the two-body problem
by ultranos

Summary

When Alex signed up for the DEO, she knew she’d be putting herself at risk for Kara’s sake.

Getting turned into a lutrinae was nowhere in her contract.

Notes

This entirely @volando_voy's fault.
“Kara, down!”

Alex slams into her, and Kara’s not thinking straight, not expecting a fight when she’s out as normal, so she rolls with the impact, dropping to the ground.

There’s a bright flash of light.

The man with the device, the one who’s threatening everyone, gasps and the weapon falls from his hands. Not that it matters much, since James tackles him to the ground. There’s a crunch and a sharp yelp. Maggie’s dashing over to help, allowing Kara to make sure Alex is okay.

Kara nearly feels her heart stop when she spots the pile of clothes, clothes Alex was wearing, piled up three feet away.

Her sister is nowhere to be seen.

“ALEX!”

Oh please no, not Alex. Not for something this stupid. Kara crawls over to the pile. Her heart leaps to her throat when the clothing shifts a little. And then a head pops out. A furry little head, with whiskers and tiny ears and sharp little teeth. Belonging to… an otter?

Kara blinks.

The otter looks down, and then erupts in furious… squeaks.

“…Alex?”

—

Okay. Maybe back up a bit.

The night did not start out this way. No, in fact, it had started out great. She and James had decided to go grab milkshakes and burgers, because Snapper’s been on her case and James is an excellent friend and knows when Kara needs to drown her sorrows in ice cream. What she didn’t expect was to spot Alex halfway down the street, just kinda hanging there. Kara was about to yell when that NCPD detective, Sawyer?, strolled up.

And then the most amazing thing happened.

Alex got this absolutely stupid look on her face and if Kara can tell she’s trying to play it cool and failing, this is… there are no words. Because it looks like Alex has a date, which she did not inform Kara of, and this is kind of amazing and awesome, and oh man, Alex is going to screw this up if it’s left in her own hands. It’s a bad rom-com waiting to happen.

Kara dragged James into a nearby store. “What?” he asked

“I just saw Alex down the road! I think she’s meeting someone!”

James poked his head out the window. “Isn’t that Maggie Sawyer, from NCPD? Is there trouble?”

“No! I mean, I don’t think so. I think it’s a date. I mean, maybe. Alex is downright sappy over
there.”

He looked dubious. “Sappy? Alex? As in your sister, Alex? Are we talking about the same person?”

Kara huffed. “Just look!”

James stuck his head out again. “...really?”

“Just trust me, okay, she’s totally goo.” Okay, so now what to do? That is not a face she’s really ever seen Alex make, and since Kara is the best little sister and an actual superhero, it’s clearly her duty to save her sister from herself. And what better way than by saying hi?

“Kara, I don’t think this is a good idea,” said James.

“Oh come on, what’s the worst that could happen?”

“Oooh boy...”

Kara grabbed him by the hand and dragged him back outside. “Hey! Alex!”

Even from halfway down the street, Kara saw Alex blinking in confusion. “Kara? What - what are you doing here? James?”

“Uh, hi Alex,” James said while rubbing the back of his neck. “Coincidence meeting you out here.”

Maggie Sawyer raised an eyebrow. “So how do you know the head of CatCo Media, Danvers?”

Alex stared at the sky and sighed. “That would be because of my sister, who is now a reporter at CatCo.” Despite her theatrics, Alex’s voice was warm. “Maggie, meet Kara. Kara, this is Maggie. We’ve, um, been working together.”

Kara beamed. Maggie gave her a smile as she shook her hand. “Nice. And before you ask, I’m off the clock and totally not answering any questions except ‘what do you want to drink?’”

Just for that, Kara gave her a fake pout, which earned her a shove from Alex.

That’s when things started going wrong.

She did not expect it at all, although maybe she should have, when a skinny man in weird armor and a bulky helmet stepped out across the plaza and started threatening everyone with a weapon she’d never seen before. Said he was going to start shooting if people didn’t kick their wallets over right then.

And Kara wasn’t in her costume. She couldn’t just zoom over there and take care of this that way, and there were way too many people around, and she just froze for just half a second too long. Because the guy zeroed in on her, and Alex didn’t even hesitate.

And...well, okay, James might have been right.

—

Back in the present, there really isn’t anything else to do but take everyone to the DEO, because Kara has no idea where to start on fixing this. Maggie takes three steps into the building, then turns to Kara. “Oh! Wait, you’re… oh god, that’s why.”
Kara’s jaw drops. Did she just figure out who she was? “Wait, what— “

“Can someone please explain why there is a river rat in the — Alex!!” J’onn stops short and just… stares at the otter who is currently squirming in Kara’s arms. He looks stunned for a second, then frowns. “Alex, please tone down the vocabulary.”

Well, at least J’onn’s mind reading still works.

Alex freezes.

“Okay, let’s try again. Why is my agent currently a small aquatic mammal?”

“That,” says Maggie as she grabs the prisoner from a helpful DEO agent, “is an excellent question, and he is going to helpfully tell us.” Maggie’s smile is very, very toothy.

The prisoner cringes. “I don’t know!” he whines. “I… I just found it and I needed the money to pay rent and I didn’t want to cause any trouble”

“You dressed up like a villain in National City, the city where Supergirl lives, and threatened a plaza full of people on a Friday night,” Maggie deadpans. “What part of that is ‘not causing trouble’?”

“It seemed like a good idea at the time?” he tries. She shakes him. He cringes more. “Eep.”

J’onn pinches the bridge of his nose. “Can you reverse it?”

“Um…”

J’onn levels a very expectant look at the prisoner. Kara fights the urge to start babbling.

The guy caves. “I don’t know how it works, I just found it!” He looks back at Maggie and hunches inward. “Please don’t hurt me.”

Alex chooses this moment to start squeaking furiously. J’onn sighs. “Okay, where is this device?”

James winces. “Yeah, about that. It was…well, take a look,” he holds up an evidence bag full of very smashed, very alien looking electronics. “It broke his fall when I tackled him. Emphasis on broke.”

Everyone looks at the broken device. Then everyone looks at Alex.

This is going to be a problem.

—

“Hey Winn, I’m sorry, I’m going to need a huge favor.”

“Kara? Wait, what happened? I can be back at — DUDE COVER ME— sorry, Overwatch. What is it?”

“You can pick up a big-ish dog bed, water and food dishes… oh! And one of those squishy ball toys.”

“… What.”

“Yeah, I swear I’ll pay you back, I just need those at my apartment real soon?… aaaand a litter
box. Thank you, Winn, see you soon!”

“Kara… Kara did you spontaneously adopt a dog? Kara? 

Guys, your head is not cover. Oh man, I knew it was going to be one of those days…”

——

“Well, the tests all say that Agent Danvers here is a perfectly healthy juvenile North American river otter,” the DEO scientist said. “I have no idea.”

Alex trills, but before she can make any sudden movements, J’onn’s hand comes down on her back. “No.”

“So what can we do?” Kara asks, because really this is very distressing, no matter that the sound Alex just made was criminally adorable and— Right. Distressing.

The scientist shrugs helplessly. “I went to vet school. This is so not my area of expertise.” She glances down at the table. “And the person who is the expert currently has no opposable thumbs.”

Alex squeaks.

“Yeah, I don’t even need a translator for that one, sir.”

——

“Alex,” Kara most definitely does not whine, “we talked about this. You know you can’t stay here at the DEO. What if something goes wrong? Or someone escapes or attacks? Or locks you in your locker as a prank?”

Apparently, Wikipedia failed to mention that otters can give very unimpressed looks.

Kara rolls her eyes. “You’re coming home with me. Come on, I’ll give you full control of Netflix.”

Alex shakes her head furiously.

“What, you’re going to go to your apartment? Alex, you’re an otter. How are you going to work, like, anything there?”

“I don’t think your sister wants to get into the dog crate,” James says slowly.

Oh. Okay, it’s not like she can really blame Alex. That’s got to be humiliating and, well, it’s a cage. Who the hell would want to be put into a literal cage? But the best and quickest way to actually get Alex home is flying, and Kara’s terrified of dropping or crushing her now that she’s small and furry and wriggly. Hence the crate. Except Alex is being stubborn and won’t get in, so Kara’s currently kneeling on the ground trying to make eye contact with her now-very-small big sister to convince her to get in. James is at least trying to be helpful, unlike Maggie, who had to wander off five minutes ago because she was laughing too hard.

“Alex,” Kara absolutely does not whine.

The response is a long series of squeaks, and Kara is sure if Alex could cross her arms, she would be.

“I think I might have an alternative,” J’onn says as he comes back into the lab, carrying a cloth bundle. “Davidson’s son just outgrew it, and he had it in his car. He’s willing to donate it.” The bundle turns out to be one of those infant carriers that strap to the chest.
“Wait, what.”

“Well, if Alex doesn’t want the crate, then you need some way of getting home.” J’onn sounds way too reasonable for this. But he has a point and they’ve been here for hours and Kara just kinda wants to go home. Maybe this is all just a really weird dream.

She grabs the carrier. “Well?”

—

“Okay, so how does this strap work again?”

“Hold up, let me wrap it around your back there, Kara, just...hold still Alex.”

There is the sound of muffled squeaking.

“Oh right, your tail.”

—

If she’s honest with herself, it’s probably the most stressful flight ever, even with the sling. By the time Kara lands on her windowsill, Alex is practically burrowed into her chest and oh my god she needs to stop herself from high-pitched squeeing because this is way too cute.

A knock on the door breaks that train of thought. It can’t be James and Maggie, because they were driving back and going to meet up here, but a quick check says it’s Winn. Who is lounging with his back against the wall and a fairly impressive number of bags.

“Okay Kara, I ran to the only pet store still open, and I got you the red bowl and blue bed because you have a color-scheme going and oh my god what is that on your chest?” Winn starts off as soon as she manages to open the door, eyes going wide. “That...that is not a dog or a cat. Kara, what did you do?”

“I didn’t do anything!” she protests. “It’s, um, complicated?”

Winn gives her a skeptical look as he steps through the door. “You were hanging out with James. That is an otter. How does an otter come into all of this?” He pauses for a moment, head tilted. “...an otter who is...yelling ‘help’ over and over...Kara, why is this thing squeaking in Morse code?”

“Wait, you can understand her?” Alex stops wiggling for a second, and then her tail starts thrashing madly, whacking Kara in the side over and over. “Alex, will you chill?”

He blinks. “That is definitely Morse code. Wait, did your sister get turned into an otter? How did that happen?”

“How did you even figure that out that fast?”

“Kara...look at our lives. Our lives? This is our normal.” He pauses. “...do we ever get other-people-normal weekends at the DEO?”

Alex squeaks.

“Yeah, didn’t think so.”
Between both herself and Winn, they manage to get Alex out of the carrier. Now she’s trying to figure out where to put the puppy bed and bowl, while Alex is perched on the back of her couch watching with a very irritated expression.

“You know,” says Winn as he tosses the ball he bought around, “somehow your sister remains far too intimidating even like this.”

Kara blinks, then turns to look, and sure enough, Alex is looking way too smug at that. “That’s gonna go to her head.”

“Yeah, well, now she has sharp teeth and claws. I’m not going to make her upset at me.”

“She wouldn’t do that.” Then, to Alex: “Would you?”

Alex hisses.

“Stop that.”

Before this manages to escalate any further, and Kara’s not even a hundred percent sure it how even can, there’s a knock at the door.

“Sorry, that took longer than expected,” James explains as he and Maggie tromp into the apartment.

“We stopped by a 24-hour grocery store,” says Maggie as she hands over a few shopping bags.

“I do actually have food in this apartment.”

He snorts. “For you, yes. But I don’t think otters can survive off of sticky buns.”

“We picked up fish.” Alex seems to perk up at that, or at least seems incredibly intent on the plastic bags. “Oh, so now I get your attention, I see how it is.” Maggie pulls out a vacuum-packed fish fillet of some type and Alex jumps off the back of the sofa to follow her into the kitchen, squeaking half-heartedly. It’s almost hilariously adorable.

“She googled this stuff all on the way over,” James mutters to Kara. “I now know more about otter diets than I ever wanted to.”

“I heard that!”

—

Kara is pretty sure there has never been this much fish in her fridge ever. “Did you buy a sushi restaurant?”

“Apparently, otters can eat like their body weight every day.” Maggie sounds far too reasonable for this, as she watches Alex tear into the fish. Well, it’s a good thing Winn got the bowl.

“So now what?” James asks, forcing Kara’s attention away from the destruction.

“I am so open to suggestions.”

“Maybe we’ll get lucky and it’ll just...wear off?” Winn pauses for a moment. “Yeah, no, we are never that lucky.”
note: This fic was started prior to s2x04 airing and is now happily frolicking in its own timeline only somewhat influenced by the canonical one. If the timeline being wonky is the thing in this fic that is way too weird, I literally cannot help you.

Alex has had a lot of bad days over the course of her life. This one? Somehow ranks in the top 20. Yeah, even above the time she fell into a sewer while chasing an alien on an early DEO mission.

Because seriously? Turned into an *otter*? This has to be some kind of absurd record.

The plan had been to meet up with Maggie for darts (because Maggie had refused to play pool this time, the whiner), beer, and bitching about what stupid paperwork they had to fill out this week. She totally did not expect to end up eating salmon out of a dog bowl in Kara’s apartment. Although on the bright side, Alex is pretty sure there is no form at the DEO for this particular situation.

This bright side sucks.

“Maybe we’ll get lucky and it’ll just...wear off?” Winn says from somewhere...above her. “Yeah, no, we are never that lucky.”

“As long as you don’t end up having to make a miniature tac vest, we might actually be okay.” James sounds like he’s forcing the optimism.

She can practically *hear* Kara’s face light up at that idea.

“Well, there goes my weekend.”

“You’d better mean you’re going into work to fix this, Winn, or I swear to god...” Alex tries to grumble, she really does, but all that comes out is a string of high-pitched squeaking. She can feel any badass cred slipping away with every second.

“Give it a rest, Danvers. You aren’t intimidating anyone.”

Ouch.

“Excuse me, she is now the perfect height to reach for my ankles, and I am not testing that.”

Maggie muffles a laugh. “I’ll run our perp through the system. Who knows, maybe we’ll find something.” She bends down and picks Alex up so she can look her in the eye. “Don’t go too wild now,” she says mock-sterly.

Hah hah, Maggie, you’re a riot.

Maggie then hands her over to Kara, along with the rest of Alex’s dignity. (Kara doesn’t even pretend like Alex hitting her in the ribs with her tail hurts. *Rude.*) James and Winn take the hint and leave as well.
The door clicks shut, and Kara gets that glint in her eye. “Soooo...out with Maggie?”

Oh goddammit.

“Not like that, Kara.”

“I guess judging from that sound, it’s still a no go, huh?” Kara looks down for a second, then brightens. “Oooh, you never told me how that profile on that dating app I made you was going!”

Alex groans, and that somehow comes out even more pathetic in otter-speak. Kara fishes out a phone from her purse and shit, it’s her phone. And it’s so unfair that Kara can unlock and flip through her phone while still holding Alex with one hand and oh my god Kara no.

Someone at CatCo would pay their left kidney and first-born child to know Supergirl can look that devilish.

“Mara? Rebecca? Dominique? You’ve been having fun!”

Oh god, this is going to be a long night.

—-

So, being able to talk only in squeaks? Actually surprisingly useful in convincing Kara that attempting to grill her on her dating life is doomed to failure.

—-

Even though the puppy bed is kind of humiliating, it is also disgustingly comfortable. (Winn’s good taste apparently even extends to pet products. Who knew?) Alex can’t help but curl up as Kara pulls blankets off her own bed to make a nest on the floor.

“Like when we were kids!”

Alex rolls her eyes.

Kara burrows into the giant pile of blankets and pillows until just her head is poking out. “We’ll figure this out, I promise.”

She’s not really worried about that. (Lies.) Her tail thumps against the bed half-heartedly.

“I hope. I’d feel guilty if you could never eat pizza again.”

“Liar.”

“Stop making that disapproving face at me! How are you making that disapproving face at me?”

—-

In the morning, Alex is still an otter. Her cry of dismay is enough to wake Kara, who promptly levitates off the floor, ends up trying to get in a fist-fight with her blankets, before landing face-first on the floor.

Oh man, she’d totally forgotten how much of a klutz Kara can be when startled awake. Amazing.

Over breakfast, Kara texts Winn to find out if he’s made any progress at the DEO.
He just sends back: 😷📱📺➡️...

So he is clearly making progress there.

—-

They’re on the couch watching *Jaws*. Well, okay, *Alex* is watching *Jaws*, because Kara had promised full control over Netflix and she’s gonna run that for all it’s worth. *Kara* is hiding her face behind a pillow, even though she’s seen this movie at least five times.

“Isn’t this kinda weird? I mean, with you being, uh, small and fuzzy and aquatic right now?”

“*Shut up.*”

“Sheesh, okay.” Kara goes back to watching the movie … and pulls a blanket over her head not five minutes later with a yelp.

The Girl of Steel, everyone.

—-

James, surprisingly, stops by. “I don’t know if I should be impressed this apartment is still intact,” he says as he walks through the door. The only reason, Alex is pretty sure, that he gets away with that comment is because Kara is fixated on the pizza he brought.

Sometimes Alex wonders why they didn’t work out, because come on, he’s at least figured out that the way to Kara’s heart is through her stomach. That’s better than any other guy Kara’s dated.

Eventually, Kara remembers that Alex currently sucks as a conversationalist.

“Not that I don’t appreciate the pizza, but you didn’t need to check up on us,” Kara says after she’s inhaled two slices. Alex looks mournfully at the box even as she tears into the tuna steak Kara pulled out of the fridge for her. (Did Maggie actually buy her sushi-quality fish, or is this just an otter taste bud thing?)

“I didn’t actually come here about that,” he admits. “I wanted to know if you had a plan if this,” he gestures at Alex, “isn’t fixed by Monday.”

“I… ooooh, yeah, that could be a problem. Unless I brought her along…”

“…and what do you think Snapper’s going to say if he finds an otter in his newsroom?”

Everyone winces. (Well, Kara’s already used to being almost fired...)

“She could hang out in your office?”

“That is a terrible idea and you know it.” “That is a terrible idea and you know it.” They manage to say it at the same time, although Alex’s comes out in squeaks, and dammit, she desperately misses human vocal cords.

Kara pouts. Somehow, James is immune. (Kara, keep him.)

“Lucky for us all, I convinced Snapper to let me borrow you for a while. Congrats, you’re now doing a wildlife piece on the pitfalls of exotic pets.”

“Whaaaaa—?”
Alex dunks her head into her water bowl.

—

Turns out, James was completely serious about the article. Which would have been hilarious if not for the fact that there is now photographic evidence of this entire incident. Which is why Kara is now grumbling at her laptop as she does a crash-course in otter biology. Alex is doing her best to ignore by concentrating on how to click the TV remote with her paws so she can find a new movie.

So she’s totally surprised when a pair of hands grab her and lift her off the couch. “Kara!”

“Oh, I can’t stand it anymore. You absolutely reek of fish and I cannot concentrate.”

“Kara. Kara put me down!” Even though she knows it’s pointless, Alex still attempts to thrash her way out of Kara’s hold. And that’s about as effective as chewing through an iron bar.

Kara hauls Alex into the bathroom and deposits her in the tub before turning on the faucet. Alex yelps.

“Oh come on, you can still swim, right?”

Alex just looks at her sullenly from the bottom of the tub as water starts splashing over her paws.

“…it’ll be a learning experience!”

Great.

Well, soon Alex is going to have bigger problems, because the water is rising and while she obviously knows how to swim, that’s with human limbs. It’s been annoying enough not to trip over her stupid tail on land. But once Kara has an idea in her head, there’s no arguing. She’s tried. So Alex crouches down and sticks her face in the water to figure out the breathing thing, because it would be beyond embarrassing to drown in a bathtub like this.

Eventually the water gets high enough that she’s going to have to figure out how to stay afloat. It’s awkward as hell, because Kara’s bathtub isn’t exactly large. Judging from her sister’s laughter, Alex gives up any remaining thoughts of dignity. Which is good, because a twitch of her tail sends her rolling so she’s sputtering underwater and looking at the bottom of the tub. Ugh.


She reaches into the water and pulls Alex to the surface. “A school bus went off the road. I’ve gotta go,” she says while chewing her lip. “Just… practice a bit, okay? I’ll be right back.” Kara turns off the faucet, drops Alex back in the water, and bolts.

“Are you kidding me? Kara!”

Kara is, of course, gone by this point.

Shit.

—

Okay. Okay, so if she flicks her tail just like this she’ll turn, and if she does that, she’ll —

— smack her head into the wall of the tub. Ow.
Alex doesn’t know how much water she’s getting all over her sister’s bathroom floor, but she officially no longer cares.

A twitch sends her smack into the wall again.

Really, screw Kara’s floor.

She has no idea how much time has passed, but this is actually starting to be fun. She’s wishing the tub were bigger, but now that she’s gotten her limbs under control Alex realizes that she’s far more agile in the water than she thought. The other excellent part is that she isn’t even cold? Sure, the fur’s the reason, but she didn’t realize it was this effective. Which is awesome. (Wasn’t there a paper about thermal properties of otter fur recently...? Mental note: get that on the Kindle. Since she has nothing but time on her hands. Er, paws?)

So... this is less awful than expected. Except for one problem: she’s stuck in Kara’s tub. For whatever reason, she cannot get a good grip on the edge of the tub and it’s too smooth to climb up. And she’s getting hungry again. And tired.

She glares at the rim of the tub and splashes more water onto the floor. Just because.

Kara finally bursts into the bathroom, still in her suit, yelling, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry! I’m here!”

Except, the floor is still wet. And Kara’s moving inhumanly fast.

“Aaaaah!”

Windmill arms are a lot funnier at super-speed. Especially when they’re totally ineffective at stopping her from faceplanting on the tile.

Alex snickers. And gets a mouthful of water for her effort.

Sigh.
Kara can tell Alex is sleepy because she doesn’t complain too much when Kara wraps her up like an otter-burrito in the fluffiest towel she owns and deposits her on the couch. She still hasn’t managed to wiggle free by the time Kara’s finished using far too many towels to dry the bathroom floor.

“I’m really sorry I took so long.”

Alex makes a tired little whining noise.

“Well… Netflix?”

Alex grumbles, then plops her head on Kara’s knee. “Meh.”

“That’s not an answer, Alex.”

Her sister makes absolutely no attempt to move, so Kara shrugs and flips the TV on to something random. Discovery Channel? Alex would probably appreciate the soothing nerdity of whatever *How It’s Made* marathon is on this time, so she flips to that. And is promptly bored within five seconds, because Kara really does not care about tires or any of Earth’s manufacturing.

She pulls out her phone to check there’s any update from Winn, which there isn’t, and then opens *Pokémon Go* because why not. Alex’s ears twitch when the first notes of the theme music start playing, and she twists to give Kara an outraged look.

“Oh come on, like you wouldn’t.” She checks the tracker. “Oh my god, it’s an Aerodactyl just around the block!”

Alex whines.

“Alex,” Kara pleads. Alex just looks up at her with a very, very sad expression. Wow, okay, that is way too adorable. “Fine, I’ll take your phone too.”

The pathetic look is wiped clean off Alex’s face. She actually looks proud of herself. Kara moves the Alex-burrito onto a pile of blankets on the couch, grabs Alex’s phone, and jumps out the window.

That… probably sounds bad when she says it like that.

She catches the Aerodactyl for both of them, and then continues flying around the night sky hunting, because there are a couple of other good ones and Alex will never let her live it down if she doesn’t catch those too.

So yeah, she’s focused, but that isn’t really an excuse for nearly dropping Alex’s phone when it starts ringing. Kara wouldn’t normally dream of answering it, but that… could be a very bad idea right now.

“Eliza?”

“Kara? Oh no, did I hit the wrong speed dial by mistake? Not that I don’t love you, sweetie, but I’m looking for Alex. And why is it so windy?”

“Oh, I’m just flying around catching some Pokémon with Alex’s phone, everything’s fine.”
“... and she turned down the chance to go with you? Your sister, who used to sneak out and fly with you constantly until we caught you?”

Uh-oh. “Oh, you know how she is. In the middle of something for work and asked me to do it because I can take care of it lickety-split, so I did.” Ugh, she sounds like Clark.

“Well… would you tell her I called? She sounded so distracted last time we talked a few days ago.”

“Wait, she called you? Voluntarily?”

“Kara, be nice. And yes, she seemed upset about something. It was just bad timing, because I had students taking an exam and I had to cut her off. She texted me saying she’d call back and she hasn’t, so I was worried.”

Oh geeze, Alex. “Everything’s fine! She’s totally cool. Nothing is wrong, how are you?” Wait, no, that’s wrong, she wants Eliza to hang up, not continue talking because this could end really badly.

“I’m… I’m fine, sweetheart. I can tell you’re busy, so just let Alex know I called, okay?”

Oh, thank Rao. “Sure thing!”

Next time, Alex can catch her own dang Pokémon, adorable little otter pout or not.

—

She doesn’t even get to ask about the weird Eliza thing when she gets back, because Alex still has not wriggled out of the towel-burrito and is instead totally passed out in the blanket pile.

At this point, Kara decides this is an excellent idea and changes into pajamas to join her.

Maybe tomorrow will be less weird.

—

Kara wakes up to something cold and damp in her ear.

She yelps. “Alex!” Her sister’s still-furry face is inches from her own as she sits on her chest. “Did you have to do that?”

“Meh.”

“Oh, I guess you would be hungry.” It’s so weird remembering that right now Alex eats more like she does. That, however, does not make taking the fish out of the vacuum-pack any less gross. She just does not like the feel of it and nearly throws it into the bowl on the ground.

Alex gives her a very unimpressed look before going to town on it.

“Yeah, meanwhile, I am going to have pancakes.”

Alex thwaps her tail against Kara’s ankle.

—

Kara’s on her 15th pancake when her phone buzzes.

“It’s from J’onn.”
Alex perks up, poking her head up over the couch, where she’d returned after eating. She squeaks a question.

“He didn’t say, other than if I could come by the DEO. And to make sure you don’t.” Kara chews her lip. “Should I go? I mean, I obviously should, but you’re here and I’d feel bad leaving again but — “

Alex lets out an absolutely shrill noise, and then flops down on the pile of blankets.

“Okay, okay! I’ll go. No need to take out my eardrums.”

—

“So what do we have? Can we fix Alex?” Kara asks as soon as she lands.

“Haaaaah, and no,” says Winn, safety glasses pushed up onto the top of his head and hair going everywhere. “I can tell you it’s absolutely alien and that right now I wish we had the galactic version of Digikey.”

Kara frowns. “I don’t know what that is.”

Winn throws up his hands. “Right. Wrong Danvers sister to get my jokes.” He flaps his hands at the pile of electronic bits strewed all over three lab benches. “As you can see, I’ve organized the device into three piles: Things I Think I Can Identify, Things That Might Resemble Something From Earth, and Things I Have No Damn Clue About.”

The third group is rather large.

“I don’t suppose any of the lettering on the parts looks at all familiar to you? Or you’ll tell me that you can tell me what something is from when you took apart your Kryptonian Easy-Bake Oven as a kid?”

“Couldn’t you ask Mon-El?” she asks.

“I would, but someone finally managed to drink him under the table.”

“Right.” She sighs and starts slowly peering at all the tiny parts. “Wait, who?”

“M’gann.”

Kara stops and stares at him.

“Yeah I know. I made that face too.”

—

Kara’s interrupted mid-way through the second bench of smashed electronics by J’onn escorting Detective Sawyer into the room. “Hey!” she says. “Did you find out anything?”

Maggie pulls a face. “Only that our perp is less exciting than a loaf of white bread. Only thing on the guy’s record is a citation for littering.”

“And...this is the guy who decided to dress up like a supervillain and shoot ray guns in National City?” Winn asks.

“Hey, the NCPD database checks for criminal record, not stupid.”
“How much easier would our jobs be if it did?”

“Mr. Schott, you are not allowed to become an evil genius. I have seen this movie.”

“...yes, sir.”

Before she can say anything else, Kara’s phone rings. “Hello?”

“Hello, Kara.”

“Lena?” What even is this day.

“Yes. I was wondering, are you free for lunch today?”

“Uh, I think so. I mean, yes, but why?”

“I wanted an opinion for a press release L-Corp will put out soon on some of our new technology. It’s regarding possible safety solutions, since that attack on Friday was thwarted without needing Supergirl. Since you’ve been the fairest to us, I thought of you.”

On one hand, sorting through so many pieces of broken electronics her eyes are starting to cross. On the other hand, free food, a possible scoop, and maybe a lead related to whoever was behind this entire mess.

Also, did she mention free food?

“Yes. I can absolutely do lunch. Where?”

Kara completely ignores Winn’s eyeroll as Lena gives her the address. “Right, I’ll see you in a jiffy. I mean, soon.”

J’onn shakes his head as she hangs up. “You’ve been hanging out with your cousin too much. You’re starting to talk like him.”

—

Lena’s already waiting at the Chinese restaurant by the time Kara gets there. Kara feels a little out of place in her skirt and cardigan, until she sees the menu. “Is...is this the entire menu?”

“Yes? Is there a problem?”

“It’s just dumplings. The entire menu is literally just dumplings and potstickers.” Kara looks at Lena with wide eyes. “How did you find this place?”

—

It’s well into the afternoon once she finishes lunch. And orders another 3 plates of dumplings to go. And... also remembers that she left Alex home alone in a pile of blankets with no extra snack food.

Oh crap.

“Sorry, sorry, I just remembered, I gotta run, I’ve got...a thing. Yes, at home, I need to...go now.”

“Oh, of course then. Let me call you an Uber, so you don’t have to catch the bus.”
It’s not like she can turn Lena down, because Kara Danvers has no reason to have something faster. So Kara accepts it, smiles weakly, and quietly panics on the inside as she’s trapped in the back of a black car with a driver who’s trying way too hard to make small talk.

She bursts into the apartment with a “Sorry, sorry, I’m so sorry, Alex! I lost track of time and...”

…and the apartment is empty.

“Alex?”

There is a disturbing lack of her sister, otter or otherwise.

Oh no.

The blankets on the couch go flying, along with the cushions, and still no Alex. Nor is she under the bed, or in the closet, or trapped in a cupboard. Kara even pulls open the fridge, because she’s seen pictures of cats that got stuck there, but no. Her sister is missing and right now sounds like an excellent time to panic.

Okay. Okay, she needs to think. Alex might be small and fuzzy right now, but she’s still Alex. So what she needs to do is think like Alex and hope that works.

Which might be easier without the blankets and pillows scattered all over. As she’s picking them up, she notices little pieces of black plastic clinging to a throw pillow. It doesn’t look like anything she owns, and she can also see jagged edges on the plastic, like something got snapped off. Okay, so… Alex decided to fight a thing? But what kind of thing? And why?

Nothing in the apartment looks damaged, or even out of place, besides the blanket heap. Kara frowns. She can’t hear anything strange. But now that she’s looking, one of the couch cushions is a little shredded. Definitely a fight. Or something.

A breeze blows through the open window. Oh, no. No no no no… Kara sticks her head outside and sighs in relief that there isn’t— well, the sidewalk below her apartment is totally clean.

She’s about to pull her head back in when she notices the fire escape. She blinks.

No. No way, Alex wouldn’t…

Oh, who is she kidding. Alex totally would chase something onto a fire escape.

The first thing that greets Kara when she reaches the roof is a completely shattered quadcopter drone. Like, it’s not only smashed, but there are clearly claw marks and— it looks like the propeller blades might have been chewed on? Kara stills. She strains her ears to hear over the dull roar of the wind and city noise. She can hear the people in the apartment below shuffling around. A TV in the building next door. And near the corner of the roof, next to the completely destroyed pile of what Kara assumes used to be the electrical controls of the thing, she hears a pathetically tiny, rapid th-thump.

She’s over there in less than a second, scooping up the little ball of brownish-grey fur that is worrying still. “Alex?”

“Meh.” The answer is weak, but Alex manages to put a smug look on her face for half a second, before blinking sleepily and curling into Kara’s arm.

“Alex, please, I’m sorry I wasn’t here. What happened?” Alex’s ears are absolutely freezing when Kara pets her on the head. And she doesn’t even twitch angrily at the fact Kara is petting her on the
head. Oh no. This is definitely bad.

Kara bolts back down through her window and wraps Alex up in a blanket again, and then fumbles for her phone while still holding her sister.

“J’onn, help, I need to talk to the vet, like, right now.”

“What is it?”

“I need an adult! An adult who knows what they’re doing!”

J’onn huffs, but stops asking questions. Kara thinks the wait might kill her.

“Uh, hello?” The vet sounds a little confused.

“I think Alex got in a fight with a quadcopter and ended up on the roof.”

“... Somehow not the most surprising thing I’ve heard all day.”

“But I don’t know how long she was out there and I don’t think she’s eaten since breakfast and she’s not really moving or responding to me and she’s freezing and I don’t know what to do!”

“I… okay. First, calm down. Second, get her warm and make sure she eats something ASAP. Water, too. She should be fine— well, actually, if she doesn’t improve within a few hours you should bring her in.” The vet pauses. “God, it’s so weird to be talking about my CO like this. I am not paid enough for this shit.”

Kara gapes in disbelief as the phone disconnects.
Alex wakes up to the smell of fish. Well, specifically, to the lump of tuna Kara is waving in front of her face with a pair of chopsticks, because her sister is a whiner and won’t actually touch the stuff. Her head is spinning enough that it’s hard to focus on the shifting food, but Alex manages to swallow down enough of it to quiet the roaring emptiness in her stomach before she dozes off (again) to the sound of Kara quietly talking to someone on the phone.

She’s much more alert the next time she wakes up. Kara still feeds her more fish, which would be embarrassing because she hasn’t been spoon-fed like this since she was a toddler, but her sister has also pinned her limbs by wrapping her in a blanket. “You feeling better?”

“Now with the food, yes.” Alex hadn’t quite connected her post-swim fatigue yesterday with her insane otter metabolism. Not that it would have stopped her, but she might’ve tried some different tactics if she’d known she would run out of energy so fast after taking down the spy drone that had suddenly appeared in her sister’s apartment this morning. Which, like. If this is some scheme of Max’s again, she’ll claw his damn eyes out.

Alex glances around the apartment, though, and sees a distinct lack of broken quadcopter. “Kara! The drone!” Except her words come out as a series of useless squeaks, and Alex flops her head against a pillow in frustration. But she needs Kara to grab the remains, because that drone had been powerful enough to carry her all the way to the roof before she managed to bring it down, and the hardware was totally not civilian-tech. None of which she can explain, because— oh right, she’s a goddamn otter.

“Oh geeze, stop wriggling. Okay, okay, I’ll let you out.” As soon as she can move, she wastes no time in dashing over to the window next to the fire escape. “Alex, no!”

This is some ironic reversal here.

Alex rolls her eyes and taps on the glass. And then tries to play charades without the aid of human facial expressions or long enough arms, because she’s out of alternatives (and patience) and the universe owes her so much at this point.

After far too much pointing and squeaking, Kara finally figures out that she should go back to the roof and pick up the drone remains. Except now Alex is freaking tired again and it only takes half a yawn before Kara’s deposited her in the blanket nest again.

“This freaking sucks.”

The third time she wakes up, Kara’s apartment is mostly dark. There’s a soft bluish glow coming from the other side of the sofa. Alex scoots closer, then startles when she notices it’s Maggie sitting there, face illuminated by a laptop screen, instead of her sister.

“What.” She tries to edge away, but somehow tangles herself up so badly in the blankets that she flips over like a sad turtle.

Maggie looks up from whatever it is she’s working on. “Welcome back to the land of the living, Danvers.”

“What.”
“Five-alarm fire in the seaport district. Kara needed to fly off, and since she didn’t want you alone again — nice job killing that drone, by the way — she called me.”

“I do not need a babysitter.”

Maggie leans over and starts untwisting the blankets with one hand. “Your guy Schott nearly started crying when he saw the mess you made of it.” She shrugs. “I was the only one not busy right now, so… I’m crashing here until your sister gets back.”

“First of all, that was in no way my fault.”

“Face it, you need help.” Maggie cocks her head to the side. “It’s hilarious that you’re trying to talk, you know.”

Alex makes a squeal of frustration. She takes a quick glance around and… yes! Kara left Alex’s phone on the coffee table. Except once she flails her way over there, she encounters her next problem: unlocking phones is difficult without opposable thumbs.

It takes annoying amounts of effort just to hold the phone still long enough to press the power button. The lock screen is a bigger hurdle. Alex curses her past self for choosing the numerical pin lock instead of a pattern, because Android phones were not designed with goddamn otter paws in mind. (And yeah, she’d be a little worried if Google did account for that in their design, not gonna lie.)

Alex bristles at the thought that Maggie is probably struggling not to burst out laughing behind her. She snarls at the phone and is about to smack the stupid thing off the table when a pair of hands wrap under her arms and lift her away. Alex freezes.

“I think you’re gonna be pissed later if you break your phone.”

Oh god, this is mortifying. And also— nope, not going there, not gonna think about that.

“Kara will also kill me if I don’t make sure you get more food, and since she did remind me that she can roast me with her eyeballs I’m not going to disobey that request, no matter how much you sulk,” Maggie says conversationally while she carries Alex into the kitchen and sets her on the counter.

Somehow, Alex manages to choke down her food instead of just hiding her face in the food bowl, while (mostly) ignoring the fact that Maggie is watching her from two feet away with that goddamn smile of hers. The one that makes it really hard to focus on approximately anything else. If she wasn’t still so damn hungry, she probably wouldn’t be able to get anything down at all and why are her nerves doing this?! (Also, where the hell is Kara?)

A warm hand rests on her head. “Relax, Danvers. You look like you’re about to twitch out of your skin.” It takes far too much restraint not to lean into the touch, and oh my god, how is this her life. She must make a pathetic noise, because Maggie chuckles and picks her up again. “I don’t know about you, but I’m dead on my feet.”

Maggie takes them back to Kara’s couch, but instead of doing something normal like dropping Alex back into her perfectly comfortable blanket nest, she flops down on the cushions, laying flat out without letting Alex go— meaning Alex ends up basically sprawled full length on Maggie’s chest.

Alex’s brain completely segfaults.
“Breathe, you nerd.” Alex can literally feel the rumble in Maggie’s chest as she huffs out a laugh. “The last thing we need is for you to fall off the couch or find some other way to get hurt.”

“Maggie. Maggie, why? What are these signals?” Alex whines.

“So, in case you need to vanquish another quadcopter, I’ll remind you that it’s a two-person job and I actually like working with you, claws and all. Now sleep, you dork,” she says as ruffles Alex’s fur and closes her eyes.

How is this her life. And how is she supposed to sleep now?!

—

Apparently the adrenaline wore off at some point, because the next thing Alex knows is that there are keys jingling at the front door. Which is weird, because Kara uses the window. She blinks blearily, glaring at sun streaming in through the open curtains. Maggie shifts beneath her, grip tightening briefly.

She’s still asleep. Thank goodness for small miracles.

“You are not my daughter.”

Alex jerks like she’s been hit with lightning.

“I didn’t leave her alone I swear I’m here, everything is fine,” Kara babbles as she practically dives out from her bedroom, blanket still wrapped around her ankle. “Er, I mean. Eliza? What… what are you doing here?”

“Kara, honey, I was worried,” Eliza says, and Alex does not dare lift her head. Maybe if she stays completely still, this will not be happening. “Alex never called after I talked to you, so I called her again yesterday. She didn’t answer and she hasn’t texted, which isn’t like her at all, and then you’ve been dodging me, too— don’t give me that look, Kara, it does not work.”

(Kara, what the hell, what phone call?)

“Oh, um, I…”

Thankfully for Kara, Maggie saves her by waking up. Unfortunately for all of them, she wakes up by saying, “Alex, you’re crushing my sternum.”

Oh, shit.

Maggie at least seems to realize immediately that something is wrong and snaps her eyes open. She tightens her hold on Alex and then practically jackknifes up. (Alex is pretty sure she’s shredding Maggie’s shirt a little with her panicked clinging, so, uh, oops.) “Uh… hi? You must be Dr. Danvers. Alex talks about you a lot. And, wow, also really looks like you, especially around the eyes.” Alex might make a noise like she’s dying at that. “Aaand on that note, I think I’m gonna get out of here. So Kara, thank you for letting me crash on your couch and I’ll see you guys later. Maybe?”

And like a coward, Maggie deposits Alex back onto the couch, pats her on the head, and hightails out the door without a backward glance. (Or even her jacket, which. Alex is so keeping that as revenge, because what the hell was that.)
Eliza raises an eyebrow.

Kara takes one look at their mother’s face, spits out, “I think I hear a robbery in progress by now,” and dives out the window before she’s even finished changing into her suit.

Alex stares at Eliza. The backdraft from Kara’s escape rustles the curtain by the open window.

“So, she seems nice.”

“Kara just abandoned me. That’s not nice.”

“No, not your sister. The other one. Although it’s awkward not knowing your girlfriend’s name.”

Wait, what?! Alex stops trying to burrow herself under the couch cushion like muffling this conversation will somehow make it disappear.

“Is that what you were trying to call about?”

Alex’s jaw drops open.

“Honey. I’ve known since you were fifteen. Remember that time at your surfing competition when you smacked yourself in the face with your own board because you were staring at the girl who went before you?” She picks Alex up from where she’s half-buried in the couch, tucking her against her chest as she starts walking around. “Speaking of which, your father owes me fifty dollars. He thought you wouldn’t figure it out until you were at least thirty.”

Hang on—her dad seriously thought she was that oblivious? Alex doesn’t know whether to be offended or die of embarrassment, because oh god, she’s already twenty-seven. Also, why the hell were her parents even betting on her future sex life? Ew. (Not… not that she’s thinking about that either. Because she isn’t. At all.)

“I had faith in you, sweetie. Anyway, yes, we kept trying to drop hints, since every boy you dated made you miserable, but it wasn’t our place to tell you that. All the parenting advice said to just maintain a safe, trusting environment and let you come to us when you were ready. So, we tried.” Eliza shrugs. “It just got painfully boring.”

At this point, Alex realizes three things: 1) her parents knew; 2) her parents didn’t care; and 3) she is still an otter and having this conversation. How is her mom doing this?

Eliza taps her on the nose. “Stop squirming.”

“But… but college! You wanted me to find someone to settle down with!”

“Gay marriage passed in California your freshman year! Honestly, I thought I was waving a giant rainbow flag at that point.”

“I was freaking out over nothing?”

“Alex. I raised an alien. I live in California. I’m a biologist. I’ve been a faculty advisor for the LGBTQ+ student group on campus since you were a junior in high school. Why would you think I’d have any problem with you being a lesbian?”

The sound that comes out of Alex’s throat might generously be called a croak. (What does it mean if her mom can say that word when she can’t yet?)

“Sweetie, I’ve always wanted the best for you. You can’t get rid of me that easily.” She taps
Alex’s nose again and easily shifts her into the crook of her other arm, tail and all. “So long as you’re happy. So. Does she make you happy?”

“Mom, why must you lead off with the most complicated questions?”

Eliza settles down onto the couch. “Aaaah, so that’s the problem. Well, let’s see if we can figure out this ‘feelings’ drama of yours.”

—

Kara eventually pokes her head back in through her own window two hours later, after rescuing god knows how many kittens from trees. Alex’s brain is so numb she can’t even muster up the will to yell at her sister for abandoning her to a mortifying running commentary on Things Her Mother Learned As A Gay Teen Life Advisor.

“Oh, Kara, honey, I wanted to ask: why is your sister an otter?”

She can, however, laugh at the way Kara blanches before she disappears out the window again. 

_Traitor._

—

After many babbling diversions, Eliza pries the whole sorry story out of Kara. Like, it takes three boxes of donuts to get through, donuts that Alex can only glare at, but they eventually cover all the important details.

“Well, you two certainly got into a mess. How are you doing on fixing it?” her mom asks while absently trailing her fingers down the back of Alex’s head. (And no one is ever going to know how much she’s secretly enjoying that. _No one_.)

“Winn’s working on it, but he’s gotten pulled away to figure out the quadcopter you smashed, Alex. And it seems like everything keeps going wrong, between that, and this thing, and then Roulette starting up again.”

“Wait, what?”

“Oooh, right. Forgot to tell you: the fire I went to go deal with last night ended up being one of her locations being burned. Um, literally.” Kara worries the thread of a pillow. “I tried chasing her but she got away. Again.”

Fantastic.

“Winn’s working on it? I didn’t know he had a background in biology,” Eliza says.

“Oh, he doesn’t.”

“That seems… suboptimal.”

“That’s one word for it.”

“Right. I suppose we’re all going to the DEO.”

“How did we get to this conclusion?”.

“Honey, if I could decipher your fifth grade science projects, I’m sure I can read your lab
notebooks.”

“Wait, you actually understand her chicken scratch?”

“Excuse you, girl who writes hieroglyphics, my handwriting is not that bad!”

“You were almost a doctor, sweetie. It really is.”

—

“Wait, shouldn’t Alex be in a booster seat?” Kara asks as they all pile into the car.

Eliza stops buckling her seatbelt, glances over, and sighs. “Kara, just get in the car. Hold onto your sister, don’t put your feet through the floor, and don’t dent the doors. This is a rental.”

Danvers Family Road Trip, yippee. Alex has not missed this.
“J’onn,” Eliza calls as she strides into the DEO like she belongs there, cradling Alex against her shoulder like a baby. Kara follows along behind her, a little sheepishly, because Eliza had taken one look at how she was holding Alex on the way up from the parking deck and swiped her away.

Her aunt Lara used to do the same thing with Kal-El when he was an infant. Kara’s not sure if she should be offended right now or just write it off as some kind of mom instinct.

“Dr. Danvers. What brings you to the DEO?”

Eliza tilts her head towards Alex, smiling faintly. “I thought we could grab some coffee and finally finish our chat about shape-shifting.”

Alex’s indignant “Meh!” is somewhat muffled by Eliza’s shoulder.

“No unless you get a tac vest, Alex.” Okay, wow, J’onn sounds way too reasonable about letting an otter do… whatever Alex is pondering that is clearly dangerous, but oh gosh she’d look adorable in an itty-bitty tac vest and Kara knows she can probably convince Winn to make that happen. Heck, maybe she can just find a toddler one on Amazon. Wait, would that fit on an otter? How are toddler clothes even sized, anyway?

Eliza probably knows, but Eliza will probably also not think tiny nonhuman Alex + bullets = good idea.

And apparently she’s being too quiet, because Eliza’s eyeing her suspiciously by the time they reach the lab, but thankfully Winn saves her before she starts word-vomiting about the batch of cat videos she forced Alex to watch yesterday.

“Please tell me you’re here to help.”

“Yes, Winn, I am here to help,” Eliza says as she steps calmly over to the piles of electronics.

“You are my new favorite person.”

Kara wrinkles her nose, because unfair, as best friend that is her position. However, she really doesn’t want to get dragged into staring at busted electronic dust again, even if she still feels vaguely responsible for this whole mess. Like, maybe she should be here in case Eliza and Winn need her help? But this tech isn’t Kryptonian, and she was only just starting the multiplexer unit of chaotic fractal engineering physics before she left Krypton, so she’s really, really rusty.

She’s hanging by the doorway as she weighs her options, which is probably why Mon-El actually stops as he stumbles down the hall. He peers into the room. “Am I still hungover? What is that?” he asks, pointing at the furry ball of grump Eliza’s still cradling.

“Er, that’s Alex.”

Mon-El blinks. Then blinks again. “…is that normal here?”

“No, no, it is really not. Although it almost feels like it should be?”

“Huh.” He stares a bit more. “Earth is weird.”
“Kara, if you’re just going to hover by the door, come in and make yourself useful,” Eliza calls, not even looking up from the computer screen.

Kara blanches. “Um, I’m gonna go… ask Mom— um, I mean the AI database, if there’s any information she can give us.”

Alex squeaks something and tries to hop off the desk as Kara zooms away, but Eliza catches her. Mon-El, on the other hand, manages to escape with her.

“Alex, be nice.” Kara hears Eliza say as she slips around the corner.

“Does your holo-mom really have information on this technology?” Mon-El hisses.

“Hah, no!” Her mother may have been amazing, but there’s a reason Kara stopped asking her for help on science homework by the time she was seven.

“So we abandoned your human mother to that room of broken dirt because…?”

“How good are you at fractal quantum entanglement debugging?”

Mon-El blinks at her in horror.

“That’s what I thought.”

“Kara, your sister is doomed.” He frowns half-heartedly, then turns his puppydog eyes on her. “I’ll buy you a condolence drink?”

Kara shoves him into a wall, and totally pretends the resulting crack in the plaster is not her fault.

“You can’t solve every problem with drinking.”

“No, but it’ll make you feel better. Or less worst. Worse?”

“You are impossible.”

—

Eventually, they have to actually come back to the lab. Or, well, Kara does, unless she wants to keep getting gibberish texts from Winn that are probably Alex gnawing at his phone. The gibberish stops before she gets back to DEO headquarters, where Kara finds Winn sitting at a computer with Alex balanced on his lap, playing some kind of game. Well, maybe. Winn’s movements are coordinated; Alex just seems to be furiously smashing the keyboard.

“I cannot believe you’re getting a higher score than me!” Okay then, that answers that question. Kara giggles as Winn starts pouting. “This is so unfair. Your limbs are like six inches long.”

“Meh.”

“I don’t even need to know what you said to know it was rude.” He looks up. “Oh, hey Kara!”

“I thought you were helping Eliza.”

“I am. By staying out of her way. Alex and I bolted as soon as she started muttering over Alex’s file organization scheme.”

Alex growls.
“Hey, I don’t understand it, but your mom is possibly scarier than you and I’m trying to make healthy life choices.”

“Seriously?” Kara looks between them like Winn is insane, but he and Alex just exchange a glance and shrug. “So you’re just sitting out here playing video games?”

“Hey, now. Alex is playing video games.” Winn then points to another machine. “I’m not slacking off, my code is compiling.”

“Meh.” Alex pops upright and wriggles like she’s fluffing her fur.

Winn then looks at the screen again. “Wha— high score!? Oh, this is so not fair. Give me that keyboard.”

—

Somehow, Kara ends up reading ridiculous articles on the internet. If anyone asks, it’s totally research so she can figure out how in the world she’s supposed to write this exotic pet article James roped her into. So far, she has marveled at the strange-yet-impressive journalistic integrity of Buzzfeed and Teen Vogue, and discovered that Supergirl was named “Badass of the Week” at some point. Which, while interesting and exciting, are not exactly things that will make Snapper like her more.

Something electronic dings from Winn’s corner of the lab. Kara jolts awake from her internet-induced-semi-stupor. “Is your code done?”

“Nope, that’s my lunch,” Winn says as he fetches a Hot Pocket from the microwave she didn’t even realize was in the room. She feels slightly betrayed that he didn’t tell her there were Hot Pockets. She loves the steak-and-cheddar ones. Then again, her idea of a snack is like four at a time, and there are only two per box. She’d need an entire freezer just to stockpile for a week. Hmm... maybe there’s some kind of provision in the new alien laws that can persuade J’onn to splurge on an extra fridge for Alex’s office?

“Meh!” Alex’s yell jolts Kara out of her food-logistics musing.

“Oh no, I am not falling for that Danvers stare. There is no way I’m getting suckered into letting you die from cheese or something,” he says around a mouthful of food. Alex swipes at him, claws out. “Gah! Kara, feed your sister!”

“I don’t have fish with me!”

Eliza pokes her head in from the other lab. “Alex, come over here. I packed you lunch, sweetie. And perhaps you can point me at the correct scripts? I thought I taught you to comment your Matlab code.”

Alex hangs her head, but scurries across the floor to be scooped up by Eliza.

Kara gapes in surprise. Also, wow, how is she only just noticing that otters look ridiculous when they run? Awkwaaard. Alex is gonna be so pissed if she realizes how much video there is.

Something else dings behind her.

“That would be my code,” Winn announces as he scurries off to look at it.

“Did you really set it to ding when there’s stuff?”
“...maybe.” Winn checks the computer, and then starts swearing.

“What is it?”

He flops down into the chair, and scowls at the screen. “Well, I traced the some of the parts of that quadcopter Alex destroyed. Three guesses who it belongs to, and the first two don’t count.”

“Cadmus.”

“Bingo.”

Kara lets her head drop onto the desk. “I’ll tell J’onn. And then go punch something. I really want to punch something.”

—

“So Cadmus is now sending drones to your apartment.” J’onn rolls his eyes. “Do these people not have anything better to do than give me a headache?”

“It’s a little creepy, not gonna lie.” Kara grimaces. “Stalker much?”

Alex squeaks something that may or may not be the opening bars to a Police song, it’s hard to tell.

“We should probably get Detective Sawyer over here again,” J’onn says. “The NCPD is better at old-fashioned police work than we are, and I have a feeling figuring out what Cadmus is up to this time is going to take pounding the pavement.”

“I can go,” Kara absolutely does not shout, no matter how much she wants to get out of here and do something.

“Why don’t you take your sister with you, sweetie?” Eliza asks without even looking up from the tablet she’s holding. Alex twitches slightly. Eliza absently pets her on the head and somehow does not lose her hand. “Staying cooped up in here isn’t good for her.”

“Meh.”

“Just because you do it all the time doesn’t mean it’s good, Alex.”

Kara frowns. “I don’t have anything to carry her in. Sorry, Alex.”

Eliza finally looks up. “Just use the bag I brought for our lunches. Well, Alex’s.”

Kara picks up the bag in question, wide-eyed. “There are still three in here! How much did you pack?”

“Kara, sweetheart, I fed you for years. Keeping up with an otter is nothing.”

—

Flying with a messenger bag strapped under her cape is really, really awkward. Kara’s just glad the bag came with one of those extra stabilizer straps, otherwise Alex’s flight would have been like riding on one of those spinning swings at the amusement park. Even without the bag constantly flopping around Alex looks particularly windblown and disgruntled by the time they land outside the NCPD precinct. She makes a point of gagging in the direction of Kara’s boots as they settle on the ground.
“Don’t you dare puke on my shoes. You didn’t have to keep sticking your head out like a backseat flyer, you know. That’s your own fault,” Kara says as she walks in the door.

The cop at the front desk takes one look at her, eyes tracking down to Alex’s fuzzy little head sticking out of her bag from beneath her cape. “Not my circus, not my monkeys,” he mutters, before tilting his head to the side and yelling, “SAWYER! IT’S FOR YOU.”

“Oh my god, Nguyen, we have phones, you don’t have to bellow,” Maggie grumbles as she comes around a corner. “What could possibly — oh, hi, Supergirl. And, um, friend.”

“Meh.”

“Yeah, see that?” Nguyen says as he swings back to his computer, “That is why I’m not in your division. I cannot deal with that level of weird.”

Maggie groans and then waves Kara into a nearby conference room. She leans against the door after she closes it. “Okay, so this is not how I expected my day to go, but I clearly had no idea what I was thinking considering I woke up on your couch.”

Alex trills something, then dives back into the bag. Maggie looks utterly confused. “You got a translation for that?”

Kara shrugs. “I speak Danvers, not otter.” She shakes her head. “Anyway, we’re here because J’onn thought we could use you at the DEO again.”

“...again, phones do exist.”

“I...” Kara pauses. Frowns. “There was a really good reason why this was a good idea.”

The messenger bag makes an angry squeaking noise.

“I mean, Cadmus sneaking around isn’t exactly brand new information.”

Maggie holds up a hand. “Wait, Cadmus? Wait, no, that’s not surprising at all. What the hell did they do this time?”

“Well, turns out, Alex taking down the quadcopter was a really good thing.”

“Okay, that’s new levels of creepy, even for them.”

“I know, right? You’d think an evil organization of badness would have better things to do than check out my decor.” Kara pauses. “Or is it worse things?”

“Meh.” Apparently, Alex has decided to join the conversation since she pokes her head out again, headbutting Kara’s elbow in the process. She wriggles away and shoots Kara a dirty look, like it’s somehow her fault her elbow is attached to her arm, then kinda... flops onto the conference table with approximately zero percent of her usual coolness factor.

Maggie shakes her head. “Anyway, what does the DEO think we can do about Cadmus? You’re the ones with the fancy equipment. I might be in the science division, but we’re still police. Not all of us can be secret agent man,” she says as she taps Alex on the nose. Which is so disgustingly adorable that Kara has to stop herself from laughing at her sister’s startled face.

Alex whines and half-heartedly tries to bat at Maggie’s finger, but even Kara can tell she’s not actually annoyed.
“J’onn did say something about ‘old-fashioned police work’...”

“Okay, yeah, the men in black with the guns make it a little hard to do that sort of thing.” Maggie sighs and straightens up. “Let me check in with a few contacts and I’ll stop by in a while?”

On one hand, there’s no reason why this is a problem. On the other hand... “Can I come with?” Kara blurs out. Ignoring Alex’s nip at her wrist, she plows on, “It’d be interesting to find out how you do what you do and it’s probably really useful and whoever you talk to might be some of my sort of people and maybe I’m also asking a little because if I spend another minute staring at nothing I will punch through a wall.”

Maggie glances between her and Alex, amused. “You two are... definitely related.” She shakes her head. “Look, I can’t promise it’s gonna be interesting.”

“Maggie, the highlight of my day so far has been reading about The 20 Most Courageous Dessert Foods In Space on Buzzfeed.”

“...how is that even a thing?”

“I don’t know. It was so inaccurate, it didn’t even list chocolate pecan pie.”

Alex rolls her eyes at her.

—

“Detective. And Supergirl. What do you want with me... and what is that rat you’re carrying?”

“It’s an otter.”

“...This planet is so strange.”

—

Three informants later Kara still can’t tell if they’re any closer to making progress. Or even something inching in the general direction of progress. There have been a couple of times Maggie’s contacts look kinda nervous when they see her lingering awkwardly behind Maggie’s shoulder. Changing into her street clothes might have been smarter, but it’s too late for that now.

“Mom, look! It’s Supergirl!”

And then there’s the this-kind-of-thing. Not exactly inconspicuous detecting. Detective-ing? She’s pretty sure Alex would be burying her face in her hands right now if she could reach her face.

Kara turns around and smiles brightly at the kid, who is just about bouncing up and down with excitement and clinging to the hand of a slightly shocked-looking woman. “Hi!”

“Ohmygod you’re really here! Mom, she’s here! This is amazing!”

“Yes, Sarah, I can see that.”

The kid, Sarah apparently, bites her lip, suddenly shy. “Um, Supergirl? Can I... can we take a photo? Mommy, can you take a photo of us?”

Kara totally ignores Maggie facepalming behind her, because role models are important. “Sure thing!”
It’s only after she’s gently putting an arm around the kid’s shoulders that she realizes she’s still carrying the messenger bag with Alex in it. Alex who is sticking her head out and looking even more disgruntled than normal.

“Meh!”

The shutter clicks. Five times.

“What is — “

Several things happen all at once. The girl turns and meets Alex face to face, wide-eyed. The camera clicks again. Kara hears the sound of a major car crash on the other side of the city. And then Alex rears up and tries to clamp onto her sleeve.

“I’m really sorry, but there are people in trouble, so I have to go,” Kara says, kneeling down to tell little Sarah goodbye. She straightens up and slings the messenger bag off her shoulder, then deposits it—and Alex—into a very surprised Maggie’s arms before taking off.

She’s about halfway across the city when she realizes she literally just shoved Alex into the arms of her crush, and even though she’s in a hurry she breaks out in a huge smile.

oh god oh god oh god, Kara what the fuck.

If Alex could manage to think more clearly, she’d probably be outraged at the fact that this is the second time today Kara has abandoned her to an utterly ridiculous situation. That, however, can wait for later because seriously, Kara?

“Well, that just happened.” Maggie remarks evenly, shuffling the bag’s strap over her shoulder.

“Mom! Look, Supergirl has a cat! Now can I have one?” What the… oh shit, the kid. (Also, what the hell has happened to the California education system if this kid thinks an otter is a cat? Alex suddenly feels very, very old, and very, very guilty for not paying attention to the local school board elections.)

“Oh, she’s not a cat,” Maggie explains cheerfully. Alex tries to whirl around, because no this is not helping at all, but the last thing her dignity needs is for her to get tangled up in the straps on this damn bag. Again.

“Maggie!”

“See how her ears aren’t pointy and her face is long like this? She’s an otter. But they, um, don’t make good pets.”

“But Supergirl has one,” the kid says with the kind of utter conviction that only someone under the age of ten can have.

“I’m… not sure they’re legal to have as pets. There’s a special permit.” Maggie bites her lip like she’s trying not to laugh. “I bet Supergirl wouldn’t mind if you petted her, though.”

“Don’t you dare.”

“Really?” The kid practically shrieks, and Maggie no, this is a terrible plan.

Maggie shrugs, which causes the bag to shift so that Alex almost falls back in. “I’m sure Supergirl’s otter friend here would love it.”

Alex restrains the impulse to hiss as a small hand plunks down on her head a little too hard while approximately twenty cellphone cameras go off, because of fucking course they drew a crowd.

Alex sighs. Thanks, Kara.

—

They finally escape from the impromptu petting zoo after Maggie flashes her badge and pretends there’s something Very Important she had to go do. But at least Alex is free now… from strangers, anyway.

“This day sucks.”

“Well, Danvers, I can try to make it up to you, but I’m not sure if you’ll be able to drink a beer like this.” Maggie hitches the bag up a little more and then rests her hand on Alex’s back, and Alex can’t restrain the impulse to go absolutely still. “In any case, our next stop on this information run is the bar, so you should be safe from more grabby preteens.”
That… those are not the people she’s worried about. Kids, Alex can handle. Going with Maggie, to the bar, like this? There’s a hell of a lot of nope going on, and she’s half-convinced the hand on her back is to keep her from leaping out of the bag. Except she’s stuck, unless she wants to learn about the survival rate of wildlife on the streets of National City firsthand.

Judging by the streets they’re passing they’re only about five blocks away, so it’s not like Alex even has enough time to gnaw a hole in the seam of the bag.

She gives it her best shot anyway. It at least keeps her busy long enough to actually make it into the bar. And the universe might be giving her a break, because it’s not very crowded at all. Of course, that means those who are here are more likely the people who are always here.

“You’re not usually one to drop by in the middle of the day.”

Case in point. M’gann ambles her way towards them as Maggie hops onto a bar stool, making the bag swing wildly. Alex jerks her head out and tries to yank the cuff of Maggie’s sleeve with her teeth.

“This thing doesn’t have a seat belt, Sawyer!”

M’gann stares at her from behind the bar. Alex glares back. “Well, that’s new.” She turns to Maggie. “Bar policy is no sentience, no sapience, no service.”

“Hey!”

“Danvers, chill.” Maggie shoots M’gann a wry smile. “All boxes checked.”

But M’gann is studying Alex, eyebrows raised. “There is a story here. I distinctly remember you being less fuzzy and more bipedal last time we talked.”

“Yeah, about that…”

“Let me get Sawyer here whatever she’s having and then you can fill me in on this, because I need to know if I should stage an intervention for J’onn.”

Rude.

So while Maggie sips some drink so rum-laden that Alex can smell it (‘It’s sorrel, and it does not deserve whatever the hell that look is, Danvers.”), M’gann fires off questions at Alex, chuckling every now and then at the strings of explicatives running through her mind. She’s mentally reliving the Bathtub Incident when a plate of unsauced chicken wings settle on the counter in front of her, because apparently M’gann is awesome.

“Well, this is a mess,” M’gann says as she leans back against the bar, drying a glass. “I assume you have a plan for fixing yourself.”

“Yeah, about that…”

“J’onn’s going to need my headache remedy again, isn’t he.”

—

Eventually, the people Maggie actually wants to talk to make themselves visible, so she excuses herself with another pat on Alex’s head. (Why does she keep doing that?) At least Alex doesn’t start choking on a chicken wing.
M’gann stares after her before turning to Alex, who is still half-frozen on the bartop. She looks back at Maggie again. “Oh. Oh, honey, you’ve got it bad.”

This time, Alex does gag on a wing. “What?! No!”

M’gann returns her gaze to Alex and quirks her eyebrows. “You understand I’m reading your mind right now?”

“...aw, shit.”

“Mmm hmm.”

“You sure I can’t have a shot of whiskey?”

“Pretty sure that’d kill you.”

“Dammit.” Alex flops over on the bartop with a pathetic squeak. “This is the worst.”

M’gann just nods sympathetically and feeds her another chicken wing.

—

“This is fun,” Maggie says, sometime after she’s wandered back over. She takes a sip of her beer (her second one, which is so unfair) as she surveils the rest of the bar. It’s been slowly filling up as more people get off work, but for whatever reason they’re still sitting here.

Okay, that’s a lie. Alex is pretty sure the reason they’re still there is because M’gann keeps handing over free drinks. (Well, Maggie’s getting free drinks. Alex isn’t sure the bowl of water she’s been attempting to drown her sorrows in actually counts for anything.) However, the smirk she keeps giving them along with the drinks is setting off the alarm bells in Alex’s head. Because she’s pretty sure she’s given Kara the same look before. Recently.

Alex shakes her head at Maggie. “Yeah, fun for you.”

“Aw, don’t pout like that, Danvers. There’s gotta be someone in this bar who knows something.” Maggie reaches over and scratches Alex behind the ears, which completely derails any actual response she could’ve come up with. “I’ll go make another circuit with the new people.”

Alex watches Maggie walk away again, and she can’t even be too upset because Maggie is trying to help. Meanwhile, Alex is trying not to act like an ungrateful asshole, but this entire mess has just been one giant exercise designed to piss her off in as many ways as possible.

“So, I would suggest making a move before the next transit of Venus comes around.”

Alex nearly leaps off the counter at the sound of M’gann’s voice right behind her. “Gah!”

“Subtle. But seriously, I’ve seen you around here how many times? Anyone else would have declared teaching Sawyer how to play pool a lost cause.”

“It’s not like that!”

“I have eyes.” M’gann leans down eye-level with her and props her chin on her hand. “The way I see it, you’ve got some time to figure things out, considering your current state.”

“...how do you deal with the shape-shifting thing anyway?” Alex has no idea why she never thought to ask J’onn this. Clearly, the stress is getting to her brain.
“I don’t think it’s quite the same. Controlling it probably does a lot. And I’ve never gotten myself stuck as an otter.”

“You wound me.”

M’gann smacks her with a dishrag. “Stop shedding all over my bar.”

—

“Okay you two, this is Nyl and he’s got an interesting idea,” Maggie says as she drags over a guy with a face that makes him look twelve. He kind of shuffles forward, white hair falling into slitted eyes.

“And?”

“You’re going to have to talk, kid,” M’gann says helpfully.

“Oh! Um.” He wrings his hands together (clawed hands, and there’s probably something hypocritical about doing threat assessment based on that), looks at Alex, and then looks down at his feet again. “Well, um, I’ve...kind of maybe have seen this before?”

M’gann and Alex look at each other. “Keep talking.”

He bites his lip. “My creche-mate’s sire worked on something that...did something like this,” he says, flapping a hand at Alex. “But I know there was a lot of scavenged tech used, so since there are a lot of people here, maybe...maybe we can figure it out?”

“You mean all of us, at the bar, now?” M’gann says, raising an eyebrow.

“It’s not a bad idea, if your people are willing,” Maggie points out, then rests her hand again on Alex’s back. Alex pointedly ignores the look M’gann is giving her.

“So...we’re having *a* hackathon at an alien bar.” Alex sighs. “I’ve heard worse ideas.”

—

Somehow it really should have crossed Alex’s mind than when the plan became “hackathon at the alien bar”, that would mean that people from the DEO would show up at said bar. People including her mother.

“I can see why you like it here,” Eliza says as she carefully re-sorts some of the piles of the device-from-hell-turned-scare Winn had made onto the pool table she’d commandeered. (The two large guys who’d been playing took one look at Eliza’s expression and then politely packed up their game. And now they’re at work clearing more tables. Instinctual fear of Mom Face is apparently universal.)

“You say that like I’m here all the time.”

“Of course you’re not here all the time. That’s what your lab is for.”

Alex resists the urge to headdesk on the pool table.

“But,” Eliza says way too calmly, and warning bells start going off in Alex’s mind, “you’re more here for the company.” She nods her head over to the bar, and Alex follows her line of sight to see Maggie smiling and laughing at something M’gann just said. “She fits in well here.”
“Mom!”

“Alex, look at our family. I’m just saying, she’d have to be made of exceptional stuff to understand, and from what I can see, it looks like she might be.”

“Oh my god.” Alex actually does flop down on the table and covers her eyes. “Can you please stop planning… whatever it is you’re planning?”

Eliza just smiles, and pets her head.

There’s that feeling of impending doom again. Maybe she can convince one of the other bartenders to give her a drink when M’gann is distracted.

—

Whoever designed shot glasses clearly did not do it with otters in mind. Holding one between her… paws means she has to walk on her hind legs, which is just awkward. Especially when the first attempt makes her faceplant. So obviously the next best option is trying to wrestle a smooth, conical frustum with her teeth.

It’s going swell.

Alex’s fight with the glass is brought to a halt when Darla leans an elbow on the bar right in her path. “I’m gonna need to see some ID there, fuzzy.”

“Oh, come on!” The glass drops from her mouth, rolls off the bartop, and shatters on the floor. Goddammit.

Darla huffs and rolls her eyes. “Yeah, nope.” And faster than Alex can react, Darla has her by the scruff of her neck.

“PUT ME DOWN.” Against her will, Alex immediately goes limp. Stupid ingrained responses. She glares at anyone who dares look at them as she is hauled to the other side of the bar.

“M’gann, I found trouble.”

M’gann looks over at them and sighs. “She is never going to forgive you for this.” Darla shrugs, not concerned that Alex gets jostled by it. “Give her here.”

To her injured pride, M’gann keeps holding her by the scruff of the neck. Alex can’t help the whine that escapes.

“Oh no you don’t. One, I am perfectly aware of how sharp your claws are, and if instinctual response gives you a magic passive button, I’m using it. Two, I told you no alcohol, Alex.”

Alex tries to look pathetic. Really, that should be easy, considering. Except of course M’gann is immune.

“Someone needs to stage an intervention.” M’gann gets a funny look in her eyes, then takes them over to another corner of the bar.

“M’gann, what — “

And before she can even think about doing anything, M’gann drops her right into Maggie’s lap. Maggie’s hands automatically wrap around her so she doesn’t end up tumbling onto the floor.
“You’re welcome,” M’gann says before walking off.

“What is with today?”

“You can’t stay out of trouble, can you?” Maggie says, one thumb rubbing circles in her fur. She’s wearing the strangest expression, and Alex feels her gut twist in a way that has absolutely nothing to do with the chicken wings. “What am I going to do with you, Danvers?”

Alex knows they’re not talking about the shot glass (now, Maggie? Really?), but the impromptu massage she’s getting starts making her sleepy. Which is absolutely not fair, because M’gann did this on purpose and now she’s gonna be smug about it. The feel of Maggie’s thumb is stupidly soothing, and despite the fact that they’re in the noisy bar full of potentially threatening aliens, Alex can’t help the yawn that sneaks out of her throat.

“Yeah, that’s adorable. I’m pretty sure it’s illegal to be that cute. I’m gonna have to arrest you.”

Alex blinks. “Uh-huh, sure. I’d slip right through the bars of the cell.”

“I guess it’s past your bedtime.” Maggie chuckles, poking her under the chin hard enough to make her jump and start hissing. “Come on, you can’t fall asleep in here. Someone might mistake you for an appetizer.” Alex is lifted up and then curled in Maggie’s arms like a goddamn infant. (Which… while embarrassing, is still better than Kara’s sack of potatoes technique.)

They make their way back over to the pool table where Eliza is holding court. At least, that’s what it looks like, what with at least four unfamiliar heads bent over the piles of components in intense concentration, and another half dozen people in booths scribbling schematics on paper. Alex shakes her head, because of course her mom has successfully wrangled fanged aliens twice her size like they’re graduate students.

“Maggie? What’s wrong?” Eliza asks as soon as she spots them.

“Nothing’s wrong, Dr. Danvers. Just someone,” she jostles Alex, “is apparently worn out.”

“Oh, none of that. Call me Eliza,” her mom says, way too casually for Alex’s taste. “And that’s not surprising. It’s been a long day, and Alex gets cranky without coffee. Her dad got her hooked when she was still in junior high. It was a nightmare.”

“Mom!”

Maggie laughs. “A girl after my own heart.” She looks down at Alex, eyes shining with amusement. “You haven’t had any in days. You must be going insane.”

“I’m feeling very attacked right now.”

“Er, Dr. Danvers?” A bald, blue alien in a rumpled business suit interrupts them and saves Alex from yet another indignity. “Sorry to interrupt, but you probably want to see this.”

“Yes, Brian?”

He holds up a mess of electrical components in one hand. “So this? This is an Albrenian adiabatic gate array. And that part there is a standard Trax quantum boost converter.” He points to the parts. “And then that? That’s a damn 555 timer chip.”

Alex blinks. That can’t be right. She peers past Maggie’s arm to examine the tangle of circuits.
“A 555? But that’s...” Eliza says, trailing off with a frown.

“I don’t know what this mess was originally, but someone slapped together a bunch of things that really shouldn’t go together and then put a very basic Earth transistor between the two for some godawful reason.”

Alex and Eliza connect the dots at the same time. “Cadmus.” “Cadmus.”

To be fair, there really isn’t anyone else who treats alien tech like terrifying Lego sets quite like Cadmus does. But considering the smashed quadcopter spying on Kara, Alex is getting the feeling this entire mess wasn’t such an accident or coincidence after all.

“How did you even notice that?” Maggie asks.

Brian shrugs. “I work tech support. After seeing what people do to their DVRs, nothing is weird anymore.”

Now that it’s obvious Cadmus is involved, Eliza calls J’onn in to take over for the night. With him comes Winn, looking pumped like a little kid who just chugged three Mountain Dews. (Alex’s nose wrinkles at the distinctive fake-citrus scent.) Winn heads immediately toward the electronics spread and starts grumbling over it.

“So, Cadmus again,” J’onn says, shaking his head. “I remember when this job used to be simple.”

“Really?”

“Of course not, Alex. The DEO is a government organization.”

Eliza slings her bag over her shoulder. “You should be fine for the night, J’onn.”

“Did they actually just sprinkle capacitors over this? Who let an undergrad design a circuit?” Winn yells from the pool table. “I’m offended on a professional level.”

J’onn sighs deeply and rubs his temples. “I will be. Somehow.”

Eliza just pats him on the shoulder before turning to Alex. And Maggie, who has still not put her down. “Come on. You too, Maggie. Alex mentioned that you don’t have a ride home, so why don’t you head out with us?”

“Oh, I couldn’t possibly…”

“I insist.”

“Um. All right, then. Thanks.”

The events of the day must be catching up to her, and this otter metabolism sucks, because Alex cannot keep her eyes open once they get into the car. She dozes on and off to the sounds of Eliza and Maggie chatting about basic things, most of which her mom already knows from their conversation-that-must-not-be-named this morning.

So this is her totally reasonable excuse for not quite realizing what’s happening until Eliza opens the door to the apartment.

Her apartment. Not Kara’s. Because Alex somehow forgot that it was technically her turn as Mom-
host since Kara’d had Thanksgiving. And probably also because Alex doesn’t exactly need her bed at the moment.

However: Maggie is now in her apartment.

This is so not how she’d pictured it happening. (Not that she had pictured it, because that would be presumptive, and inappropriate, and she is so not that kind of person.)

“I’d normally offer you a home-cooked meal, but it’s been a long day. Would delivery be all right? If you’re hungry right now, I know Alex always keeps fruit around.”

Alex is finally let down onto the back of her couch when Maggie answers. “Delivery is fine, Dr. Dan— er, Eliza. And really?”

“The fruit? Oh, Alex used to eat at least a bag of oranges a week. I think because Kara wasn’t the most enthused about fruit she realized it was something she wouldn’t have to fight over. As long as I kept something stocked, there would be peace in the house.”

“You try arguing with a Kryptonian about who gets the last slice of cake. I’ll watch.”

“Huh, interesting.” Maggie gets a really devious look on her face. “What other things did young Alex Danvers do?”

Oh no.

Eliza gestures to the mantle over the fireplace. “I could probably tell you the stories behind most of those photos, and then some.”

Alex scrambles off the couch and runs away while her mom gestures at a photo from Kara’s first summer in the family and starts reminiscing about how they’d been teaching Kara to bake cookies, an experience that had left Alex shaking sprinkles out of her hair for days. Maggie’s delighted laughter chases after her as she escapes into her bedroom.

Her mom is evil, and she’s going to go curl up in her sock drawer and sleep until this nightmare is over.
Kara’s making sure the last of the accident victims are safely loaded onto the ambulances when the call comes. She flies out of earshot of any bystanders to answer it.

“Danvers, why aren’t you in my office right now?” Snapper growls into the phone.

“Um… I thought I was on assignment?”

“Are you still in National City?”

“Er, yes?”

“Then I don’t care. Get in here.” And with that, Kara’s left wincing at the dial tone before she can even ask why he needs her in the office.

Wonderful.

—

CatCo is a madhouse when she steps off the elevator. She’s never had to dodge so many people running around in front of her, and oh no, is that weird? Should she have let somebody run into her? Well, right as she’s wondering that, some poor intern runs smack into her and papers go flying everywhere.

“I’m sorry!” she blurts out as she kneels down to help pick up the mess.

“Danvers, is that you? Get in here.” Or not.

Snapper looks especially growly today, even though he thankfully missed her almost epic dive into the bullpen. “Sir?”

“Danvers. I’ve got a job for you,” he grumbles, not even looking up from the mountain of paper on his desk that he is attacking with a red pen.

“I still have that piece I’m on assignment for.”

Snapper just points over her shoulder. Kara strains her hearing nervously, a little bit afraid to turn around once she realizes just how much whispering is taking place. She gulps to tamp down the knot of dread forming in her stomach, then spins on her heel to see… every single monitor in the editing room plastered with cellphone photos of Supergirl. With a small child. And an otter. Because of course her 90-second attempt at positive role-modeling went viral.

Alex is going to kill her.

The strangled noise that escapes her throat probably sounds like a dying giraffe. For whatever reason, that’s the thing that draws Snapper’s attention, because he looks up from destroying some reporter’s hopes and dreams with red ink.

"Danvers, much as it pains me to admit it, you have the obnoxiously upbeat temperament to sell 'cute pet sidekick to peppy cheerleader hero', so get on this.”

“What… what exactly do you want me to do?”
Snapper glowers, so Kara decides that discretion is the better part of valor and she should leave before the yelling starts. Snapper is irritated and Alex is most definitely going to kill her. Maybe Clark will let her timeshare the Fortress of Solitude.

—

“It’s not that funny, Clark!” Kara hisses into her cell phone while hiding in a supply closet.

Not that hiding makes her feel any better, because her utter brat of a cousin will not stop laughing. He’s lucky he doesn’t have to breathe like a human because otherwise she might actually be concerned.

“A... otter... and you... oh god, Kara, only you!”

“Give me that, you giant nerd.” There’s a shuffle as the phone relocates and then, “Hello Kara, I’m sorry he’s useless.”

“Hi, Lois.”

“So. I hear the Danvers sisters got themselves into a... hairy situation.”

Kara groans. “Not you too.”

“Sorry, sorry. But you have to admit, it’s otterly ridiculous.”

“If Alex decides to kill you, I’m not going to stop her.”

“Can she even reach right now?”

“Alex has figured out how to get me down from space. You think height is going to deter her?”

“Hmm, valid point.” Kara can still hear Clark laughing in the background. “So you have to write an article about your superpowered alter ego having your sister, who got turned into an otter, as a pet sidekick. How do you even get into these situations?”

“Honestly, I have no idea. But Lois, I don’t know what to do!” she absolutely does not whine.

“Write the article?”

“Thank you, Ms. Award-Winning Journalist, for that valuable and life-saving tip.”

“I don’t know what otter advice you’d expect me to give.”

“Lois!”

—

“Uh, Kara? What are you doing here?” James asks as he pokes his head into the supply closet. “I got you that assignment so you wouldn’t have to be here.”

Kara looks up from where she’s been folding a small mountain of paper cranes out of unused pads of legal paper. Well, they’ll definitely be unused now that they’ve all had the bottom eight inches of paper removed. And are slightly charred at the edges. She sighs. “Snapper called.”

“Ah.” He closes the door behind him, then strides over and joins her in the corner she’s claimed, slouching down to the floor with his legs stretched out in front of him. “Still not quite explaining
why you’re hiding in the supply closet. Did he give away your desk again? I swear I told him to let you have a desk.”

She can’t help but snort at his fake-outraged tone, but she isn’t sorry when her light shoulder bump nearly sends him sprawling. “I assume you saw the latest viral photo? Snapper wants me to write it up.”

James’s eyebrows shoot up. “...Alex is going to murder us.” He pauses, reaching for a piece of paper, then nods toward Kara. “Although you might be safe. You have sibling amnesty,” he says as he deftly folds the paper.

Kara grimaces. “I think you’re probably the one with amnesty here.”

He shrugs. “Could go either way with her, really.” Kara watches as he makes the paper bird between his fingers flap its wings. “That why we’re hiding in the supply closet?”

“I’m not hiding. I’m… brainstorming, because I called Clark for advice and he’s useless, and Lois was worse somehow.”

“I could have told you that.”

They sit there in silence for a while, folding cranes. Kara sighs. “I miss her.”

“Who?”

“Alex.”

“Didn’t you see her like two hours ago?” James sounds confused. “You left her with Maggie, right? You could always go find them. How hard can it be to find a cop and an otter?” He pauses for a moment, then frowns. “Wait, don’t answer that.”

“No, not literally,” Kara says, the folded paper crinkling to uselessness between her fingers. Her latest failed crane joins the sad graveyard by her ankle. “It sounds really stupid, but I miss being able to talk to her? I mean, I can talk to her. I’ve probably talked at her more in the last few days than I have in weeks. But it’s just … it’s not the same. If that makes any sense.”

“I think so,” he says softly, adding another tribute to Crane Mountain. “It’s not like she can talk back.”

“Right? But... it’s not only that, not entirely.” She pushes up her glasses to rub the bridge of her nose. “Why is this so hard to explain? It’s— ugh.” She sighs, then tries again. “Alex is always there for me when I’m feeling lost or confused, making it better with even the little things. Arguing over the Netflix queue. Letting me steal the last slice of pizza, or her ice cream. Or... I didn’t realize how much she did all these tiny things like bump my shoulder or tap my arm to remind me that she was right there if I needed her, or grabbing my hand just to let me know she’s there. And the hugs. She hugs me all the time. And now she’s gone and it’s like I’m lost in the Phantom Zone again.”

James doesn’t say anything, but he does set down his paper crane and hook his arm around her shoulders. It feels good, and comfortable, but not really what she wants right now, and why is she still so weird about figuring out this kind of stuff?

“But she’s not gone. I know that. But it’s so weird right now, and I want things to go back to normal. I look at her and she’s small and furry and all of a sudden she needs me to pull fish out of the fridge. But she’s still Alex, you know?” Kara stares at the half-folded paper between her
fingers. “I broke her arm once, when we were kids. It was an accident, obviously, but I felt awful because it was my fault. So I tried to fix it by offering to get her anything she wanted. She ended up yelling at me that she wasn’t going to die from a broken arm, and then she tried to climb a tree.”

“That… definitely sounds like Alex,” James says as he releases her shoulder and goes back to folding paper.

“Yeah. So I just… she never needs my help, you know? But now she does, and now that I have to be the responsible one I keep it screwing up.”

“Hey, hey, hey, no. You’re doing fine.”

“James, I left her alone for a few hours and she got into a fight with a Cadmus quadcopter on the roof of a multi-story apartment building.”

James opens his mouth. Closes it. Frowns at the crane in his hands before he tosses it on the pile. “I’m still not sure that’s on you, because this is Alex we’re talking about.”

Before she can come up with an answer to that one, no matter how right he might be, her phone rings. “J’onn? What—”

“Everything is fine, Kara. Where are you right now?”

“Er, I’m at CatCo. For… reasons.”

There’s a beat of silence. She can practically hear J’onn frowning through the speaker. “You took your sister to CatCo.”

“No! No, that would be crazy. I don’t want to think about who’d win a fight between Snapper and Alex, because I’m pretty sure I’d lose either way.” Off to her side, James is struggling to hold in his laugh — unsuccessfully, given that his upper body is shaking so hard that he ends up tearing his paper crane in half. Kara nudges his shoulder, and sends him sprawling again.

“Kara, please tell me my agent is not out terrorizing the ankles of National City pedestrians.”

“Hey, come on, I’m not that irresponsible! But, um, you might want to check out #otterlysuper?”

There’s a lengthy pause and the sound of tapping on a smartphone screen. “I am not hiring a publicist for you.”

“There was a car accident! And then I left her with Maggie. She’s a cop, she’s competent!”

“I no longer feel guilty about what I’m going to say. I called in some reinforcements to help pick up the slack at the DEO while Agent Danvers is out of commission. Flight touches down at National City Airport in 20 minutes. Pick them up and bring them over to the DEO, and I will not be the one to inform your sister of this exciting viral sensation.”

Kara huffs. “Deal. But, um, wouldn’t sending a car be less obvious?”

“Yes, but it’s rush hour.”

She rolls her eyes. Then again, it’s a distraction from this stupid article that is only going to get Alex mad at her. “Fine. See you in a bit.”

James grins at her when she hangs up. “Did you just get demoted to taxi service as punishment?”
Kara throws a dead paper crane at him.

It occurs to her later, while she’s waiting in the airport terminal and trying to look casual in her suit as the poor TSA agents keep sneaking glances at her like they’re trying to figure out how to ask for help with the giant security line, that it might have been a good idea to press J’onn for more detail on these “reinforcements.” Because she has no idea who she’s looking for.

As it turns out, he really didn’t need to be more specific because it was actually really obvious.

“Lucy?”

Lucy Lane glances up from where she’s frowning at her cell phone as she walks into the baggage claim. “Supergirl?” She laughs and steps into Kara’s outstretched arms for a hug. “I did not expect this pickup.”

“I didn’t either! J’onn only asked me to ‘escort the reinforcements.’” Kara pouts. “He could have told me.”

Lucy smirks. “Reinforcements, huh? I left you guys on your own for how long?”

Kara makes a grabby motion for Lucy’s carry-on as she steers them toward the exit. “In our defense, it has been crazy lately.”

“Uh-huh.” Lucy’s phone buzzes and she frowns down at it again.

“What’s wrong?” Kara asks as she grabs Lucy around the waist in preparation for takeoff.

“It’s nothing,” she says, as she swings an arm firmly around Kara’s shoulder. “Unless you happen to know why Lois decided to send me otter puns for the entire duration of my flight.”

Kara groans.

Lucy is nearly in hysterics by the time they reach the DEO. “I… oh my god. An otter. Alex Danvers got turned into an otter. Please tell me there are pictures.”

“Only all over the internet,” Kara grumbles as she lands them on the balcony, which sets Lucy off giggling again.

“Excellent.”

“Why do you take joy in my suffering?” Kara asks while doing Lucy the favor of pretending her shove is effective.

“Because you’re impervious and your sister makes those delightfully funny faces when she’s annoyed.”

“…they look even better with the fur. And if you tell her I said that, I am going to drop you in the Pacific.”

“Rude.”

J’onn of course chooses that moment to act all responsible-like. “Major Lane, good to see you
again. As you have probably heard, we have a bit of a… situation here.”

“Nice to be back, Director. And yes, I’ve been briefed on your 2IC’s fuzzy little problem.”

He sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose. “I swear I am running a circus.” Lucy just beams, completely unrepentant. “Kara, you should probably check in with Eliza. She’ll probably want to know where her child wandered off to this time.”

“You didn’t tell her?” Kara asks, frowning.

J’onn just gives her A Look. He’s really good at those, not gonna lie. Maybe it’s a dad thing? “I’m old, not stupid.”

“You are the worst.”

—

When Kara reaches the lab, Eliza and Winn are packing up the various piles of electronics dust. Which after all that effort Winn put into sorting them and given that still there’s no human-Alex seems really weird. “Um, what’s going on?”

“Hackathon at the alien bar!” Winn cheers.

Eliza frowns. “Winn, when was the last time you got sleep?”

“Um. It was absolutely sometime today.”

“No.” Eliza’s voice is firm. Winn attempts to make puppy-eyes. Key word being attempts, because Kara already knows Eliza’s immune to those. It could be her superpower. Is Mom-ing a superpower? “Bed, mister. I know J’onn keeps a bunk for you.”

“But…”

Eliza just gives him A Look, and Winn’s mouth clicks shut. He tries pouting instead, which is promptly interrupted by a huge yawn. Eliza shakes her head fondly as he shuffles off to the bunk room, then turns her attention to Kara and promptly gives her that same piercing look Alex gives her every time she gives up the last potsticker without a fight, and wow is it weird to miss that?

“What’s wrong, sweetheart?”

“Nothing.”

“Oh, Kara.” Eliza rests a hand on her shoulder. “Out with it.”

Kara caves. “I don’t know, I just feel… useless. Alex needs help, but I don’t know this technology. And this isn’t exactly a problem I can punch in the face.” She throws up her hands. “And then Snapper wants an article about Supergirl’s cute new pet, so now I have to worry about that instead, and Alex might try to eat my face, and Clark is a horrible substitute advice-giver.”

“If anyone could solve this by punching it in the face, you would be at the top of my list, sweetie.” Eliza somehow says this with an entirely straight face, which is so unfair. “And no one’s expecting you to fix the technology. Maggie suggested getting help from the non-human patrons at the bar, which is why we’re going. And I highly doubt Alex will eat you.”

“She’ll try.”
“Well, yes, because she’s stubborn.”

“Exactly!” Kara crosses her arms. “Wait, Maggie took Alex to the bar? Why am I not surprised?”

“Because you know your sister,” Eliza says as she continues packing up equipment.

“And you are not in the least bit concerned by this?”

Eliza pauses, and looks up, quirking an eyebrow. “Should I be?”

Kara opens her mouth, remembering the assortment of burly aliens with claws and limited patience. Then she thinks of her sister, small and… and also clawed. “You know, I might be more concerned about the bar.”

“Like I said, you know your sister. And as for everything else, well, that’s why you’ve got people here helping,” Eliza says, shrugging. “‘Stronger together’, isn’t that what you told us?”

“It’s totally not fair when you bring my family crest into the argument,” Kara pouts.

“I’m your mom, I’m allowed,” Eliza replies cheerfully, pulling her in for a hug that Kara sinks into, because she needs this so much right now, and oh no, now she’s trying not to cry. “Kara, hey. Breathe, sweetie. It’s going to be all right.”

“I just hate feeling helpless.”

“Well, what can you do?” And the way Eliza says it, she’s not being rhetorical. What can she do? She’s no good with the tech, either in the device or the drone. On the other hand...

It’s a long shot, but it could work, and Alex deserves it.

Kara hugs Eliza back, accidentally squeezing tight enough that Eliza coughs a little. Oops. “You’re brilliant. I’ll see you later.”

“If I don’t end up seeing you at that bar, I’m going to drive over to Alex’s place for tonight.”

Kara pauses on her way out the door. “Oh, yeah, do that. Alex is going to need a ride, since I kinda was hauling them around.”

“You took both of them? Huh.”

Eliza’s got a glint in her eye that doesn’t match the detached expression on her face, but Kara can’t stop to ponder that now because: she has a plan.

—

The fact that Lena Luthor is still in her office after sunset is probably the least surprising thing that’s happened to Kara all day. She makes a note to send Lena’s assistant a Starbucks card or something when she waves her through, because she knows the feeling and assistants should stick together.

“Kara! What a surprise!” Lena jumps to get up and reaches for her phone, frowning as she taps through several apps. “I didn’t forget an appointment, did I?”

“No, no, no,” Kara says, waving her hands until Lena sits back down and stops her awkward hovering. “I just… came to see you. Not for an interview or anything!”
“Oh. Well, what brings you by?” She peels up at her. “Is something wrong?”

“What? No! Can’t I just swing by to visit?”

Lena raises an eyebrow. “At...” she checks her monitor again, “8:27 PM. And you’ve got that same frown as when your boss sends you to ask me something you really don’t want to. *Something’s* the matter.”

Is she that obvious? Kara winces and takes the seat opposite. “Okay, so I’m a little bothered by something. And I need to ask you something that’s going to sound really bad, but I swear I don’t mean it that way.”

“This is not filling me with great confidence.”

“Argh. Okay. So... has L-Corp, er, lost any kind of tech? Recently?”

Lena’s eyebrow climbs higher. “Not that I’m aware of,” she says slowly. “What happened?”

There’s a hint of ice in her voice.

Kara fiddles with her glasses. Okay, so she has to do this without revealing anything super-secret. No big. “You know that attack that happened on Friday?”

“The one that was all over the evening news? I’d heard that NCPD caught the man, and that someone was hurt.”

That’s less information than she thought had gotten out, but then again, she’s been a little too distracted to see what nightly broadcasts have been reporting this week. “Yeah, that one. It… well, it was my sister. The casualty, I mean.”

Lena’s hand flies to her mouth. “Oh Kara, I’m so sorry. Do you need help with anything? Let me know what I can do, I’ll clear my schedule — “

“Whoa whoa whoa, waitaminute,” Kara waves her hands. “She’s not dead. Just… ugh, this is so hard to say. So the guy, the one who got arrested? He had this weird raygun or something. And she got hit by it. And it… did something. Really weird.”

Lena just kinda stares. “Well, that’s an impressive cluedump. I almost don’t even know where to start parsing that.” She shakes her head. “Weird how?”

“She, um, well… here.” Kara pulls out her phone, flips to one of the hundred photos she’s taken within the last few days, and hands it over.

There’s a moment of silence. Kara’s can hear the birds nesting on the rooftop across the street.

“This is an otter.”

“North American River otter, to be exact.”

Lena frowns at her.

“That’s impossible.”

“I swear, that’s my sister. It turned —”

“No, no, no, I mean that should be *physically impossible*. Where does all the extra mass go? Where do the different proteins even come from? Otters aren’t even that closely related to humans, so how
could any device even be capable of that?"

It’s a really good thing Lena isn’t the one with laser vision, otherwise Kara would need a new phone given how hard she’s glaring at it.

“The power requirements alone would...”

She really needs to put Lena and Winn in the same room. That would be hilarious to watch.

“...no it’s not quantum entanglement. Ugh, somewhere the second law is crying....”

And Alex, when she’s back to normal. Because this is a nerd tangent, and Lena shows no signs of stopping.

Suddenly, Lena’s head shoots up from where she’s been scribbling notes. Where did that notebook come from? “Do you know where that raygun is?”

Kara winces. “It’s... well, it apparently got smashed when the guy fell on it while being arrested.”

Lena pinches the bridge of her nose. “Of course it did.” She frowns down at her page of scribbles. Kara shakes her head, because Lena’s handwriting is as bad as Alex’s. Is that a scientist prerequisite or something? Are there anti-handwriting classes?

She starts when Lena looks back up at her expectantly. “Is there any other information you can give me?”

Well, she could, but it would involve breaking at least ten major secrets and making J’onn do his frowny disappointed face. “I can try?”

“Well, you’ve certainly given me a puzzle,” Lena says, pressing her lips in a thin line.

Kara hunches her shoulders and smiles weakly. “Sorry?”

Lena shakes her head, smiling. “It’s not a problem at all. Really, I’d much rather chew on this than expense reports or the other things the board is whining about. You’ve practically done me a favor.”

Success! “Thank you so much. I’ve just felt so... helpless since this happened, you know? I can’t do anything about it myself.”

“What are friends for?”

—

Kara stays a little longer chatting with Lena, but she can tell that her friend is distracted and itching to run for a whiteboard or something and start scrawling equations and theories. Lena’s excitement reminds her so much of Alex that she finds herself flying over to her sister’s apartment almost without thinking.

The smell of Cantonese food is the first thing that registers when she lands on the balcony. Two heads turn towards her from the couch. “Oh! Er, hi Maggie.”

“Maggie needed a ride home, and it was so late we decided to order dinner before I dropped her off,” Eliza explains innocently. “And before you ask, yes, there’s two orders of potstickers and a beef lo mein for you in the fridge.”
Kara is torn. On one hand, food. On the other... “Where’s Alex?”

Now Eliza looks amused. “I think she’s hiding under her bed. Maggie started asking about the pictures on the mantle. Apparently your sister didn’t want to join us.”

Poor Alex. Despite being on the President’s go-to list for tactical operations, Eliza can still outmaneuver her.

Eliza picks up a new photo. “Oh! This one is from when you and Alex had that fashion show after you decided you wanted to learn how to sew.”

Kara feels the blood drain from her face.

“You know what? I’m gonna go check on her. You have fun with that bye.”

She tells herself it’s not running away, it’s a tactical retreat. Alex would appreciate that. Especially since Maggie isn’t muffling her laughter at all. Kara stares through the bed until she finds Alex, then lays down on her stomach next to the spot where she’s hiding. A beat later, a furry little face pops out of a storage drawer and glowers at her.

“Meh.”

“Yeah, I don’t blame you.”

Alex tilts her head.

“I don’t know how you’re dealing with, well, all of this. I mean, I’m barely dealing and I’m not the one who’s, well, yeah.” She lets her forehead thump against the floor. “Seriously. I didn’t realize how hard it is to be all responsible and everything. And you’ve been doing it for years without complaining? How? Sometimes I think you’re the one with superpowers. Uuugh.”

It’s not really what she wanted to say, but she’s too worn out by everything to stop from laying it all on Alex. Again. She’s probably being selfish. She should probably mention the article. And Lucy. And Lena. But right now, the floor feels stupidly good, and honestly, she’d rather just let her hair flop over her face and ignore all of her problems right now.

It works for approximately half a second, until a warm paw pats at her cheek.

Kara turns her head to see her sister right next to her, and the expression on Alex’s face is so Alex that something in Kara just gives. She scoops her sister up, rolls over, and leans against the wall with Alex curled in her arms. She buries her face into Alex’s fur, and at this point, Kara doesn’t care how weird it looks. She can’t.

“Meh?”

Kara leans back. “Sorry. Sorry, I just... we’ll fix this, I swear.”

Alex nuzzles her face awkwardly. Strangely — or not so strangely — it makes her feel better. Kara yawns, and lets herself slouch against the wall until she’s completely curled up in the corner, still holding onto her sister. Alex squirms a little until Kara loosens her grip, then yawns herself, and finally curls up on Kara’s stomach, tucking her tail over her nose and closing her eyes.

It’s incredibly adorable. Kara kinda wishes she could take out her phone for a picture.

Everything’s gonna work out. Except...
“Alex, your claws are stabbing me.”

“Meh.”

“They’re still pointy!”

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