know better than anyone what a monster Lillian was. Please. Let me try.” She could see Kara on the precipice of giving in, and Lena through in a confident, cocky point to push her over the edge. “Besides, I don’t trust anyone else to administer the gold K. It has to be me.”

Lena knew she had won when Kara blew out a long sigh. “Fine, but you don’t open the inner cell until it’s time to administer the gold K. No, you know, in fact, you call for Sam before that.”

“No promises, love.” Kara took another deep breath, but she didn’t argue further as she followed Lena out of the room at normal human speed.

“I’m going to go tell Lucy what’s going on; I’ll be back in under a minute. Sam—”

“Babe, stop worrying. I’d never let anything happen to our Lena.” That, more than anything, seemed to soothe Kara, and she disappeared into the air as Lena exchanged a glance with Sam before entering the code that slid the door open again. Zora was seated against the wall of her cell, facing away from the door, and she didn’t move an inch when Lena stepped into the room.

«I have nothing further to say to—»

«I am not Kara,» Lena interrupted in perfect Kryptonian, and Zora was on her feet and facing the door faster than Lena would’ve thought possible under the red sun lamps. Her gaze was coldly calculating, piercing in a way Lena was unaccustomed to. Regardless, Lena didn’t react at all—calm and collected was second nature to her. She felt like Zora needed to see her as a strong individual, an equal, at least at first.

Zora’s eyes betrayed her confusion. «No, you are not. I was unaware there was another of our people in her company.» She continued analyzing the woman standing in front of her. «Or are you? You carry yourself like them.»

«Because I am them. I am human.» This time, the barest lilt of her childhood Irish accent slipped into her pronunciation. Kara said she adored how Kryptonian sounded on Lena’s tongue, but she knew that little nuance marked her as not a native speaker. Still, she was good enough with the language that she had fooled Zora even for that short moment, and Lena couldn’t tell if the soldier was impressed or outraged.

«How is it that you speak our language so fluently, human?»

«Because I wanted to learn my beloved’s native tongue,» Lena answered concisely, allowing just a bit of her genuine emotion into her voice. «She lost her entire world. It was important to me that I give her back every tiny bit of it that I can manage.» She allowed a small grin to play along her
lips. «Plus, it really is a beautiful spoken language.»

Zora’s brow furrowed, and her reply legitimately surprised Lena. «What is your name, human?»

Lena took a few steps forward, relaxing her posture ever so slightly. The briefcase with the gold K, however, was still firmly in hand. «My name is Lena.»

«And you are Kara’s beloved?»

«Yes.» Lena nearly added ‘one of them,’ but she remembered how Zora treated Sam. For all her time in captivity, somewhere along the way she had clearly heard about Reign. Given how she kept referring to Sam as a monster or creature, Lena guessed she had some knowledge of the Worldkillers and the cult that created at least one of them. Probably wouldn’t be helpful to bring that up at the moment.

Zora didn’t appear to have anything to add, but Lena felt like she was making progress. Her guard was still up, but she no longer looked like she wanted to rip Lena’s head off on principle. Lena decided to push her luck a little, but wasn’t yet ready to bring the conversation back to Alex. «We’re a lot I like, I think,» Lena suggested.

«I sincerely doubt that, human.» Despite her doubt, Zora allowed herself to lean back against the wall of her cell, which was the most relaxed she had been since she first broke into the DEO and abducted Alex.

«If someone killed Kara, I would be just as consumed with vengeance as you appear to be. To be completely honest, I am terrified to think of what I might do to her killer.» Zora crossed her arms, a shadow passing over her face. «Do you not believe me?»

«I do not have any reason to believe or disbelieve you.» Lena resisted the urge to roll her eyes. She wondered if all Kryptonians—who hadn’t spent a good number of formative years pretending to be human—were this dry and formal. Maybe it was just a military guild thing. Even so, Lena would not be deterred. She simply had to get more honest.

«If you were under Astra’s command, I’m sure you were aware that Kara was living here on Earth with a dual identity. Publicly, she was the Kryptonian hero Supergirl, but privately, she pretended to be an ordinary human. All that changed when the leader of an anti-alien terrorist group revealed her private identity to the world. That group, and its leader in particular, epitomize every awful thing you believe you know about humanity.» Lena couldn’t be sure, but she thought she saw a self-satisfied look cross Zora’s face. Lena frowned, but didn’t break her line of reasoning. «The leader of this group has been a thorn in Kara’s side for years. She has done much to hurt Kara on multiple occasions. Recently, she tried to kill her.»

«Do you intend to reach a point sometime soon?» Zora was no longer leaning against the wall, and she had taken several steps towards Lena. Doing so betrayed her interest in the point Lena was seeking to make.

«The name of that group was Cadmus. Its leader’s name was Lillian Luthor. She became too much of a threat to Kara, and I … I killed her. I killed the woman who threatened my beloved. My family.» Lena paused for emphasis, and she could see the understanding behind Zora’s dark eyes. Then Lena dropped the bomb. «That woman was the doctor who oversaw your torment. She was also my mother.»

For the first time, all measure of poise was gone from Zora’s body language. «The Doctor was your mother?» she gasped.
«Yes,» Lena reiterated. «And you were able to escape because we killed her.»

«Thank you,» Zora offered, and she locked eyes with Lena in such unwavering fashion that it was impossible to question the sincerity of her gratitude. «I know that you did not do it for us. But for you to see one of your own for the monster she was, and your mother no less, demonstrates the quality of your character. My only regret is that I will not have the opportunity to end her life with my own two hands. Kara Zor-El may be a traitor to her people, but I cannot deny that she is a lucky woman to have you as her fiercest defender, Lena Luthor.»

Lena bit back the angry words that threatened to escape her lips, but couldn’t hide her scowl at Zora’s insult. Zora simply smiled as if she understood. «You really do love her.»

«Kara Zor-El Danvers is the best person I have ever known.»

«Astra always spoke highly of her. Kara was like a daughter to her. She should be with me. She should want vengeance every bit as much as I do. Astra tolerated her husband, but she was no extremist. She wanted to help you humans, to protect you from your own ignorance and hubris. It killed our people, and she did not wish for Kara’s new home to suffer a similar fate.» Zora’s hands balled into fists, and Lena could see her struggle to remain in control of her emotions. «Whatever differences were between Kara and Astra, they could have been bridged. But that murderer ended any chance of compromise, and left Astra’s soldiers under the command of a mad man. And your people remain every bit as doomed as the day we arrived on this Rao-forsaken rock.»

Lena could have told her about L-Corp’s many advances in green technologies or Kara’s newly found public platform from which to advocate for immediate action on climate change. But that wasn’t really what drove Zora. She had been in it for Astra, and she couldn’t see Astra’s killer as anything other than an enemy. But she was actually listening now. Maybe Lena had a real chance at changing her mind.

«There are a great many humans who are nothing like my mother,» Lena pointed out gently, breaking eye contact with Zora as she walked back towards the door. She just hoped Kara wouldn’t freak out and interrupt her. «Just as there were no doubt many Kryptonians who were nothing like Non.» Lena reached the door and opened the hidden panel beside it. She typed in the necessary code and the door to Zora’s cell swung open.

Lena turned back to the prisoner and continued speaking as if nothing had changed. For her part, Zora did not move. She simply watched Lena curiously, a slight tilt to the way she held her head up. Lena hoped that she knew better than to try something. «I am not the only human who is fluent in Kryptonian. Who loves Kara. Who works to make this world a more open and welcoming place for alien refugees simply looking for a new home.» Zora narrowed her eyes again, then stepped free of her cell. She stood just outside of it, seeming to understand that this was solely Lena’s gesture of goodwill, not the DEO’s. The red sun lamps outside of the cell continued to burn as brightly as those inside of it.

«Zora Vi-Lar, I understand your desire for vengeance, but Alex Danvers is a good, honourable person.» Zora scoffed, and Lena began to lose what little hope she held for turning this around. «I didn’t know Astra, but I know Kara loved her to the very end. She mourned her aunt’s loss even as she fought to protect her new home from Non’s psychotic plan. Kara told me that Astra and Alex respected each other, despite being on opposite sides of a conflict. My relationship with Alex hasn’t always been easy—we’ve had our fair share of fights—but she has become my family. I have no reason to doubt Kara when she says Astra respected Alex. And I have little doubt that if you could let go of your pain, and give Alex a chance, she would earn your respect as well.»

Zora maintained a neutral expression, her arms clasped behind her back as she approached Lena.
She imagined this was as non-threatening a posture as Zora could muster. She halted with about a foot of space between the two of them. «Lena Luthor, you have my respect, if not my trust. I do not doubt the sincerity of your words, or the love you hold for Kara and her human family. But I will not be swayed. Regardless of what she means to you, Alex killed my beloved. I am a shell of the person I once was. This is all I have now. And I will not let it go.»

She turned away, and Lena could see how tightly she was clenching her arms together. «Do what you must. I will not help you find her.»

Lena sighed, but she could tell the conversation was over. She would indeed do what she had to. «You won’t resist?» Lena inquired. Zora answered with silence, releasing her grip and allowing her arms to rest at her sides. Lena took that as a ‘no,’ and she bent over to set the briefcase on the floor. She got the strangest sensation, almost like goosebumps on the back of her head but not quite, and she would’ve bet a considerable chunk of her considerable wealth that Sam’s hand was poised on the keypad lock of the room.

But Zora remained still as Lena pulled out one of the vials and loaded it into the injector. She placed a soft hand on Zora’s shoulder, and to her credit, the soldier didn’t flinch at all. «Please remove your jacket and face me.» Zora complied, but her face was an impassive mask. The woman Lena had been bonding with was gone. She didn’t like this at all. She understood where Zora was coming from, and she wished that Alex had found a non-lethal way to stop Astra from killing J’onn. But Alex was the agent, not Lena, and it wasn’t her place to question her heat of battle decision-making. Perhaps Zora deserved her vengeance, but Alex didn’t deserve death. She was Lena’s family, and this was apparently what it would take to get her home.

Lena moved with expert precision as she found a vein and injected the full vial of glowing golden liquid. Zora didn’t react at all, but Lena nearly dropped the now empty injector as the door slid open behind her.

«Return to your cell.» Kara’s eyes tracked the prisoner warily as she picked up her discarded jacket and returned to her cell, the door sealing behind her. Then she turned to Lena, switching seamlessly back to English. “We need you outside. The Kryptonian who escaped with Alex has reached out to the DEO. He wants to make a trade.”
Don't Lose Hope

«You bring shame upon the Great House of El, Kara Zor-El. You and your cousin both.» Kara was so stunned by the sudden accusation that she nearly dropped Zora from the bridal carry she had her in. The now powerless Kryptonian had been icily silent in the five minutes since they left the DEO, leaving Kara to her stormy thoughts. She hadn’t expected any conversation on the flight to the GPS coordinates given by Zora’s confederate.

«You’re a terrorist who was willing to follow a madman like Non, so I don’t think—»

«I would never have followed that rabid dog!» Zora spit, and Kara avoided her furious glare. «My loyalties were to Astra and no other. I was the only one willing to speak out against Myriad.» Kara hoped Zora didn’t notice her sharp intake of air at this revelation, but the slight tilt of Zora’s head said otherwise. «Yes, Little One. In my naiveté, I believed we could find peace with these humans. I tried everyday to convince Astra to turn against Non. But I see better now. Non was wrong, but so was I.»

Kara continued to fly, processing the new information. Her thoughts wandered back to Lena, and a ghost of a smile passed her lips at the thought of Lena’s attempt to connect with Zora. The thought inspired her. «Do you know what he did to me that day?»

Zora tensed slightly in her arms, but her voice betrayed no emotion. «I am aware of the black mercy, yes. I am also aware that Astra was furious about it, and that if she weren’t an incredible soldier with exemplary control over her emotions, she may well have made the rash decision to execute Non on the spot. Instead, she made just as rash a decision in choosing to trust your backstabbing sister.»

«Exactly!» Kara gasped in exasperation. «Astra trusted Alex with my life. She knew of our bond, and she believed that Alex had the best chance at saving me from that thing. You can’t deny that.»

«Perhaps not, but you cannot deny that it was this trust that got Astra killed.»

Kara shook her head. «That isn’t fair. Alex didn’t betray her. Astra forced her hand.» Zora started to respond, but Kara cut her off with her most authoritative Supergirl tone. «No! You will listen to me now, Zora Vi-Lar. When Alex pulled me out of that dream world, I was furious. Ever since coming to Earth, I have struggled with my anger, and it nearly overwhelmed me that night. Do you have any idea what it was like for me to lose Krypton—to lose my mother and father—all over again? It was only my love for my sister that shook me free of that place, and even then, having them all back—having Astra back in my life as family, not foe—was nearly enough for me to forsake my sister and my adopted world with her.»

She paused, but Zora kept her silence, eyes focused on the passing landscape. If she felt sympathy, she was in no mood to express it. Kara was disappointed, but she continued her appeal. «That night, we were all running on emotion. I don’t think I would’ve admitted it then, but I know that deep down, I wanted to kill Non for making me experience that loss all over again. But Alex was just as furious. She nearly lost her sister, and these who should have been my family were trying to take another world from me. To take her home from her. It was war, and everything was at stake for us.»

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“Astra wouldn’t have let it happen!” Zora insisted. “We weren’t trying to destroy your world, but save it. I may have opposed it, but regardless, Myriad was a temporary solution. Free will would have been returned once the crisis was resolved.”

Kara couldn’t help that she gripped Zora a little harder, her mouth twisting into a snarl. «That is crap! Non would’ve never ceded control back to the humans, and for all her posturing, Astra never openly challenged him. Non was an anti-human bigot full of rage and self-righteousness. From the sound of it, you thought as little of him as I did. Even so, Astra continued to empower him. She refused to stand up for what she knew was right. Tell me I’m wrong.»

Zora’s stubborn silence spoke louder than any words could have, but Kara wasn’t sure she was actually making any headway with the woman. «Despite everything, Astra was helping Non with the final steps of Myriad that night. Even though she knew my life was potentially still in danger, her focus was on his mission. Alex confronted her while I sought my vengeance against Non. Even after what Non had done to me, she continued to support him, and Alex couldn’t let her continue to threaten this planet. And even then, she didn’t want to fight Astra. She knew what she meant to me.»

«Then why?! Why kill her?» Zora roared.

«Because she was going to kill J’onn!»

Zora’s eyebrows raised in apparent confusion. «The Martian?»

«Yes. J’onn J’onzz is like a father to me and Alex. And Astra was going to kill him. Alex made a choice in the heat of battle, and while I wish with everything in me that things had gone differently, I can’t say it was the wrong one. Astra forced her hand.»

«Bullshit! She could have disabled Astra, captured her as you had before.» Zora’s protestations sounded desperate. Kara wasn’t sure what to make of it, but she knew Zora was dead wrong.

«We only captured Astra because she wanted to be captured. And like I said, it was a snap tactical decision made in the heat of battle. You’re a soldier! I shouldn’t have to explain that to you. Alex was facing an impossibly superior opponent who was about to kill her mentor. Alex had the kryptonite sword and a gun with kryptonite bullets. She had one chance to catch Astra off guard. What would you have had her do?»

Zora bristled. «She could have—»

Kara cut her off. They were nearing their destination, and Kara was anxious to get through to Zora before she had to deal with two angry Kryptonian soldiers instead of just the one. «If Alex had tried to disable Astra rather than kill her, that would only have angered my aunt. Even missing a limb or riddled with kryptonite bullets, Astra was more than capable of killing Alex with ease.»

Kara was surprised at the emotions pouring into her own voice. «Astra could have helped us against Non! But she made her choice. And so did Alex. I think deep down, you know that I’m right, but your pain and trauma have blinded you. I understand it, and I hurt for you, but I will not let you hurt my sister.»

A quick radio in from Lucy told her that they were approaching the spot, and Kara could spot a
lone figure on the ground a few hundred yards ahead. She began to slow. «I was there, when her soul left her body. I will never forget her last words to me. She was so happy that my sister was able to bring me back from the black mercy.» Kara landed on her feet, and let Zora push free to land on hers. As she strode towards her waiting soldier, Kara called out after her. «Astra wouldn’t want this!»

«Why was the traitor carrying you?» Tor demanded to know.

«I am no—»

«Her human poisoned me. Stole my ability to process the yellow sun’s energy.» Zora sounded almost dismissive, but Tor eyes flashed with rage.

«This is an outrage!» He was instantly in Kara’s face. «You are a disgrace to the House of—»

«Cease your petty outrage, Tor.» He continued to glare at Kara for a moment but followed the order and turned back to his commander. Kara didn’t let herself read into Zora’s reprimand, as much as her optimistic heart wanted to find a reason to hope.

«I’m not letting you leave with her until you give me Alex.» Tor ignored her, standing at attention for further commands from Zora. Her eyes narrowed as her attention flitted between the two other Kryptonians.

«Kara of the House of El may well be a traitor to her house, her family, and her people, but she has honoured the terms of your proposed deal, Tor. You will not disgrace yourself by failing to respond in kind.»

Tor seemed unfazed by the warning, but Kara was already fully aware that no member of the Military Guild would go back on their word. Especially not a soldier loyal to Astra In-Ze. Tor had promised to make a fair trade, Alex for Zora. Alex would not be harmed so long as Zora was not. Tor’s only condition was that Kara and Zora come alone, and only once he had his commander back would he lead Kara to his prisoner. This demand was a clear statement that he did not trust Kara and her human allies, and she supposed after what Cadmus did to him, she didn’t blame him. Kara’s only concern had been that the use of gold kryptonite might be considered a breach that would void the deal in Tor and Zora’s eyes. Tor’s next words proved that it had been a legitimate concern.

«They poisoned you,» he protested. «Let me end the traitor, and I will take you to the murderer she calls sister.»

Zora’s dark eyes bored into Kara’s, and her expression was unreadable as she kept Kara waiting to hear her judgment. Every second that passed allowed Kara’s anxiety to clutch a little tighter around her heart. She had little doubt that she could take Tor in one-on-one combat, but that wouldn’t get her any closer to finding Alex. So she held Zora’s gaze and waited.

«The humans did indeed poison me, and you let it happen,» Zora accused, her face still giving nothing away. «But they did so before they received your message. We will uphold our side of the bargain, Tor. Take us to Astra’s murderer.»

Zora gestured for him to pick her up, and as he did so, Kara cautioned him. «Be careful not to fly too fast. Her body is no longer capable of handling it.» He glared at her harshly, then took off into the sky. Kara followed closely, and the journey took nearly ten minutes. They dropped into a smaller town, towards a shady looking part of a warehouse district. Kara didn’t recognize any of it, and she had been too distracted by her thoughts to keep track of the direction they had been
traveling. She had no idea how far from National City they had traveled at this point.

Inside the warehouse, Alex was pinned to a wall, a steel pylon twisted around her midsection and crudely welded to the wall to hold her in place. Kara was at her side in a heartbeat, and she carefully used her heat vision to weaken the weld and pull the metal free of the wall, cooling it immediately to keep it from burning Alex as Kara freed her. She pulled Alex into a fierce hug.

“I knew you would come,” she whispered in Kara’s ear.

Kara answered simply, “I love you,” before placing a gentle kiss on Alex’s forehead. “Now, let’s get you out of here.” She started to lift Alex into her arms, but Zora’s voice called out from behind her, loud, clear, and challenging.

“Alexandra of the House Danvers.” Alex patted Kara’s arm to get her to set her down, and they both faced Zora. “Kara Zor-El speaks highly of you. She says you are an honourable soldier and a brave, caring person.” Her face tightened into a mask of righteous fury. “But when I look at you, all I see is the monster who stole my beloved from me.”

“Your beloved?” Alex questioned. Kara leaned in to explain, but Zora beat her to it.

“Astra In-Ze. My general. My lover. My partner. My life.” Her voice broke at this last word, and her anguish was palpable. “You killed the love of my life, your own sister’s beloved aunt. For this, I sought vengeance, but I will settle for justice. I challenge you to a duel in the Kandorian tradition.”

“Alex is not Kryptonian, and she owes you nothing,” Kara seethed, instinctively switching back to her native tongue. However, the next words came not from Zora, but from Alex.

“Why would I agree to a duel to the death with someone who could kill me by looking at me?” Zora almost looked impressed, and Kara didn’t know if it was due to Alex’s proficiency with their language or her skepticism in the face of Zora’s challenge.

“You speak our language, human?”

“Ever since I was 16 years old. My parents encouraged Kara to hide who she was, to fit in with human society, but I couldn’t force her to forget everything, not when I realized how much Kara had lost. I wanted to help my sister hold onto what parts of her home she could, and I wanted to get to know her better.” Alex stepped forward a step. “And I took no pleasure in killing Astra. I wish there had been another way, but I gave her multiple opportunities to turn on Non. She was going to kill someone I love, and I did what I had to do.”

Zora stood straight as she stepped towards Alex. “Your story is remarkably similar to what Kara told me. Whether or not it is true, all I have left is this. I am an empty broken shell of a woman without Astra. We may no longer be under Rao’s light, but he will reveal the truth of the matter. Between the two of us, the better woman will survive. She who is in the wrong will die. This is justice.” She glanced at Kara, brow furrowing. “As for your earlier question, your sister and your fellow humans saw fit to poison me with a substance that appears to have severed my access to the natural gifts provided by my Kryptonian biology under your yellow sun. My only physical advantage over you is my superior military training. That and the righteousness of my cause.”

Alex exhaled loudly, crossing her arms over her chest. “Well then. I, Alex of the House Danvers, accept this challenge by … sorry, I never really got your name.”

Kara thought she saw Zora’s shoulders slump ever so slightly, but it passed as she resumed her
soldier’s posture as she answered. «I am Zora Vi-Lar, of the Great House of Lar and the Military Guild of Krypton. Will you demand swords as per tradition, or are you willing to waive tradition and fight hand to hand?»

Alex frowned, and Kara stepped between them, facing Alex. “You don’t have to do this.”

Alex met her concerned gaze. “Kara, do you trust me?”

“Of course I do, but—”

“She’s in pain,” Alex whispered. Enough that Zora likely couldn’t hear, though Tor no doubt could. “This is all she has left, and while I’ve dealt with my guilt over Astra’s death, I … want to do this. Maybe she can find closure.”

“Alex! You could die!” Kara was too concerned to modulate her voice, and she had little doubt Zora overheard. Alex scrunched her nose, then leaned in and whispered directly into Kara’s ear.

“Kara, I know you. Kryptonian or not, I owknay ouyay ontway let me ieday. You decide who you are and what artspay of yptonkray live nonyay in you and atwhay parts of your ulturecay are worth oldinghay onto.” She winked, and Kara couldn’t help but grin at her quick thinking. The Kryptonians might have learned English in their time on Earth, but Pig Latin was a culturally specific and very silly thing would go right over their heads. “Honour duels to the death aren’t exactly your wheelhouse.”

“Guess I’ll just have to leave this one to you then, Alex.” She smiled softly and backed away. “Fight well, sister.”

“I’ve got this, Supergirl.”

«You’re cocky, human.» Zora began to pace around the sisters. Tor watched on patiently. Kara stepped back further, confident that she was the fastest person in the room. And just in case, she had already signaled Sam, who was no doubt already on her way to the location of Kara’s comm.

«We don’t have to do this, Zora.»

The Kryptonian lunged at her, growling. «I really do.» Alex dodged the punch, slipping in an elbow to the gut as she spun away. They continued to dance in this way for several minutes, trading blows and taunts in succession. If Kara didn’t know any better, she would say that Zora had lost the rage that had been driving her before.

«What does killing me get you? Do you think you’ll feel better? Be able to move on? Will you miss her any less?»

Zora caught Alex square in the jaw, sending her stumbling backwards. «You understand nothing, human. I have nothing left. My world, my people, my beloved… my very soul. They are all lost to me. All I have is my vengeance. I care nothing for what comes next.» Alex spit blood and blocked Zora’s next attack.

Their fighting styles were drastically different. Zora was military might and blunt force, motivated by raw emotion. Alex was craftier, using precision and flexibility to keep herself fresh and get in meaningful strikes where she could. Alex was slightly limping, favouring her left arm, and bleeding from her mouth, but Zora was wearing down. She’d been on Earth almost as long as Kara, and while she had no doubt suffered greatly at the hands of Cadmus, she was no longer accustomed to fighting under conditions where she could get hurt or exhausted. And it showed.
«This doesn’t have to be the end for either of us,» Alex urged, continuing to dodge and counter Zora’s strikes as she spoke. «Losing the person you love most in the world would break anyone, but it doesn’t have to end you. You can heal. You can find new meaning.»

«There is no meaning left to me!» Zora shouted, pummeling Alex with a flurry of blows that she couldn’t entirely parry. Kara’s anxiety spiked as Alex fell to the floor, but she knew that she wasn’t in serious danger just yet. Kara held herself back.

Alex grunted under a kick to the ribs but knocked Zora off her feet. She winced as she pulled herself to her feet and back away. «Kara lost everything too, but she found a new life for herself here. You can too.»

Zora pushed herself to a kneeling position, breathing heavily. «Kara was a child! She was impressionable and resilient. You humans didn’t see her as a threat, not yet. There is no place for me, among the savages who tortured me.»

«They aren’t all like that,» Kara piped in. «No more than all Kryptonians are warmongers like Dru-Zod or backstabbing cowards like Non.»

«Perhaps. Perhaps not.» Zora rose to her feet, seemingly catching a second wind. «Regardless, I was honest before. There is nothing left of who I was. I am an empty vessel, filled only with the spirit of vengeance. If this is my end, Rao will welcome me back into His light. I am content with that. Can you say the same, human?»


Zora landed an elbow to Alex’s temple, and it was a nasty blow. Alex fell again, and this time, Zora was on her. She wrapped her hands around Alex’s throat, leaning in as she practically screamed, «You know nothing!» Kara flinched forward, though only a few inches.

«I know that you don’t really want to kill me.» Kara could hear the confidence in her sister’s voice and knew what was coming next. Alex headbutted Zora with all the force she could muster, and while it dazed both women, only one of them had known it was coming. Alex managed to reverse their positions and place firm hands around the back of Zora’s head and her chin. «Don’t make me do this. Surrender, and we can find a place for you in this world.»

«Alex! Don’t kill her.» Kara supersped in between the two women and Tor. Zora simply went still in Alex’s grasp, accepting her fate. Even so, her eyes burned into Kara.

«Do it, human! On your honour! Kara Zor-El, you know our customs!»

“And I reject this one!” Kara roared, slipping into English without meaning to. “This is not Krypton. This is a new world, and those of us left here forge our own path. Kal’s path is different than mine, and I have no doubt yours will be different than mine, but you can make your way here if you let go of your pain.” She took a knee in front of them, dropping to eye level with Zora. «Astra would want you to live. We both loved her. I don’t want to be your enemy.»

Kara sensed movement behind her, and she had Tor pinned against the wall in the blink of an eye. «Do not interrupt us!» she ordered, her eyes glowing.

«Tor, stand down.» Kara spun in shock. Zora looked defeated, but also lighter, in a way. «I
surrender myself into your custody, Kara Zor-El.»  Alex released Zora, and then offered a hand to help her to her feet.  Zora glared at it for a moment, then with a grimace, accepted the help.

It was a good start.

«We will get you better accommodations, I promise.»  Kara sat in a chair across from Zora, seated upon her bed.  The DEO cell was spartan, but as comfortable as they could offer for their prisoners.

«Am I to remain a prisoner to these humans?  Is this my grand purpose you and your sister spoke of, Little One?»  Kara wasn’t sure how Zora managed to sound both emotionless and sarcastic.

«No.  Your crimes committed here on Earth are not so severe that they can keep you locked up indefinitely.  And the mechanisms aren’t fully in place yet to handle someone like you.  Rather than have a trial for kidnapping, assault, and destruction of property, you will remain in the DEO’s custody until you can prove that you are not a danger to society.  At that point, you can register under the Alien Amnesty Act and become a full citizen of the United States of America.»

«What does any of that mean?»  She blew out a frustrated breath.  «Why did I submit myself to this?  What is the point?»

Kara hurt for the woman.  She remembered how lost she had been when she had first arrived on Earth.  The anguish she felt at the loss of her parents.  The confusion at her abandonment by Kal.  And then years later, she felt all that pain all over again in the months that she found herself at odds with Astra, before her death.  Kara got through all of that because she found a new family here on Earth.  Alex and Eliza were there for her.  And she was determined to be here for Zora.

«The point is that you will find your place here, but it will take time.  And work.  But I will be here for you the entire way.»  She reached out and placed a hand on Zora’s knee.  «We got off on the wrong foot.  But if Astra loved you as much as you clearly loved her, I know that we can find common ground.  We’re family, in a way, and I want to get to know you.»

«And you will keep me prisoner to do so.»  Kara tried to keep the hurt off her face at the accusation.

«I hope I can earn your trust at some point.  But your imprisonment is your own doing.  You attacked a government building and kidnapped a government agent with the intent to kill her.  And with the haziness of Earth’s laws regarding aliens, it could be much worse for you.  But I believe there’s more inside of you than pain and vengeance.  You just need to prove that you want to find your place here.  Even if it takes you some time to find it for yourself.»

Zora shook her head dismissively and slid back to lie down on the bed.  «What is it you see in these humans?»

«They’re people, just like us, Zora.»

«Their capacity for cruelty seems to know no bounds.»

«Krypton had its problems, too.»

«This is not something you need remind me of, young one.  After all, it was your mother who banished me to the worst hell imaginable, all for the crimes of another.»

»And that was wrong, but it wasn’t her fault.  Not entirely.  The problem was the harshness of the
laws. The blindness of our society to the rampant classism and oppression inherent in our
governing structure. And our collective denial at our self-destructive habits.

At this, Zora sat up and met Kara’s gaze. «And you think this world can be better?»

Kara smiled wryly. «I believe it can be. I have spent the last three years trying to establish myself
as a symbol of z for the humans, and I’ve achieved some success. But I can do more, and I’m
learning that part of it is becoming a part of them.»

Zora raised a skeptical eyebrow, and Kara explained further. «I will always be Kryptonian, but I
have begun to see that I am also more. I’ve lived on Earth longer than I lived on Krypton. Our
home is gone, but we are not, Zora. And I’ve realized that it’s freeing in a way. The worst of
Krypton can be left in the rubble of our world, and the best of it can live on in us. And those we
share ourselves with.»

«What do you mean?»

«I have an adopted mother here, a mentor who is more like a father, a sister, two wonderful
partners, and a … well, not exactly a daughter, but I am growing closer to my partner’s child.»

Zora leaned in, curiosity written all over her face. «Lena has a child?»

«No, my other partner, Sam.»

«You really have built a life for yourself here, haven’t you?» For the first time, Kara sensed that
maybe Zora was opening up.

«I really have,» Kara beamed. «I just wish Astra could have been a part of it.»

Zora’s body language sank, and Kara regretted mentioning her aunt. But she sensed that what Zora
needed most was to really talk about her loss. «From what little I have seen, you seem happy. This
would have brought my beloved great joy.» Her voice dropped, both in pitch and volume. «I miss
her so much, Kara. It has been years, and it still hurts worse than any tortures the humans put me
through. How am I supposed to go on?»

«It will be hard. The best advice I can give you is to remember how much she loved you, and how
much she would have wanted you to try to find your way back from this place of hurt. And to lean
on the people who care. Right now, that is Tor and Mur—»

Zora’s eyes narrowed as if interpreting Kara’s suggestion to contain some unintended implication,
and Kara blushed. «Sorry, this is not the point. I do not know what your relationship is with your
soldiers, but I know that you have me, and probably Alex, in your corner. And that means you also
have Lena, Sam, and Alex’s wife Maggie, too. It is quite a support system you have lucked into, if
you’re willing to utilize it.»

«You’re being kind to me, when I tried to kill your sister. Who you clearly love strongly. Why?»

«Because you weren’t trying to kill Alex. You were trying to kill the source of all your pain and
grief. Your violence and hatred were the result of your love for my aunt. And I loved her too. She
would want you to be okay, to have a chance at happiness again. Since she’s not here, it falls to
me to help you along your journey. Just promise me no more kidnapping my loved ones?»

For the first time, a faint smile broke across Zora’s lips. «So long as your loved ones do not hurt
you, Little One, I should be able to manage that.» Her gaze dropped her feet. «And I am sorry for
the pain I caused you and Alex both. Perhaps I am not the empty shell I believed myself to be.
Perhaps there is room for me to find myself again. With your help."

Kara smiled warmly. «You have it. Now, I have to go, but I will be back. We will talk more later and figure out where we go from here. Thank you, Zora Vi-Lar, for choosing the difficult path. I can see Astra’s strength in you.»

«Thank you, Kara. I will endeavor to be worthy of that.»
““This goes without saying, but be good for Alex and Maggie, okay?” Ruby’s stricken look almost fooled Sam, but then a teasing grin broke across her daughter’s lips.

“You have such little faith in me,” she pouted. Sam just raised an eyebrow.

“Just remember, Kara can hear you all the way across town, and she doesn’t let anyone mess with her sister.”

Alex reached down and wrapped a hug around Ruby from behind, nearly identical mischievous expressions on both their faces. “Oh come on, Mom, Ruby knows better than to mess with us.”

“She better,” Sam quipped, not able to contain her own smile any longer. “You’ll call us if there’s an emergency?”

“Of course,” Maggie assured, then a devious look glinted in her eyes. “But only if it’s an emergency. Wouldn’t want to interrupt the love fest.”

Ruby caught the implication of Maggie’s tone, her face souring as she played up the shudder than ran down her body. “Ew, gross, Maggie!”

“Yeah, gross, Maggie,” Lena added with a wink, before mouthing ‘thank you.’ Then, as Lena hustled Sam back to the door, both Maggie and Alex’s faces softened into suspiciously knowing expressions.

“You three kids have fun tonight!”

“Yeah,” Alex agreed. “Wouldn’t want to keep your girlfriend waiting.”

“I don’t know what’s going on with you two, but you’re quite right. We have no intention of keeping our darling Kara waiting.” Lena hesitated only a second longer to see if Alex and Maggie would give anything away, but they didn’t. Sam and Lena said their goodbyes and headed back to Lena’s car.

Lena’s faithful driver Mark held the door open for them. “Ms. Luthor. Ms. Arias.” He nodded politely at them both, but Sam could hear the joviality in his voice.

“One day I’ll cure you of that annoying politeness,” Sam teased, and then slid into the car after her girlfriend. She misjudged the distance just a bit, but didn’t bother with any of her powers, allowing her body to fall against Lena’s. “Oops,” Sam intoned. “Why, Ms. Luthor, I didn’t even see you there.”

Lena rolled her eyes but didn’t bother to hide the pleased grin that tugged at the corners of her oh so perfect lips. Then, after a slight, thoughtful tilt of her head, Lena pressed herself into Sam, their lips crashing together. Lena’s breath was warm and tasted of pomegranate and mint from the organic chewing gum she always carried. Sam’s grinned through the kiss, her mind replaying in vivid detail the time she had all but tricked Kara into admitting that Lena’s breath was somewhat less than fresh sometimes. Kara had blushed wildly, the words passing her lips before she stopped to think, and Lena did her best to pout about it, even though everyone knew she wasn’t nearly as good at the pout as Kara was.
Mark’s voice broke her out of the thought, purposefully annoying in tone. “Ladies, I hate to interrupt the passionate makeout sesh, but I need a destination.”

Lena’s lips barely parted from Sam’s long enough to hiss, “Home, you jackass!” and then they were kissing again. Sam chuckled into Lena’s mouth, but pulled away as Lena’s tongue sought entrance into her own.

“Someone’s a little riled up, I see.” Lena raised an eyebrow in that way no one else in the entire universe could pull off so perfectly, and Sam offered a sultry smile in return. “Surely you can keep it in your pants until we see what Kara has planned.”

“I can, but that doesn’t mean I should have to,” Lena purred. She bit softly at her own lip. “What do you think is going on? Clearly Sanvers have some ideas.”

“Shit, you don’t think she’s going to try to cook again?”

“Samantha!” Lena scolded.

“What?” Sam snarked back. Lena knew damn well that Kara in the kitchen was a dangerous prospect. Then Lena’s devious smirk gave her away.

“You know as well as I do that Kara promised us no more kitchen fires. Surely you’re not implying that our dear, sweet Kara would go back on her word.”

Sam slapped her arm playfully. “You’re such a dork. I don’t know why I put up with your nonsense.”

Lena leaned into Sam, and her lips brushed against Sam’s ear as she whispered, “Because you do so enjoy the things I can do with my tongue.” Arousal thrummed through Sam’s body, and only the sudden stop of the car saved Lena from a very swift reprisal. Lena unbuckled her seatbelt and slid away from Sam. “Saved by the bell, I suppose.” Sam bit hard at her lip to restrain the pulse of want left behind by Lena’s teasing.

“We’re continuing this later,” Sam growled, even as Lena slid out the now open door.

“Oh, I have no doubt of it, darling. But perhaps you’d like to involve our girlfriend as well.” A stray image from a few nights ago sparked to mind, of Lena sitting on her face while Kara fucked her senseless, and Sam nearly fell out of the car.

“I’m so going to make you pay for that later.”

Lena’s eyes sparkled as she held her arm out for Sam to take. “I sincerely hope so. Thank you, Mark! Have a nice evening.”

“You ladies try not to have too much fun,” he called back, and with a wave, he was back into the car. Sam was tempted to shove Lena against the nearest wall, and only the possibility of lingering paparazzi kept her from giving into her desires. Instead she let Lena lead her inside the building. Only once they were alone in the elevator did Sam let herself give in, lips finding their way to Lena’s strong jaw the instant the doors closed.

“Is it later already?” There was laughter in Lena’s voice, but Sam didn’t rise to the bait. Instead, she pushed Lena’s hair back behind her ear and ran her tongue along Lena’s ear. Lena drew in a sharp breath, her body pressing up and into Sam’s. Then the soft familiar chime of the elevator signaled their arrival at the penthouse. She pulled away from Lena ever so slightly.
“Holy shit, what is that incredible smell?”

“Come out of the elevator, and maybe you’ll find out,” Kara sing-songed from the kitchen. Lena and Sam traded a look, and Sam stepped back with a final peck to Lena’s lips.

The scene they walked into was like something out of a movie. A seemingly endless number of candles bathed the apartment in warm shades of orange and yellow, velvety shadows dancing about with the rhythm of the flickering flames. The city lights popped even more vividly through the floor-to-ceiling windows in the dim candlelight. Bright red rose petals decorated various surfaces. Vanillas, spices, and a hint of black currant mixed with the soft aromas of whatever meal awaited them. It was altogether the most romantic setting Sam had ever experienced.

“Darling, this is…”

“Fucking gorgeous, babe,” Sam finished Lena’s thought. Kara beamed at them both, a soft blush painting her cheeks as she leaned in to kiss first Lena, then Sam.

“Welcome home.” She supersped all of their shoes to the closet before halting in front of them again. Kara looked radiant in a burgundy velvet floral top and high-waisted pink jeans. Her lips were painted a bright red, and Sam gently pushed her sideswept bangs out of her eyes.

“What is all this, Blondie?”

“I just wanted to treat my girlfriends to a nice romantic dinner is all.” Lena’s hands came around both their hips.

“It’s lovely, Kara. Though I’m certainly surprised you managed to arrange for catering without me finding out. Did Jess help you? Cat?” Kara’s face immediately shifted to a pout.

“Leeena. This isn’t catering. I made dinner.” Kara got even grumpier, and Sam was sure that Lena must’ve looked every bit as dumbfounded as Sam felt.

“So these delicious smells just wafting in from the kitchen…”

“Are all mine, yes.” The Kara pout intensified, so Sam kissed her soundly.

“We are very impressed,” she murmured. “What’s on the menu?”

“And when did you find time to fit cooking lessons in between superheroing, reporting, and being the world’s best girlfriend?” Kara grinned at Lena, then took them both by the hand and led them into the kitchen.

“I’ve been spending time with Eliza, actually. And this is, well okay, so maybe this is the only nice thing I can make so far, but that’s still pretty awesome for me, and I mean, I think you’ll like—I mean I hope you like it and—”

“Kar, I’m sure it’s perfect,” Sam assured. “Don’t second-guess yourself. This is the most romantic dinner setting I’ve ever seen, and it smells so good it distracted me from making out with Lena.”

“Hi praise, indeed,” Lena teased. “Now, darling, do tell us, what have you so lovingly prepared?” Kara bounced in the air at the question, then launched into an explanation.

“So, I’ve got balsamic chickpea avocado feta salad for you two to start off with,” Kara began, carefully enunciating each word as if the hardest part of the entire dinner was remembering the
name of the repulsive salad she had so devotedly prepared for the more cultured tastes of her partners. “Then I’ve got a mojito chicken quinoa bowl for each of us, tortellini with butternut squash, steamed vegetables, roasted baby potatoes, and finally, loads and loads of lobster mac and cheese for the hungry, hungry Kryptonians.”

Lena gaped at Kara as Sam surveyed the feast set out along the counters of the kitchen. Silence stretched out for several seconds, and Kara wilted under it. “You … uh, you don’t—“

“Kara, this is amazing,” Sam cut her off. She traded a look with Lena, who looked equally blown away with Kara’s ability to surprise them with her thoughtfulness and ability.

“So, when you said this was the only thing Eliza taught you to make, what you meant was that she taught you to prepare something like three different, exquisite meals, and you threw them all together just for us.”

“And then decorated the entire apartment in candles and rose pedals,” Sam added.

“And kept it all a surprise from us,” Lena finished. Their eyes met again, and Sam could read clearly Lena’s inner sense of nervous curiosity. It matched the not unpleasant churning in Sam’s own gut. She felt like she was suddenly on the precipice of something monumental, but she wasn’t ready to put a name to it yet. By the look of it, neither was Lena, and they both just mouthed stunted questions of ‘what’s going on’ and ‘you ask her,’ ‘no you’s. After a few rounds of back and forth, Sam put up her hands.

Fine. I can be the grown up.

Meanwhile, Kara had set about pouring them all glasses of wine and setting the table, as if to distract herself from their reactions. Sam asked the question. “I guess we’re just wondering what the occasion is, love.” Kara froze, then chuckled nervously. She turned and smiled brightly at her girlfriends, but they could both read the mild, impossibly adorable panic in her eyes.

“Nothing! I mean, uh, no special occasion. Hah! Can’t a girl just be romantic for no reason?” Her ramble caught a strengthening wind, and she stepped closer, holding out a wine glass to each of them. “Actually, there is a special occasion, and it’s you! Both of you! You’re both so perfect and wonderful and amazing, and and—” The nerves in her voice gave way to genuine emotion, and Sam’s own nerves calmed considerably. “And I just love you both so much, and I just wanted to show it.”

Lena stepped up into her space. “Well, you’ve certainly accomplished that. Have I ever told you that you’re incredible?” Kara blushed, and Sam found herself floating happily off the ground without having realized it. Lena leaned in to brush a soft kiss along Kara’s lips, and Sam was so weak for how much joy seeing them together in these little moments brought her.

“Yeah, you uh might have mentioned it once or twice,” Kara whispered a little breathlessly, eyes following Lena’s lips as she pulled away.

“Good. Now, I bet Samantha’s hungry, so let’s see what we can do about that, yeah?” They both turned to Sam, and she raised both of her eyebrows playfully. Nothing but gleeful adoration gazed back at her, and with a taunting grin, she turned back to the food.

“Dibs on the lobster mac!”

As they transitioned to the living room with wine in hand, Lena found herself captivated by the candles Kara had placed so beautifully all over the apartment. Not a single one had blown out
during the course of dinner, and yet none appeared to have shrunk in the slightest. Lena wondered what sort of exotic Kryptonian material could burn endlessly like that. The mechanics of it mystified her. Perhaps the wax replenished itself. Maybe the flame was an illusion. Lena felt the urge to run her finger through one of the flames just to test her hypothesis, but before she could, the temperature of the room shifted ever so slightly. The laughter and soft chatter between Kara and Sam had given way to silence without Lena noticing, and she hid her mild embarrassment as she focused back on them.

Kara was watching her with the same nervous energy Lena had picked up on several times that night, but Sam just smirked at her knowingly. Lena shot a momentary glare her way before turning back to Kara. “I’m sorry, darling, what did I miss?”

“I, um, wanted to talk to you both about some stuff that was on my mind.” Something shifted in Lena’s gut, and she noticed that Sam’s eyes had gone soft. Fortunately, her warmth against Lena’s side helped calm some of the butterflies. The three of them had ended up close together on the couch as usual, but Kara had a bit more distance between herself and the other two, ostensibly so she could more easily see them both.

Lena swallowed a sip of wine carefully, then raised an eyebrow. “Well? What’s on your mind?”

Kara’s gaze shifted between them a few times. “I’ve been, uh, thinking about some things for a while now, and everything that happened with Zora Vi-Lar maybe sorta put it all into perspective for me?” She paused. “You see, ever since I lost the ability to hide behind a secret identity, I’ve been thinking more about the future. I think I had some vague ideas about a future for Kara Danvers, and like, Supergirl never really needed a plan for the future. But everything feels more real now, more open to possibility, now that I’m just Kara Zor-El Danvers in all aspects of my life. I’m free to be myself, truly free, and I’m faced with this big, beautiful, terrifying question of figuring out who exactly that is.”

Kara smiled so brightly at them, tilting her head back just a little before reestablishing eye contact. Pride flooded through Lena, and she couldn’t do anything but beam back at her girlfriend. Sam’s squeeze on her thigh was all she needed to know the feeling was shared.

“So are we,” Sam pointed out. “But you don’t have any reason to be, I promise.” Lena was surprised by Sam’s confidence. Lena herself hadn’t guessed they would be having this conversation so soon, but she knew that when they did, it was always going to be the three of them. Despite the relatively short time all three of them had been together, apparently Sam had also reached this conclusion. And had already decided how she felt about it.

Kara was on the same page. “I’ve known for a while now that Lena and me was a forever thing.” Her eyes fixed on Sam. “I don’t think I would’ve ever felt comfortable pursuing a relationship with you if I didn’t feel sure of that. But somewhere along the way, everything changed, because there’s no Lena and me without you. We’ve all got our own pair dynamics, but it doesn’t change the fact that we’re all three one big complicated whole. We’re all in this together, and—and I want us to take this next step together. In whatever form it takes. Whenever all three of us are ready.”

“Darling, are you asking us to marry you?”
Kara blushed wildly. “Umm, yes? I mean. I don’t know what to call it! Marriage means something very different on Krypton, and the U.S. doesn’t allow for marriage between three people, and like, it’s fine if we’re not all ready for it yet. I just love you both so much, and I’m not trying to jump into anything, so maybe I’m not asking yet. Or, well... A-and if I am, then obviously I have no idea—”

Her rambling was cutoff as Sam fell apart, a vicious storm of laughter overtaking her as Kara just gaped. Lena reached out a hand to squeeze Kara’s. “Just give her a moment.” Then Lena stood, and without looking back, she paced into the bedroom. When she came back, Sam’s laughter had died out, and she was gazing adoringly at Kara. Her breath caught at how beautiful they looked together in the candlelight.

“And where did our Little Bird get off to?” Lena stuck her tongue out in answer, allowing herself to indulge in a rare moment of childish behaviour at the nickname. She couldn’t remember ever feeling this giddy. Plus she wanted to draw attention away from the hand she kept carefully behind her back.

“I needed to grab something from the bedroom, and it simply couldn’t wait another moment,” Lena teased, then set the long, ornate box on the table before getting down on one knee facing Sam and Kara. She had to stifle a giggle at how wide two pairs of eyes suddenly became. She was Lena fucking Luthor, and she was going to pull off this proposal with aplomb. “Kara Zor-El Danvers. Samantha Arias. I think we are ready for this. And just as Kara said, the three of us are home now. I love you both with all of my heart, and I want to make our family—the three of us and Ruby—official. Will you both marry me?”

Lena flipped open the box as she asked the question, revealing three classic solitaire engagement rings inside. All three featured the same pristine, pale silvery rings, each band tapering slightly as it met the setting, each holding a large, perfectly cut round gemstone. The rings were simple yet elegant, and Lena had put much thought and effort into making them perfect.

Kara’s eyes were watery, and Sam had already shed her tears, but both wore proud smiles. “Yes,” Kara gasped at the same time that Sam blurted, “Of course!” And then they were all in a heap on the floor, tangled limbs and crashing lips and pure, unadulterated joy. Then Kara bumped her head on the table with the goofiest, “Oof,” and all three of them descended into gleeful laughter.

“Is the table alright?” Lena queried.

Golden hair rained down around her as Kara leaned forward into her space. “The table’s fine, sweetie, now kiss me again.” Lena indulged her, but then Sam was pulling them apart.

“Ohkay okay, you two. I wanna check out the bling. We’ll get to the sexy stuff here in a minute.” Kara slipped back onto the couch as Sam helped Lena up from the floor. As Lena settled in between her newly minted fiancées, she reached out and took the ring in the middle before turning to face Sam. She held her hand out excitedly, and Lena slipped it its rightful place on her ring finger. “Jesus, Lee, it’s huge!”

She wasn’t wrong. The perfectly round stone dominated her finger, its red depths shimmering in the candlelight. “That’s because it’s best ruby my considerable wealth could buy. You’re the best, most incredible mother I’ve ever had the privilege of knowing, and even though it scared me at first, I love that so much about you. Ruby is a remarkable young woman, and while neither of us will ever be her mom, not like you, this ring is my pledge to you that I will love her like my own. You’ve both been my family through thick and thin, and I wanted this ring to symbolize that.” Lena pulled Sam’s hand to her lips, kissing her knuckles. “Moreover, you’re our heart, me and
Kara both. You make every moment we share together that much more vivid and alive just by being here with us."

The tears were coming down hot and thick now, but that didn’t stop Sam from wrapping a hand around the back of Lena’s head and pulling her in for a fierce kiss. She cried through it, and Lena felt awed by the moment. As Sam pulled away, she rested her forehead against Lena’s for the briefest moment, a reverent, “I love you,” escaping her lips before they captured Lena’s again. They shared a charged, emotional look, and then it was Kara’s turn.

Lena took the next ring from the box and held it in her hands as she found herself lost in the sparkling sea of Kara’s teary gaze. Simultaneously, their faces broke into absurd, painfully wide smiles, and Kara held out a slightly trembling hand. Again, the fit was perfect, and the fire of the candles around them reflected so warmly in the massive yellow diamond. “Kara, you are the sun. Our yellow sun gives you a power that so few are good enough to be able to handle responsibly, and yet that isn’t close to the most amazing thing about you. You made me believe in myself, and you’re an inspiration to me, to Sam, to Ruby, and to so many others.” Just as with Sam, Lena brought Kara’s hand up to kiss it. “You light up our lives in way I never even knew was possible. You’ve survived more trauma than any one person should ever have to face, and even so, you radiate joy in every aspect of your life.”

Now Lena was crying just as heavily as Kara and Sam, but she needed to finish. She sucked in a breath and released it to steady herself. “I don’t know what I’ve ever done to deserve the love and devotion of two literal goddesses in my life, but I thank Rao and any other gods out there that I have you both. I will do everything in my power to be worthy of your love every day of our lives together.” She had barely finished before they were both peppering her face with kisses.

“Kara.” Lena couldn’t help the tiny, mournful hum that escaped her lips as Kara pulled away to give Sam her attention. “There’s a ring left in the box. You think we should do something about it?”

“Yup. Definitely gotta do something about that,” she murmured, her face still close to Lena’s.

“No, you don’t.” Lena responded, her focus still mostly on Kara’s lips. “I just thought that we should all match and be—” Kara silenced her with a finger to her lips at the same time that the third engagement ring disappeared from the box and appeared in Sam’s hand.

“Hush. It’s our turn to be romantic now.” Sam kissed her cheek then smiled at Kara. “You’re the journalist, babe. Use your magic words. Tell Lena what she means to us.”

“It’s interesting that you chose an emerald for yourself, creampuff. Green is not only the colour of your beautiful eyes, but also the colour of growth. You’re the most stoic of the three of us, but also the most vibrant. Nothing is impossible for Lena Luthor, and you make Sam and I feel as if nothing is impossible for us either. You’ve changed my life, opened my eyes to so many possibilities I never considered. You’ve been a pillar of strength for Sam for so long. We can fly, and we can save lives, and we can stop villains. But you, Lena Kieran Luthor, you’re going to change the world. You’re the best hope for the future of this planet. And we’re the lucky ones you’ve chosen to spend your life with.”

Sam slipped the ring onto Lena’s finger, then brushed her lips softly over Lena’s knuckles. Kara took Lena’s hand from her and repeated the gesture. Sam finished the speech almost reverently. “You never, ever have to be alone again, Lee. We’re yours, now and forever.”

For several moments, the three of them just sat there with full hearts and glassy eyes. Lena had never felt so full of life, like for once, she could join her goddesses in their journey through the sky,
powered solely by the love shared between the three of them.

“With speeches like that,” Lena whispered eventually, “I’m not sure what we’ll have left to say at the actual wedding.” Her mind whirled to life all of the sudden. “Kara, darling, given that proposing was your idea tonight—and please forgive me to the extent that I perhaps stole a bit of your thunder—but do you have any thoughts on what a wedding or marriage might actually look like for us? It seems rather, well, complicated, all things considered.”

“Oh!” Kara shifted slightly so that she was facing both of them again. Lena let herself lean back a little against Sam. “I mean, you’re right about it being complicated. Obviously. I couldn’t even think what to call it when I tried to ask you both.” Sam chuckled at that, and Kara’s face momentarily shifted to a pout before she continued. “I want to marry both of you, in the way that most humans interpret that concept. Well, I guess not the legal part because of the stupid laws, but Lena’s lawyers can figure that out, right?”

Lena considered answering, but Kara looked like she was still mid-ramble, so she let it go. “But if you’re marrying me, you’re marrying all of me. And I need that to include my Kryptonian heritage, even if I have to repurpose some of it to avoid the classism my people refused to let die.”

“So what do you have—” Sam stopped talking, and a shift in the air told Lena that Kara had used her superspeed. Lena’s eyes immediately began searching for changes, and sure enough, three intricate bracelets had now come to rest on the table beside the now empty ring box. They were all identical and clearly alien. They were made of a metal clearly not of the Earth. Each featured three interwoven strands of the metal, which was ethereally pale, almost pearlescent. They seemed almost to shimmer, as if fluid, but Lena felt confident that if she prodded one, it would be incredibly durable and firm. They were remarkable.

“Kara, what is this metal?”

“Nahkrys,” she answered without a thought. “It’s a Kryptonian precious metal. Kal had some in his fortress, and it didn’t take much effort for Kelex to craft me the marriage bracelets. Though he did think it was odd that I requested three rather than two.”

Sam blurted out a question at the same time as Lena.

“What fortress?”

“Who is Kelex?”

Kara blushed. “Oh right, I guess neither of you has been to the Fortress of Solitude yet. Sam, the Fortress of Solitude is a little piece of Krypton my uncle left to Kal. It is a large Kryptonian building located on an isolated island in the Arctic. Lena, Kelex is the artificial intelligence that serves as an assistant at the fortress.”

“Kara, you have a robot assistant, and never once in the two years we’ve known each other have you thought to tell me about it?”

“Okay, fair, that’s my mistake. I will introduce you to Kelex soon. Can we keep talking about our deep and forever love now, cream puff?” Lena made a face at Kara, trying to seem scolding despite the joy she felt written all over her own features. Sam reached past her to pick up one of the bracelets.

“So these are some sort of a Kryptonian marriage thing? Like wedding bands?” She started to slide the band over her left hand, and in the next instant, Kara’s hand was on hers, halting the
progress of the bracelet.

“No! Not yet.” Kara took the bracelet, her hands pulling at it nervously. Incredibly, the metal seemed to stretch ever so slightly as she pulled, then glide easily back into shape. “Once they go on, they don’t come off. And we haven’t chosen our colours yet.”

“Don’t or can’t?” Lena inquired, fascinated by the properties of the alien metal.

“Kryptonian marriage was permanent. To remove the bracelet, the nahkrys must be destroyed in a very particular manner, and it isn’t without pain to the person wearing it. Under Kryptonian tradition, we would place these on each other’s non-dominant wrist. They would symbolize the unique new bond between our Great Houses, one that will never be broken, not even after our deaths.”

Lena hummed thoughtfully. It was a lot to take in, and she wanted to process it a bit before discussing the implications. “You know, our rings are made of a special metal alloy as well.”

“Is that so?” Sam asked, and Lena’s head tilted back to get a glimpse at the proud smile across her lips.

“Oh yes,” Lena chuckled. “Prototype L-Corp creation. I haven’t even named it yet. But it should hopefully hold up to the rigors of being worn by Kryptonians under the yellow sun.” Sam’s hand played along Lena’s arm, and Kara’s drew similar patterns along her thigh. Her ring caught the light as she did so, a tiny sun moving along with her hand. “I confess, I was terrified the finished product would be ugly. I so didn’t want it to be that flat slate colour of nth metal.”

“They’re beautiful, Lena.” Kara’s voice had that reverence in it again, and Lena felt tingly all over.

“Okay, so, for real: what is the deal with the bracelets? There wasn’t any divorce on Krypton?” To Kara’s relief, Sam sounded curious. Not freaked out. That didn’t, however, make Kara’s thoughts about Krypton any easier to untangle, much less explain. Where to even start? How to explain about how to explain an alien culture that she hadn’t discussed in any detail more than four or five times in the last fifteen years?

“Umm, no. Er, not in the Great Houses, anyway. I don’t really remember what the norms were for the jraogh—” She caught sight of the confusion on Sam’s face and blushed wildly. “Sorry, babe. The, er, citizens. Kryptonians who weren’t a member of one of the Minor or Great Houses. I don’t even remember whether they got married at all.” Her brow furrowed. “I mean why would they? There couldn’t have been any appeal…”

Now both of them were looking at her in puzzlement. Kara rolled her eyes. She knew this was going to be difficult. “Okay, let me try to explain. But just … remember that I was thirteen when I left, and it’s been almost sixteen years. My understanding of things might not exactly be perfect.”

Lena’s hand came to her knee and squeezed reassuringly. “Of course, darling. And you don’t,” she shared a look with Sam, who nodded ever so slightly, “you don’t owe us any explanation. If it’s too hard.”

Kara smiled, and it caused a tear to escape her eye. She hadn’t realized she was on the verge of tears. “No, really it’s fine. I just … I don’t want to give you the wrong idea. About my home. Kryptonian society was unlike anything you have on Earth. It was … you were either a member of
“Darling, you don’t have to sugar coat it,” Lena insisted, her hand still on Kara’s knee. “My wealth is obscene, and it’s beyond corrupt that the system enables families like mine to hoard it, as you say. But if you are going to be my wife, or whatever we decide to call it, you will be a member of that family, and you will hopefully be willing to help me find more just ways to utilize my absurd wealth. I do, however, understand your unease. Please don’t feel guilty for acknowledging the obvious.”

“Yeah, babe, I sure as shit don’t. I’ve been making Lena put her money to good use for years now.” Sam smirked. “It’s a lot easier now that you’re the last Luthor standing.”

Lillian’s death was still not an easy topic, and Kara noticed the momentary unease in Lena’s posture as she moved quickly to regain control over the situation. “Kara, you were telling us about marriage customs among the Great Houses of Krypton.”

“Right, uh, yeah,” Kara acknowledged. “Marriage had nothing to do with love. Not that there wasn’t love—romantic love—on Krypton. It was far from a perfect place, and the Great Houses put a great deal of value on tradition and class. Far too much, as I’ve come to realize.”

Memories of home stimulated the nervous energy already coursing through her, and Kara was off the couch and pacing the length of the living space in between Lena’s heartbeats. Her mind continued to work furiously, and she decided to just admit the obvious and go from there. “If I had stayed on Krypton, I would have married another member of a Great House, a man who was deemed a good match for someone of my social standing.”

“I thought you said Kryptonians were fine with the gays,” Sam questioned, a hint of censure in her tone. Kara blushed in response. Why couldn’t any of this have a simple explanation?

“We didn’t have words like ‘gay’ or ‘straight,’ but yes. When it came to romance, no one made distinctions based on gender. But like I said, marriage wasn’t about love. For all of the freedom we had to love whoever we chose, the structures of the Great Houses and the Guilds were very much tied up in traditional concepts of male-female pairings. House membership traced through the father, so every child must have a father in order to determine inheritance and House membership. So marriage was always between a man and a woman.”

“Someday we’re going to have a long conversation about how Krypton managed to be so egalitarian in so many ways, but still uphold such rigid and antiquated concepts regarding gender and class,” Lena interrupted, and Kara thought she sounded more curious than disapproving. The two of them had discussed Krypton on a number of occasions, and the planet continued to mystify Lena. More than once, Lena’s shock at one thing or another had forced Kara to consider for the first time in her life the glaring contradictions in Kryptonian society. Lena no doubt found it bizarre that a society with such advanced technology and borderline communistic government and economy could also be a place where women carried their father’s full name in place of a surname and quasi-oligarchic families wielded tremendous influence and power that traced solely through the male line. And perhaps she had a point.

Even so, Kara didn’t want her proposal to turn into an academic debate about the merits of Kryptonian civilization. “Later. I’m trying to explain the bracelets,” she scolded. “On Krypton, I would’ve married a man, and our child would have been a member of my husband’s House, first and foremost. They would have also had inheritance rights and a lesser membership in my House, the House of El. Marriage was about tying Great Houses together—building or strengthening alliances, influence, or prestige. The permanence of marriages helped ensure that the bonds
between Houses, once formed, remained solid and reliable.”

“And as a symbol of those bonds, the bracelets were also permanent,” Sam reasoned, her lips still fixed in something of a frown. “But then why? Why make bracelets for us?”

Kara smiled at the question, but couldn’t shake the butterflies that continued to flutter deep in her gut. “The way I see it, neither Kryptonian nor American concepts of marriage really work for us,” Sam’s confused expression showed no signs of clearing up, and Kara rushed to continue. “Three people can’t be legally married in the U.S. And so, um, I just figured if neither concept of marriage worked for us, we would make our own. I just—I guess I just like the idea of them. The bracelets, I mean. And they’ll be so pretty once we’ve chosen our three marriage colours!”

“Sounds like you’ve given this a good deal of thought, love.” Kara felt something in her body relax ever so slightly at Lena’s observation, and she felt noticeably more centered as she came to sit back down on the couch.

“I have,” Kara agreed, her voice quietly pensive. “When Zora first attacked, I was actually telling Alex that I was thinking about proposing. I’ve talked to her a few times, since we took the three of them into custody. A-about Astra, but also about Krypton and whether we owe anything to a dead world.”

“Do you?” Lena inquired.

“I don’t think ‘owe’ is the right word,” Kara explained. Nothing about her conversations with Zora Vi-Lar were easy—there was too much baggage between them for that. That didn’t make it any less meaningful to have someone to talk to about Krypton. Someone who had lived it. While she and Zora didn’t see eye-to-eye regarding Krypton’s legacy, their conversations were worthwhile and rewarding, in their own way. In time, she hoped they could find common ground. “What I know is that I want Krypton to live on through me. And … through the family I build here on Earth. I’m still trying to figure out what that looks like for me. For us. And I want to figure that out together. As a family.”

“So Kara’s been sitting on this for weeks,” Sam quipped, and Lena sighed contentedly as she began running strong fingers through her hair. Kara loved how easy and comfortable the two always seemed with each other. “How ‘bout you, Lee?”

“Hmm?” Lena couldn’t focus through the gentle pleasure of Sam’s ministrations, and she took a few moments to understand what she was being asked. “Well, I’ve been playing with the metal for a long while, completely unrelated to either of you, but the notion of proposing didn’t enter my mind until Kara and I reconciled. I knew that if we could weather that, the three of us could make it through anything,” Lena scoffed at the same time Kara practically shouted, “Of course we do!” But Kara thought that probably Sam was joking. Her hands hadn’t stopped in their movements through Lena’s hair.

Sam shrugged playfully, a goofy smile forming across her lips but fading just as suddenly. “So what about legally?” she asked, and now her fingers stilled. “Are you, I mean, do you want to try to adopt Ruby?”

Kara froze, her eyes wide with nervous energy. She hadn’t expected the sudden shift in conversation, or the anxiety playing through Sam’s now shifty fingers. Lena seemed to sense
Kara’s hesitation, emerald eyes snapping open as she moved to take charge of the discussion. She twisted as she leaned forward, gaze meeting Sam’s. “I’ll have you know, Samantha Erin Arias, that I already received your daughter’s blessing.” If that surprised Sam, she hid it well behind a well-practiced smirk. “As for the logistics of legal arrangements—” she took Sam’s hand with her, then Kara’s in her right, “—I have more than enough lawyers to work that out for us.”

Kara moved closer, reaching out with her free hand to place it on Sam’s arm. “I would’ve never asked you to marry me if I didn’t want Ruby in my life just as much.” She nibbled at her bottom lip nervously. “I don’t know what any of this makes me, whether I’ll ever be a mom to Ruby, really. But she is my family, I have no doubt about that. And I will always protect her and love her, with everything in me.”

The next moment was between Kara and Sam alone, their movements measured at a speed too fast for Lena to comprehend. Sam’s eyes grew glassy as her shoulders softened, and then she was in Kara’s space. Their lips met, tentative at first and then with confident passion, and Kara breathed in Sam’s relief at her reassuring words. Kara’s right hand lifted to Sam’s jaw, her fingers stretching and curving ever so slightly into the hair behind her ear.

As Sam withdrew, everything slowed back to human speeds, and they both shifted towards Lena. Her eyebrow raised as she shot a pointed look at Kara, and she realized that her other hand had found its way quite far up Lena’s thigh. Kara could already feel warmth radiating from between Lena’s legs, and her body responded with an electric thrum of desire up her spine. It only intensified when Lena bit her lip, and Sam took Kara’s hand from its place on her jaw and took Kara’s thumb between her teeth.

Kara’s heart pounded in her chest, and the air between the three of them practically crackled with tension. “We can talk logistics later,” she panted. “Right now, I need you to take me to bed.”

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