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“So tell him the truth, Kara,” Alex finally spoke, when she could breathe again, meeting Kara’s worried gaze. “Tell him that we are already bonded.”

Notes

Disclaimer: Supergirl is an American superhero fiction action-adventure drama television series developed by Ali Adler, Greg Berlanti and Andrew Kreisberg, that aired on CBS and sister network, The CW. It is based on the DC Comics character Supergirl (Kara Zor-El), created by Otto Binder and Al Plastino. No profit or infringement is intended with this fanfiction.

Spoilers: Up to and including Season 2, Episode 8, The Darkest Place including the cross over episodes of Flash/Arrow/DC Legends of Tomorrow. Please note however that there was no Sanvers kiss and that Maggie and Alex are just friends.

AN – So Mon-El as Kara’s love interest is just even more annoying than James ever was.
Therefore, I need to just get this out of my system. This is a Kalex romance, so if that's your squick, please don't read. Title comes from *Superman (It's Not Easy)* by Five for Fighting.

You can find me lurking in the shadows on tumblr: geekgrrllurking.tumblr.com
What a fucked up evening it had been.

Alex Danvers sighed and flicked the light on as she entered her apartment, blinking as her eyes adjusted to the brightness. The friendly game of pool with Maggie Sawyer had turned into drinks, which turned into more drinks and then she was admitting things that she didn’t really want to talk about. Not that that had stopped Maggie from asking.

Dropping her keys on the kitchen island, Alex flopped down onto her grey couch and let herself slide down sideways to rest her head on the seat cushions. Now if only that spinning sensation would stop, all would be right with the world. Despite spilling the beans about Kara being Supergirl, which J’onn was going to kill her for, Maggie had certainly told her share of secrets too, which she could deal with. Mostly. That whole still being in love with her ex-girlfriend back in Gotham City had certainly been the most painful.

A knock at the door pulled her from her thoughts.

“Go away.” Alex mumbled into the sofa cushion underneath her. What the hell time was it anyway? Too late o’clock in the fucking morning to be knocking on her door.

“Alex?” A familiar voice drifted in from the hallway, followed by more hesitant tapping on the door. “It’s me, open the door.” Alex lifted her head and sighed. So much for falling asleep where she lay.

“Hang on.” Alex grumped and forced herself upright. She shuffled to the door, running a hand through her hair and yawning before unlocking and yanking it open to find her sister standing there. “Kara, it’s late. Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I guess.” Kara Danvers offered up a lopsided smile and half shrug, before stepping through into the apartment. Kara glanced around the dark space, as if only just realizing the time and that she maybe should have called first. Still this couldn’t wait until the morning and it wasn’t something she wanted to discuss over the phone. “We need to talk.”

“Ooo-kay.” Alex frowned as she closed the door and flipped all the locks back into place. ‘We need to talk’ never led to good conversations in her experience. She watched as Kara made her way over to her sparsely stocked fridge and pulled out two bottles of water.

“So what’s going on that I need to know?” Alex came from around her kitchen island to meet her,
her dark eyes scanning for any injuries or damage. She took one bottle and cracked it open, trying to
gauge Kara’s mood.

“I just…I wanted to…” Kara’s eyes began to fill with tears. She didn’t even know where to start or
how to explain the overwhelming frustration of what she was feeling. Luckily Alex didn’t even
hesitate, putting her water down on the island and pulled Kara close, into a much-needed hug.

“Hey, just take your time, I’m not going anywhere.” Strong arms wrapped around her and Kara let
herself sink into the embrace. She buried her nose in Alex’s warmth, snuffling into the dark hair and
breathing her in. Alex always felt so good, the scent of her calming her down almost as much as the
hug.

“It’s okay, it all just...” Kara smiled into Alex’s shoulder, touched by the obvious concern. “Well, it’s
all kind of caught up with me. I didn’t really have a lot of time to process destroying that poor
environmentalist.” Kara paused and pulled away, the bitterness of having failed to save the
changeling still difficult to swallow. “And then when I was helping Barry and the others off world, I-
I…” Kara came to a full stop and just wiped at the gathering tears in her eyes. It was always hard to
talk about her Red Kryptonite experience, especially with Alex.

“Damn it, Kara. I knew I should have gone with you.” Alex muttered, finding Kara’s hand and
leading her to the couch. They sat together, Alex’s arm sliding across Kara’s narrow shoulders,
pulling a snuggly blanket over both of them. Kara sighed and melted closer into the offered comfort.
She was glad Alex hadn’t seen her controlled yet again. It had brought all the Red Kryptonite
memories rushing back in a horrible wave.

“Tell me what happened in the other universe.” Alex adjusted her tone, sure that something was
bothering Kara. She reached out and pulled on long blonde hair, letting it fall through her fingers.

“It was horrible, I couldn’t stop myself, again!” Kara pulled a pillow to her chest and hugged it,
remembering being controlled mentally by the aliens, a shiver running down her spine.

“They had Red Kryptonite there?” Alex asked, pinching the bridge of her nose, afraid Kara had to
live through that again.

“No, thank Rao. B-but the alien invaders, they were able to telepathically control me and some of the
others. We were forced to attack Barry and a few of the team that had stayed behind at STAR Labs.
I nearly killed…” Kara’s voice broke and she wiped at her eyes.
“Hey, come on, you’re safe now. No one was killed.” Alex pulled her closer again. “You should have told me about this sooner. I could have cancelled my plans.”

“I wanted to, I was going to see if you wanted to get dinner, but my debrief at the DEO was interrupted by a Supergirl emergency. J’onn said we could just continue tomorrow, and by the time I finally got back, you weren’t answering my texts and Mon-El was at my door. Which y’know is fine, but then…well, ever since then I’ve been trying to talk him out of doing anything. I need some time to get my head together, not jump into something so quickly. However, he is rather stubborn…” Kara leaned back, shifting away as she babbled nervously, not making a lot of sense.

“Whoa, slow down. What did the frat boy do now?” Alex’s lips pressed together into a thin line of disapproval. The Daxamite was more trouble than he was worth as far as she was concerned. She didn’t understand the soft spot that Kara had for the big dolt.

“Well,” Kara hesitated, not sure how Alex would react. “Before I left with Barry and Cisco, Mon-El…kind of kissed me.” Kara bit her lower lip self-consciously and looked away.

“What!” Alex’s gut dropped, the audacity of the man was unbelievable. Why had Kara not mentioned this development before? She had been so busy keeping Winn and James in line that she missed this completely.

“It was when Eliza was here and Mon-El was so sick and out of it. I didn’t think he remembered, and it wasn’t a big deal or anything so I never mentioned it.” Kara leaned back again. There was a part of her that was flattered by the attention but another, bigger part of her was dreading having to deal with this. “But at my place tonight he admitted that he did remember. And then he said that he wanted to follow protocol, that he should do this right.”

“Do what right?” Alex frowned, not sure what that really meant. Kara sighed and turned to face her.

“Mon-El has officially asked if he could court me.” Kara fidgeted, pushing her glasses higher nervously.

The silence was deafening. Alex blinked, sure that it was that last shot of whiskey that was still rattling around her belly, causing the burn in her gut. She wished she had another one, that she could swallow down along with her unexpectedly raw feelings.

“So tell him the truth, Kara,” Alex finally spoke, when she could breathe again, meeting Kara’s
worried gaze. “Tell him that we are already bonded.”
Kal-El’s Earth accent all but made the ancient Kryptonian words of betrothal incomprehensible as he stumbled and bumbled his way through it. Kara resisted her sigh of frustration, making a mental note that she would need to work with him to get his vocabulary and speech patterns up to even working class levels. She worried briefly about what kind of education system they had on this backward planet. Kara said nothing though, instead biting her tongue and smiling as she finally belonged to the House of Danvers. As the eldest male member of her family, Kal-El was responsible for ensuring that Kara was looked after, that she was allied to a strong House. She desperately wanted to be a Danvers.

“In the name of Truth and Honour, before the face of Rao, who kindled the sun and assembled the ground beneath our feet, I hereby declare these vows binding upon you.” Kal-El switched to English. “For from this day forward, through all time and space, even unto eternity, the House of El shall be joined with the House of Danvers.”

Kara stood straighter, squaring her shoulders and speaking the solemn vow in perfect Kryptonese. “I so swear.”

Kal-El nodded proudly smiling at his little cousin. Kara nervously glanced over at Alex and the elder Danvers. She desperately wanted to be part of this House, to try to fit in and move forward on this new world. Alexandra Danvers would be a fine mate, once they came to the Age of Ascension.

“Uh…I do?” Alex glanced over at her parents, Jeremiah and Eliza who nodded and smiled encouragingly. If Kara felt the need to formally join their Houses, whatever that meant and could finally sleep through the night, then they were going to play along. It didn’t mean anything, any more than Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy hurt anyone. Once Kara was settled it could all be explained to her, calmly and over time.

Kal-El took the strip of cloth and wound their hands together. Kara smiled up at Alex as she entwined their fingers and they held hands. Alex gave a little squeeze of encouragement and solidarity. Kara knew everything would be all right now; Alex would always be at her side. She glanced back at her cousin.

“Therefore by the power invested in me, I declare your Houses joined.”

“El mayarah.” Kara smiled softly, meeting her new mate’s dark eyes, something settling deep inside. She started as Alex repeated her words, in perfect pronunciation.
“El mayarah, Kara Zor-El Danvers.” Alex smiled, pleased she had gotten the wording right. And the happy look of pride in the smaller girl’s eyes made it even more pleasing.

*Stronger together.*

***

“So tell him the truth, Kara,” Alex finally spoke, when she could breathe again, meeting Kara’s worried gaze. “Tell him that we are already bonded. That should cool his heels.”

Kara stared at her for a long moment before finally looking away.

“Actually, that’s what I needed to talk to you about. Well, part of it anyway.” Kara stood, nervous energy becoming too much, and began to pace. She knew she should have dealt with this when she hit the Age of Ascension. It didn’t seem like it was ever going to be an issue. Who could have anticipated someone from her home solar system dropping in and screwing things up?

“Just spit it out, Kara.” Alex watched Kara as she moved, tugging on her fingers and chewing her bottom lip. She sighed and closed her eyes, sure that she wasn’t going to like where this was headed. She hadn’t had nearly enough to drink to deal with this.

“We aren’t fully bond mated. We aligned our Houses, when I first arrived here on Earth, yes. And I took the Danvers name, but that was more like what you would call a betrothal. A declaration of intention, as we were both too young to actually complete the full ceremony.” Kara sank back down on the couch, and took Alex’s hands and hunted for the right words to explain.

“I am forever grateful, as it gave me a home here, a sense of belonging. The ceremony helped me to adjust, to feel like I was part of your family.” Kara smiled, remembering the event like it was yesterday. “But you didn’t understand what the ritual truly meant. Neither did your parents, nor Kal-El for that matter. For me, it was normal for houses to merge for political reasons. No one would bat an eye that we were declaring a match at that age.”

“So we didn’t just merge houses, we are technically betrothed but not fully bonded?” Alex said wrapping her head around the distinction. She didn’t think that sounded so bad. A little more serious though than anyone had really realized. Cultural differences caused so much miscommunication.
“Yes, exactly. By not completing the full bonding ceremony when I turned 18, the Krypton Age of Ascension, well, it left us in a kind of limbo. I was happy to just leave it be, since it allowed us to see others.” Kara looked at their joined hands, not mentioning her own growing doubts of ever finding a true bond mate. Alex was probably as close as she would get, and if she was honest with herself, that was fine by her.

“Okay, but I don’t see why we can’t just tell Mon-El that you’re taken and that’s the end of it.” Alex said, trying to keep the intergalactic playboy under control was the priority here. The rest of it could be sorted out over time.

“Mon-El apparently got all enthused while I was away for the week off world and decided to talk to Kal-El.” Kara closed her eyes and leaned back. It was all such a mess. “Mon-El understands that distinction and has seen his chance. The Daxamites were always critical of our practice of marrying for politics not love. They were a passionate group of people, gotta give them that.” Kara nodded, appreciating the thought. “Anyway, Mon-El wants a chance to court me, to challenge the betrothal. He has officially declared it.” Kara stopped and shook her head, not believing the audacity. “He spoke to Kal-El about it.”

“Well, shit.” Alex sighed not anticipating that wrinkle. “What did the big guy say?”

“What could he say?” Kara leaned back further and stared at the ceiling above, dejected. “As the oldest male member of the House of El, he had no choice but to allow the challenge.”

“Thanks for nothing, Clark.” Alex muttered. Fuck, she needed another drink, or better yet an ibuprofen, to nip her threatening headache in the bud. “So now what?”

Kara sighed. This was the embarrassing part. Why did Mon-El have to stir stuff up?

“You need to accept the challenge.” Kara said quietly. “And defend our betrothal by declaring that you want to be my bond mate.” She glanced over at Alex, trying to figure out what was going through her mind.

“So is that like a duel to the death or something?” Alex frowned. She wasn’t sure she would survive combat with Mon-El, even if she did kind of want to pound him into the ground at the moment. Her mind began to plot, perhaps if she had the right weapon, a lead knife to stab him maybe…
“No, no! Nothing like that, thank Rao. I think we can just go through with some of the courting rituals until I can persuade Mon-El that we are together, just taking our time, and then with luck he will lose interest and leave me alone.” Kara ran a hand through her hair in frustration. “I-I just need some time to get my head together, to figure out what I want. To process some of the stuff that’s been going on lately. I can’t take on much more. I already feel bad enough about letting James down, without adding Mon-El into the mix. Rao, I’m such an idiot…” Kara’s eyes began to tear up again.

“Hey, it’s okay.” Alex leaned forward, she just wanted to scoop Kara up and protect her from it all. “You are not an idiot. And Mon-El is smarter than I gave him credit for. Of course I will pretend to be your seriously offended betrothed. How dare he try to poach my territory!”

“Your territory? Really?” Kara snorted into the cushion she was hugging and laughed at Alex. Alex smiled back, mission accomplished, making Kara feel better about the whole mess. Kara grew quiet again before glancing back at Alex.

“Hey, seriously though,” Kara said softly, their eyes meeting. “Thanks for your help.”

“No worries,” Alex smiled back. “You know I’ve always got your back. Stronger together.” Her arms were suddenly full with a very appreciative alien. Alex soaked in the warmth for a minute, relishing the intimacy. She was going to kill Mon-El if he fucked this closeness up for the two of them.

“I think it’s time for bed, are you staying over?” Alex asked, emotionally drained and ready for sleep. Her whiskey soaked brain couldn’t take much more, and she was more than willing to worry about the courting rituals tomorrow. In the meantime, she wasn’t sure that she wanted Kara to be alone with everything still so fresh from her time off world.

She clearly had said the right thing, as Kara grinned and disappeared in a flash into the bedroom.

“Do NOT hog that blanket, Kara Zor-El Danvers. I have a popcorn maker and I know how to use it!” Alex flicked off the lights and smiled as she heard Kara giggling madly from her bed.

Some things would never change.
Not Dwelling on Possibilities

What a day.

Kara Danvers flopped down onto her couch with an exhausted sigh and stared up at her apartment ceiling. She was beginning to wonder if her promotion had been worth it. She missed her old job, her neatly organized desk, hell, she even missed Ms. Grant’s sniping tirades. Change can be good, but not everything all at once. Nothing was the same anymore, and it was leaving her very disheartened. She just needed a little peace and quiet.

Kara’s cell phone vibrated on the coffee table. She sighed, making no move to see who it was. There was no need, she knew exactly who it was. It was the same person that had been ringing her all day. It was the same person that she had been ignoring, all day.

Mon-El was nothing if not persistent.

Kara briefly considered using her laser vision to fry the offending device but she didn’t even want to think about the paperwork the DEO would make her fill out. Or the face that Winn would make when she asked him to reload all her stuff back onto it. The phone finally stopped and she closed her eyes trying to shut down her racing thoughts.

To be honest, Mon-El’s interest in her was flattering. He did know things about her home world, reminding her of the old days and she liked mentoring him, but the kiss in the infirmary had been surprising. Pleasant enough, but surprising. And then when he didn’t remember doing anything, well, it had been a relief. Kind of like how breaking up with James had been.

Kara pulled her glasses off and pinched the bridge of her nose. She didn’t want to think about it any more. How no one seemed to fit in her life the same way that…

Kara tossed her glasses onto the coffee table beside her silent phone. Nope she was not going to go down that road right now. Not when there was a quart of mint chocolate chip ice cream with her name on it in the freezer. She would just take a moment to soak up the silence. No ringing phones. No sirens or honking horns. No loud voices, crying or cursing into the early evening air, just blessed peace and quiet.

Wait a minute…it was too quiet.
Kara’s eyes snapped open and she sat up with a start. She tried to pick up Mrs. Wilkie’s heartbeat in the apartment upstairs. No luck.

“What the hell?” She glanced around trying to discover what was going on, when she noticed a small package on her table. She briefly wished for telekinesis as one of her super powers, so she wouldn’t have to get up, but her curiosity was too strong. She made her way over to the table and picked up what appeared to be a small gift, if the bow was any indication.

“Alex!” A wide smile broke out as she recognized a familiar scent on the paper. It was confirmed by the attached card, which was written in her familiar confident scrawl, Kara would recognize it anywhere.

‘I know things are crazy for you right now. I’ve been tinkering in my lab again, and I was going to give this to you for Christmas, but thought you might appreciate some quiet time to just relax now. The silver button on the side turns it off and on. I can explain the details tonight. Love you, Alex’

Kara smiled sadly. She could always count on Alex. She hadn’t even hesitated about defending their betrothal, just jumped right in. Kara wished not for the first time that she had taken care of this years ago, but she had thought that there would be plenty of time. Besides, Alex wasn’t into girls, or so she had always thought, but now…

Kara didn’t want to dwell on those possibilities much either.

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*Kara paced in the living room, glancing out the window as Alex hopped into her friend Vicki’s car. They were off to go surfing, which was almost as much fun as flying, probably as close as Alex would ever get on her own anyway. Kara didn’t really want to tag along anyway.*

*She sank down onto the couch and tried to focus on the list of kids Eliza wanted her to invite to her birthday party. She was going to be eighteen years old next week, give or take, and not counting her years in the Phantom Zone. The Krypton Age of Ascension. Kara was dreading it, when she normally should be on top of the world. If they were on Krypton…*

*Well there was the rub. She wasn’t on Krypton anymore. She was very much on Earth, with Alex about to head off to university. Kara knew that the Danvers didn’t really understand the joining of the Houses. The political and emotional significance of it. To be honest, Kara wasn’t even sure if she*
wanted to follow the old Krypton ways anymore. She might be the last daughter of Krypton but that didn’t mean that she had to be a slave to a dead world’s customs.

“What’s going on behind those big sad eyes, Kara Danvers?” Eliza asked softly, sinking down onto the couch beside her, stroking her fingers through the fine blonde hair.

“I’m kinda torn between the old world and my new world I guess.” Kara sighed, enjoying the rhythmic motion. Eliza just quietly waited for her to continue. “On Krypton, Alex and I would be entering the Age of Ascension.” Kara hesitated on how to continue.

“What does that mean? You would both be considered adults and there is a ritual of some sort?” Eliza frowned, wondering if this was like a Krypton quinceaneras or bat mitzvah of some sort.

“Well, kind of.” Kara squirmed, not quite sure how to put it. “More like consummate our marriage.”

To give Eliza credit, she never stopped her gentle stroking of Kara’s hair, or sharply inhaled in surprise. However there was no controlling the sudden shocked thumping of her heart. Kara swallowed hard and waited for the fallout.

“Marriage, sweetie?” Eliza leaned back on the couch and waited for more information.

“Do you remember the joining of our Houses ceremony? Not long after I landed here?” Kara pulled at the fringe of the pillow she was hugging, avoiding eye contact with her foster mom.

“That Kal-El came over for, if I recall,” Eliza licked her lips. Fuck, what had they screwed up in ignorance this time?

“The joining of the Houses was the first step, like a betrothal. At the Age of Ascension the betrothed officially consummate their joining, and become full bond mates.”

Kara didn’t think she could blush any harder. Too bad Kryptonians weren’t impervious to embarrassment. The good news was Eliza’s heartbeat had calmed back down and there was a soft smile still on her face.
“I see. So what do you think you should do next?” Eliza asked gently.

Kara pulled the pillow to her chest and pressed her chin into the soft warmth. There was so much she still wanted to do. Alex was already accepted to college and she would miss her like crazy, but she was just about ready to head off to college herself.

“I want to go to school and…” Kara hesitated, feeling awful.

“And?”

“And maybe meet new people? Date people?” Kara snuggled closer to Eliza. “What if Alex isn’t my bond mate? What if she is but she doesn’t want to be with me? She likes boys and I’m definitely not a boy. On Krypton it wouldn’t matter, but here…” Kara’s voice faded off. “Well, it’s different. Besides, I don’t want to screw up our family.”

Eliza hugged her closer, it was all she could really think to do at this point.

“You know what, Kara, there is no right or wrong way. You have honoured your Krypton elders and joined our houses. Now you need to figure out what you truly want, who you truly want to be with. And if that is someone you haven’t even met yet, that’s fine. And if it is meant to be with Alex, then it will be. Nothing needs to be decided today.”

“Thanks, Eliza.” Kara murmured into the older woman’s shoulder.

“So do we need to do a ceremony or anything for the Age of Ascension?” Eliza made a mental note to call Clark and give him an earful. A little heads up on this whole bonding and ascension stuff would have been helpful.

Kara leaned back and shook her head, feeling a lot better about everything. There was a lot of time to sort things out, no need to take care of it all now.

“Just a chocolate birthday cake would be nice.” Kara grinned up at Eliza, who ran a hand through her long blonde hair. “With ice cream?”
“Of course, sweetie.” Eliza kissed the top of Kara’s head. They would figure something out, there was plenty of time.

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Kara smiled at the memory. What would Eliza think of this whole mess, she wondered? She looked down at the gift in her hands, curiosity getting the better of her. She slid off the lid to discover what looked like a black Beats portable speaker that seemed to be emanating something that dampened external sound waves.

“Cool!” Kara grinned and hit the on/off button, immediately noticing the ambient noise coming back from outside. She hit the on button and it once again stopped. A big smile crossed her face. This was so awesome!

Her cell phone rang yet again. Hoping it was Alex, Kara quickly picked it up, but she noticed it wasn’t a number she recognised.

“Hello?” Kara asked, wondering just who had her private cell phone number.

“Hey, it’s Detective Sawyer. I have a dead alien and my crime scene is crawling with feds. Alex is here, as is a certain Daxamite who may, or may not, have something to do with my db. Their conversation is pretty intense at the moment.” Behind the amusement in Maggie’s voice, Kara could make out very familiar voices yelling at each other.

“Fuck.” Kara swore.

“Right, I thought you’d like to know,” Maggie laughed outright at her reaction. “See you super soon, Baby Danvers.”

Kara just looked at her phone as Maggie hung up. This day just got even worse.
“Danvers, you need to calm the hell down!”

Maggie Sawyer tried to get her friend’s attention as she slid her cell phone into the pocket of her leather jacket and moved closer to the fracas that was unfolding before her. It was bad enough that this was happening at her crime scene; she didn’t need Alex getting busted down for brutality. With any luck Supergirl would be here to sort this out without anyone getting hurt.

Much.

Maggie had to hand it to the agent, she was not backing down from the much more powerful Daxamite. Alex was pretty fierce in a good firefight or hand-to-hand combat. It was pretty damned sexy actually and it reminded her on so many levels of her ex-girlfriend. Maggie winced as Alex pulled up on the tall man’s arms, completely and painfully immobilizing him, ignoring her advice completely.

“What part of no didn’t you get, Space Boy?” Alex growled as she all but threw Mon-El against the side of a DEO standard issue black SUV. “Did that ship of yours land on your head or something?” Alex glared at the tall alien, shoving him chest first into the passenger side doors with alarming force. “I think Kara was pretty clear that she is taken.”

“Alex, I don’t want to fight with you about this.” Mon-El struggled against the vehicle, trying to get a better foothold to push her off. She kept moving, never giving him a chance to get the upper hand, keeping him off balance. For someone so much smaller than him she was damn difficult to fight off.

“Well, too bad. You wanted to challenge my relationship with Kara, push your way into where you don’t belong, then this is what you get.” The silent ‘asshole’ was clearly heard in Alex’s tone. She spun him around and slammed him against the vehicle again, pressing her forearm against his throat to keep him in place as she plotted her next move. Mon-El however couldn’t help his dumb ass self and felt the need to sass back.

“I believe the immortal words of one of your musical poets sums it up nicely.” Mon-El grinned. “If you liked it, you should have put a ring on it.”

Alex’s jaw dropped at the audacity of his words, anger rushing over her in a wave. She wanted to hit him, hurt him, wipe that damned cocky smirk off his smarmy face. Only the thought of all the paperwork involved kept her from reacting with her fist. That, and the disappointed face that Kara would make when she found out about it. Still, it was awfully tempting.

“Agent Danvers, report.”

Alex recognized the familiar voice instantly. She glared stubbornly at Mon-El before turning him face first onto the hood of the SUV and snapping her cuffs around his wrists. “I accept your challenge, in case you hadn’t figured that out yet, so don’t think this is over.” Alex hissed and pushed herself away from the man to greet her superior officer.

“Director Lane,” Alex turned and genuinely smiled for the first time in hours. It had been far too long since she had seen Lucy and her friends stationed at the desert DEO facility. “How are things underground? Is Vasquez still running you off your feet?”
“Roger that. Susan keeps me out of trouble most days, thank God.” Lucy laughed and nodded. She glanced over at the dark haired woman glowering at them with her arms crossed. “Who’s your new friend?”

“Oh, uh,” Alex glanced behind her, as Maggie frowned. “Science Police, an NCPD detective, her name’s Maggie Sawyer. She’s all right, she knows her alien stuff and you can trust her.” Lucy cocked an eyebrow at the high praise and took a better look at the attractive brunette, but didn’t comment. The DEO could use as many allies on the police force as they could get. And if Alex trusted her, that was good enough for Lucy.

“So, when can we catch up? Somewhere we can have a decent drink?” Lucy asked as her cell phone buzzed. She scrolled through the text message and Alex knew that duty was calling by the focus on her friend’s face.

“I know a place, how’s Friday? See if you can drag Vasquez out too?” Alex said quickly, before Lucy had to disappear.

“Sounds like a plan.” Lucy slid her phone back into her black cargo pants pocket and glanced at the man leaning heavily against the SUV in cuffs. “Who is that?”

“Your team will want to talk with this…person of interest.” Alex smirked over her shoulder at the cuffed man. A little time in a DEO holding tank would do him a world of good.

“Wait! What?” Mon-El’s eyes widened as Lucy waved to her agents to collect him.

“Say hey to your sister,” Lucy said before nodding to the detective and heading to her vehicle. Behind her, Maggie could see the dead alien being scooped from her crime scene, zipped up in a non-descript body bag and removed as quickly as possible. She knew the usual National Security bullshit would be trotted out whenever the feds showed up in a swarm like this. She understood the game though, and just politely nodded back at the departing DEO Director. Alex waved as the car sped off and headed over to stand next to Maggie, grinning.

“Fuck, Danvers. Remind me to never get on your bad side.” Maggie murmured under her breath and watched as several hulking men in black grabbed Mon-El and shoved him into another waiting vehicle, before quickly following after the first car.

“I certainly wouldn’t advise it, Detective Sawyer.” Supergirl floated silently down beside the woman, her arms crossed, clearly pissed if the look she levelled at Alex was any indication. “Where are they taking him?”

“He found the body, and maybe saw someone take off in a hurry. So yeah, he technically is a person of interest.” Maggie hedged, shifting from foot to foot, wishing she could have dashed off sooner. “Or a witness. Maybe.”

“Alex!” Kara glared as Alex just lifted her chin defiantly. “Really? Lucy can probably use his help. Was that necessary?”

“Come on, he was being a total asshole. I didn’t hurt him! They won’t hurt him either and eventually
have to kick him loose.” Alex crossed her arms. She had been rather restrained she thought. “You know, you’re the one who asked me to help.”

“Help, yes. Not get Mon-El interrogated for something he didn’t do.” Kara waved her arms in the air in frustration. So much for her brilliant ideas. Who knew Alex would play the part of a jealous suitor so well?

“Is it my fault that the two overlapped?” Alex asked, biting her lower lip to stop the smile that desperately wanted to erupt.

Kara rolled her eyes and didn’t dignify that with an answer. She shot up into the air, heading quickly towards the underground DEO desert facility.

“She is so pissed at you.” Maggie said softly, watching the blue and red streak disappear behind a bunch of skyscrapers.

“Yeah,” Alex rubbed her neck and sighed. “Don’t need to be bond mates to know that.”

“Whoa, bond mates?” Maggie turned to Alex, shocked at this new bit of news. “With Supergirl?”

“Hey, when your ex is Bat Woman I wouldn’t be pointing fingers, y’know?” Alex grumbled back. She looked back up at the sky, knowing that any chance of meeting up with Kara and talking about her present tonight was unlikely to happen.

"Shit Danvers, she could have laser fried me for flirting with you.” Maggie frowned, her mind reeling with a million scenarios, none of them good.

"She would never do that," Alex said, placing a hand on Maggie's arm to try to soothe her worries. "It's complicated. Come on, I'll buy dinner and explain."

They took several steps in companionable silence.

"She could have turned me into a popsicle..."

Alex pinched the bridge of her nose and sighed. It was going to be a long conversation.
“Well, look what the wind blew in,” Susan Vasquez grinned, spinning her chair around from her computer board display, pleased to see her friend drop into the DEO command center.

“Still cleaning up your messes, Susan. Can’t leave you and Lucy alone for a minute.” Kara teased back. She didn’t miss the dank underground facility but she did miss the people stationed here. With J’onn assigned to the new DEO offices in National City he had been able to hand pick his leadership team, taking Alex with him. Lucy was in command here now, and was flourishing with the challenges of maintaining a military base as well as a high security alien prison. The facility had an excellent reputation, the escapee that ended up dead in town not withstanding and Kara knew that Lucy and her team would get to the bottom of that as quickly as possible. However, throwing Mon-El into a holding cell was not likely the way to go about that.

“Vasquez, update.” Lucy strode into the command room, shrugging out of her leather jacket and handing it to a passing assistant. She glanced up at the wall of monitors, quickly trying to assess where various teams were and what was in progress.

“Station is secure, Ma’am. All floors report operational, with no incidents. Construction crews are reinforcing the cells that were compromised in the explosion and the suspected escape route is being investigated with a fine tooth comb by the engineering team. There is a preliminary report on your desk.” Vasquez nodded and turned back to her console, awaiting further orders while continuing to monitor a variety of ongoing operations.

“Excellent.” Lucy smiled and then turned to greet Supergirl. “I wondered if you would drop in. Our suspect kept saying it was all a huge mistake and to call you. He had very colourful things to say about Alex as well, but then who doesn’t?” Lucy grinned wider at Kara’s long suffering expression.

“Detective Sawyer indicated that Mon-El might have seen something, but I don’t believe he is involved in any of it.” Kara said quietly as another agent arrived at Lucy’s side, with several documents at the ready for her signature.

“I see,” Lucy quickly scanned the paperwork and began to make short work of signing where needed. “Well, we will question him and see exactly what he does know about the situation.” Kara frowned, that was not the answer she had really wanted.

“Ma’ams,” Vasquez interrupted their conversation from her desk. “The Daxamite has arrived, we have interrogation room three ready. I have a fresh security team already at the door.”
“Lucy, really? Mon-El did not kill your prisoner.” Kara tried again, not sure how else to get them to listen to her. She looked around trying to think of her next steps. Vasquez caught her eye, and then shifted her gaze up to the wall of monitors. Kara followed her look and glanced up as well, realizing these were likely the real culprits. “Who are those guys up there? Suspects?” She pointed up to the monitor array, with three rather nefarious looking aliens plastered across the screens.

“Mmm,” Lucy murmured vaguely and just pursed her lips as she flipped to another form, scanning it before signing it in silence. Kara dragged her fingers through her long hair in frustration.

“Kara! I am so glad to see you.” Mon-El called from down the hallway to their right, as he was unceremoniously dragged through to the interrogation room. “Tell them I had nothing to do with the death of that incredibly horrible smelling fellow that was killed. To be honest, someone did us all a favour. Not that these soldiers are much better.” Mon-El waved his cuffed hands in front of his face to clear the stench from his sensitive nose. He didn't know how Kara could stand it here sometimes.

“Mon-El, just tell them what you know,” Kara shifted and tugged at her fingers, wishing she could help more. “You can trust them, they are DEO as well, and are just trying to get to the bottom of this.”

“Take him to three, I’ll be there shortly,” Director Lane crossed her arms and glared at the suspect. She appreciated Kara’s words, but she still had a job to do. Kara sighed and nodded, hearing and understanding the note of finality in Lucy’s voice. The security team escorted Mon-El towards the interrogation room. He glanced over at Kara sadly, before noticing the wall of monitors and freezing, excited that he recognized one of them.

“Wait, that’s him! That was the other guy who drove off!” Mon-El jerked loose from the guard on his right and pointed up at the thin green grey alien displayed on the middle screen. He looked over at Kara and nodded, a wide smile breaking out across his face.

“Vincent Olango, from the planet Garva.” Vasquez quickly pulled up the details on the suspect, eyes narrowing as a long list of offenses began to scroll across the screen. “Vinnie is a local runner and small time thug. Gambling, sharking, shaking down other refugees like himself to keep them hidden from authorities. The Science Police have had several run ins with him over the last year or so.”

“Well, Kara, it looks like you are quite correct about your friend here.” Lucy crossed her arms and smiled. She even had an idea where to find him. “A shake down on a new alien in town gone bad doesn't sound like a job for the DEO. I think this part of the investigation has fallen back into police jurisdiction.” Lucy looked over at Mon-El and Kara and smiled.
“Can I get you a coffee while we take your statement, Mon-El?”

***

An hour and a half later they wandered out of the DEO complex into the cool evening air, stars sparkling overhead. A DEO agent was coming to take Mon-El back to his place. Kara felt bad about the whole thing and was quite happy to wait with him as it gave them an opportunity to talk.

“I’m sorry about all this. Alex gets a bit intense sometimes…” Kara hesitated, searching for the right words, knowing that it was probably too little too late.

“Hey, don’t apologize. I figured Alex would be angry with me. Besides, you are totally worth it.” Mon-El ducked his head, his thick fingers scratching through his short hair self-consciously before he looked up at her again. “Thanks for sticking around until they let me out of there. I was worried that I might disappear.”

“I wouldn’t let that happen.” Kara reached out and squeezed his arm. “Neither would Alex, despite what she might say.” Kara was sure of Alex’s intentions, even though Mon-El didn’t seem as believing.

“You could make it up by going out to dinner with me?” Mon-El asked, his smile soft and eyes hopeful. “Maybe this Friday night?”

Kara glanced at him and couldn’t figure out a way to get out of it. Especially after everything today. She really just wanted to crawl under a blanket on her couch with a pizza and start a marathon Netflix binge watch of The Crown. She had promised to wait and watch it with Alex, but she had said she was going out with friends, so there was no real reason to say no. Maybe if it was a horrible date he would take the hint. At the very least it might stop the constant texting she had endured all day.

“Uhm…all right.” Kara sighed softly and flicked her hair out of her eyes. “Nothing too fancy though, okay? I just want something relaxing and low key.” They both turned as the DEO vehicle pulled up in front of them.

Mon-El grinned and nodded before hopping into the car. He could do low key. Once he asked Winn what that meant, he was sure he would be able to do it.
Kara sighed and launched herself into the sky, already regretting saying yes.

***

There was a lone light on as Kara slipped into her apartment through the open window, landing softly on the wide planked hardwood floor. It was also blissfully silent; except for a very familiar heartbeat that Kara would recognize anywhere.

“Alex?” Kara said gently, smiling as a dark tousled head popped up from the couch, followed by a sleepy yawn as the other woman turned to face her. The silence between them stretched out awkwardly, their gazes meeting and holding as each waited for the other to speak.

“I brought a peace offering.” Alex finally said, reaching to flip open the lid of a pizza box on the coffee table, the scent wafting through the living room. Kara closed her eyes and shook her head slightly as her tummy rumbled loudly. Alex grinned, knowing that she had at least gained some favour with the hungry woman. She grew serious again as Kara still stood there, not moving.

“I hate it when we fight.” Alex said softly, genuinely sorry and hoping Kara was ready to forgive.

“Me too.” Kara sighed, quickly moving to flop down onto the couch beside her. It was too hard to stay annoyed with Alex for any length of time. She laser zapped the pizza warming it up nicely again, before she pulled a slice out and began to eat.

“I was just trying to…” Alex squirmed, feeling the need to try to explain.

“Intimidate Mon-El to leave me alone, like you used to do with all the bullies in high school who tried to push me around?” Kara cocked her head, not cutting Alex any slack nor taking any bull in this situation.

“Maybe.” Alex cleared her throat self-consciously and offered a lopsided grin in response, before taking a big swallow of water from her bottle. “Maggie got called back into work, apparently they got a lead on the suspect?”

“Yeah, Mon-El was able to identify someone. As he was being dragged through the communication
“See! All’s well that ends well…” Alex tried to fluff it off. Kara just lifted an eyebrow. Alex bit the inside of her cheek, knowing she needed to switch tactics. “Another slice?”

“Redirecting my attention to food is not going to work.” Kara said, accepting the piece being offered. They lapsed back into silence for a bit. Kara knew she had to tell her about Friday night. She took another long swallow of water before saying anything. “He asked me out tonight, and I said yes.”

Alex frowned, her gut suddenly churning and not from hunger. She didn’t say anything though, it was her experience that karma was usually a bitch after all and maybe this was reward for today’s games with Mon-El.

Kara knew that her point had been made and decided to take pity on the brooding woman before it went too far. After all she was the one that had asked for Alex’s help.

“It was mostly to apologize for being detained,” Kara leaned over and bumped her shoulder with Alex’s before reaching for more food. “It was also partly so I can get some peace. He’s been texting me non-stop all day.”

“I could…” Alex stiffened, concerned that Mon-El was turning into a crazy alien stalker.

“NO! I think you’ve helped enough for today.” Kara grinned as Alex settled back down beside her on the couch. Kara turned as a thought hit her. “Oh, thank you for my present, by the way. I LOVE it!”

“I finished it up the week you were off world.” Alex immediately grinned, pleased that the gift at least had been discovered and was appreciated. “I had a lot to think about after everything with Maggie, and you know I think best when my hands are busy working on some project.”

“I could always tell when something was bugging you or Eliza.” Kara smiled and got up to take the empty pizza box into the kitchen and grab some ice cream from the freezer. “Hiding away in your labs for days on end until something amazing is made or a decision is made. Like mother, like daughter that way.”

“Anyway,” Alex grabbed some spoons from the drawer and bumped her hip against Kara at the hub on his way to interrogation.” Kara looked pointedly at Alex.
“Well, it’s fantastic.” Kara leaned close and carefully pulled Alex into a hug. “And extremely thoughtful. Thank you.” She smiled as Alex slowly squeezed her back, feeling like things were almost back to normal between them again.

“I’m sorry I pissed you off.” Alex finally murmured into the warmth of Kara’s neck, relaxing into the closeness. She inhaled softly, enjoying the scent of strawberry shampoo and something all Kara.

“No, I’m the one who asked you for help with this. I should have realized what that would mean.” Kara closed her eyes and held on just a little longer before finally pulling away. Snagging a spoon from Alex’s fingers, she dashed back to the couch with the quart of ice cream and started to dig into its icy goodness.

“So, tell me more about what happened off world with you and Barry. His friends sound nice, even that cranky one you mentioned.” Alex followed, pulling a blanket from a nearby chair and sinking down beside Kara, tucking it around their legs before stealing the container of ice cream and digging into it.

Kara smiled and watched as Alex licked some melting ice cream from her spoon. For all her adventures lately it was moments like this that she truly treasured. When she could snuggle up and share them with someone who cared. Alex turned to look at her, hair still mussed from her nap, a bit of ice cream in the corner of mouth, genuinely wanting to hear what Kara had to say. A bloom of happiness spread in her chest, and Kara tugged the blanket a bit higher.

It really was good to be home.
“Whoa, dude! You have balls of steel!”

Winn spun around in his chair at his desk at the DEO, his eyes growing wide at Mon-El’s news. Asking Kara out he understood, the tempting fate with the wrath of Alex’s presumed shovel talk, well, no sane man would dare.

“No, not the last time I checked…” Mon-El glanced down at his crotch, his brow furrowed at his friends confusing words. “Is that a side effect of the yellow sun on my species? It doesn’t sound very comfortable.” It was bad enough that he had to wear underwear here, but perhaps that was to aid in keeping any metal bits supported?

“Never mind!” Winn closed his eyes and held up a hand, trying hard not to, and failing spectacularly at, visualizing Mon-El and his… “Okay, moving on now.”

Mon-El crossed his arms and sat down on the edge of the desk, smiling at Winn’s rather adorable embarrassment.

“Perhaps I should have you check to be sure?” Mon-El teased, enjoying the flush rising up Winn’s neck. It would take nothing to bed the man he was sure, but Mon-El knew that he needed to keep his eye on the prize, and not jeopardize it for a dalliance just for sport.

“This is officially awkward now.” Winn murmured under his breath and turned back to his computer monitor avoiding the topic completely. “Any way, we are discussing you taking Kara out on a date. You said she wanted something low key and relaxing.”

“That’s right,” Mon-El grinned and took pity on his friend and went with the topic change. “I wanted a second opinion on my ideas for our night out and thought who better to ask but one of Kara’s best friends.”

Winn sighed, knowing he didn’t really want to be a part of this but oddly compelled to do so. He pinched the bridge of his nose and spun his chair back to face the eager alien.

“Oh, okay, but you owe me.”

“I was thinking of taking Kara to the best restaurant in town, Chez L’Amour. And then we could head out to that new dance club that’s opened up on the strip for a night of dancing…” Mon-El watched as Winn’s face seemed to droop with disapproval with each word out of his mouth.

“Huh, what part of that is low key and relaxing?” Winn asked confused by Mon-El’s choices. Not that it didn’t sound like a great night out, but Kara would hate it. Pot stickers and a romantic comedy movie at her place was more along the lines that she would want.

“Well, dancing is pretty fun and relaxing. Gets a lot of pent up energy out of your system, plus I have this hot new shirt that Kara will love, it show’s off my arms so nicely.” Mon-El flexed a bicep and patted the bulging muscle. Winn swallowed and glanced away again. “The restaurant is quiet and has great food, also great for talking and getting to know each other. It shows I can provide her with the best things as a mate.”

“Mate?” Winn froze at that last word. “This is just a date, you’re not proposing to her or anything.” He scoffed, and glanced up at the big guy, watching as Mon-El fidgeted and wouldn’t catch his eye. Something was up, he could tell. “What the hell is going on?”
Mon-El’s shoulders slumped, so much for keeping his challenge quiet. He glanced up at Winn’s concerned expression. Perhaps this was for the best; it might be good to have an ally in this battle for Kara’s affections.

“Let me explain…”

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Director Hank Henshaw stood at the entrance to his office, glass doors open with a clear view to the work bull pen, his arms crossed and brooding, staring down at his agents toiling diligently away on the floor below him. Something seemed to ripple through the room, like a disturbance in the time/space field where they stood. He tried to tap into his Martian senses, honing in on where the mental anguish seemed to be coming from, realizing quickly it emanated from Agent Schott’s desk.

“BOND MATES!?”

Hank shifted, put his hands on his hips and smiled. He had heard Winn’s hushed exclamation loud and clear, without even needing to use telepathy to probe deeper. Well, bond mates would explain a lot of what he had always sensed between Alex and Kara, but there was still much to be be figured out between the two women.

“CHALLENGE? ARE YOU INSANE?”

Hank frowned, tempted to reach out and listen in. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed another familiar face pausing down the walkway from his office door, also glancing down at the two men now walking quickly to the nearest break room, Winn’s hands waving dramatically, Mon-El just smiling, smug, like the cat who ate the canary.

“Vasquez.” Hank caught the attention of the pensive agent, who startled and then stepped closer.

“Yes, sir?” Susan turned to face her commanding officer. She had been working at both bases recently, pleased to be able to shorten her commute time at least a few days a week and to act as liaison for Director Lane. She stoically waited for further instructions.

“$50 on Alex.” Hank said, their eyes meeting, an understanding settled between them. Whatever was going on with Mon-El, Alex would be more than a match.

“Roger that, sir.” Susan smiled, message received. Hank nodded and headed back into his office, the glass door swinging closed behind him.

“Thank you, Mr. Schott.” Hank said under his breath, heading back to the paperwork awaiting his attention on his desk. Now they just had to wait to see what the fall out was going to be.

He had every faith in his girls.

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Friday night arrived faster than a speeding bullet.
Or at least that’s what it felt like for Kara. Right up until the last minute she had been hoping that Supergirl would be called into action, a reasonable way out of this silly situation she had gotten herself into, but there had been no such luck. She had to admit though that the date had been going better than she had anticipated. She had been pleased when she realized they were headed to their new favourite haunt, the alien bar was a place where they could chat, have some fun and really be themselves.

Mon-El had been charming and funny, ordering several tasty snacks and an assortment of drinks for her to try, each beverage having a varying degree of kick to it. It was only mildly annoying that he hadn’t asked her what she wanted first, and had simply ordered for the both of them. However Kara didn’t want to ruin the mood over that little niggling detail. Besides, the drinks were going down nicely.

Maybe that was why she had felt so off balance and unprepared for when Alex and their friends sauntered in as a laughing group a few minutes ago.

Kara glanced over the top of her menu and tried not to look over to where they were hanging out around a table near the bar. Of course they would be here at their favourite alien friendly bar on a Friday night, she should have put two and two together. When Alex had said she was going out with friends Kara had figured that meant hanging with Maggie, but the addition of Susan Vasquez and Lucy Lane was certainly unexpected.

Kara released a slow breath, and rolled her shoulders to release the tension lingering there. She settled back into the comfort of the padded booth she and Mon-El were seated in, trying to ignore the laughter and conversation going on across the bar. Kara gave herself a little shake, knowing that she shouldn’t be wishing she was with the girls; she should be focusing on the man sitting across from her.

Try as she might though, it was clear that low key and relaxing was not going to be in the cards for her date tonight. Mon-El had meant well, picking a familiar place where they could be themselves, enjoying some dinner and drinks. It wasn’t his fault that it was the same bar that Alex and their friends also ended up in.

Kara bit her lower lip and smiled softly. Alex had looked surprised at seeing her, them, but had smiled and even waved a little before settling down with the gang. So at least it wasn’t something that Alex had planned to disrupt the date, although her presence was certainly proving to be distracting.

A familiar leather jacket caught her attention, and Kara thought it was Alex and Maggie out of the corner of her eye, possibly playing pool. Kara dared not turn her head and check though. It wasn’t like she was spying on them or anything. She was just looking out for Alex, like any good sister would. Concerned that Maggie was stringing Alex along, even after breaking her heart. Kara tried to ignore the churning in her gut whenever she thought of them hanging out together. After all, Alex said that they were just friends, right?

Riiiiight...

Kara tipped her head back and drained her glass of its delicious other worldly goodness. Enough of these confusing thoughts about Alex, she was on a date, trying hard to not think about anything other than having some fun. She wiggled her empty glass at a passing server, wanting another of whatever this had been. She was definitely feeling floaty, possibly even tipsy, but she certainly wasn’t giggly this time around. She felt confused, hot under the collar, fidgety even. In fact she was feeling a lot of things that she didn’t usually let herself dwell on. Kara focused her attention back to the handsome Daxamite sitting across from her, trying to tune in to whatever he was droning on about now.
“…and then J’onn kissed Winn right on the mouth.” Mon-El grinned at Kara’s eyes widened at his words. “Aaaaand she’s back, ladies and gentlemen!”

“Sorry.” Kara closed her eyes, a slight flush colouring her cheeks.

Mon-El shrugged, casually turning to look over his shoulder, seeing Alex glance toward their booth and then quickly look away. Again. He had lost count the number of times she had looked their way since arriving at the bar. That, and the number of times that Kara had sought out the brunette in the crowded bar as well. His eyes narrowed and he wondered if he had under estimated his opponent. Or maybe he had misread the situation and it was a true bond mate relationship after all.

Naaah.

Kara was just playing hard to get and he could appreciate that. He was ready to earn her affections. Mon-El turned his attention back to Kara. His gut was telling him to go for it and where the ladies were concerned he always trusted his gut. Or sometimes a little lower than his gut.

“Hey, you can make it up to me on the dance floor.” Mon-El smiled wider, finding her shocked expression rather adorable. “I’ve been told I’m the best dancer in three solar systems. Give me a chance to spin your world, Supergirl.” He cocked an eyebrow and flashed his most charming smile.

Kara blinked and digested his words, forcing a return smile to her lips. She didn’t feel like dancing, but Mon-El had asked so nicely after she had been so incredibly rude and there was no real reason to say no exactly.

Except for that big intense reason sitting near the bar watching their every move with studied nonchalance.

“Um…sure.” Kara nodded hesitantly. Mon-El practically leapt to his feet and offered his hand to help her out of the booth. She slipped her hand into his larger one and he didn’t let go as she followed him through the crowded bar as he led the way to the tiny dance floor.

Kara tried to relax, settle into the flow of the music. Allowed herself to take in the fact that she was in the middle of an alien bar, dancing in the arms of a fine male specimen, from her own home solar system no less, who was most definitely interested in her. Tall and handsome, funny and kind too, exactly what every woman could possibly want. She exhaled slowly and tried not to step on Mon-El’s toes.

Mon-El took the lead, pulling her along awkwardly, his hands clammy where they were holding hers. He smiled down at her, tugging her at the waist with his other meaty hand, forcing her around, the movement clumsy and she stumbled a bit in his hold. He seemed oblivious and just continued to move along the dance floor, bumping into others behind her and to their left as they went.

Kara frowned, trying to figure out his next moves, failing to follow him with any ease. She was beginning to think this was a sign of things to come. She shook that thought off; refusing to talk herself into the fact that something was off. That somehow this wasn’t enough, that it felt just like when she had been with James. Something wasn’t right, the aftershave didn’t smell right, the deep voice didn’t resonate right, the large hands didn’t grasp hers right, that something buried deep inside was screaming that this whole thing was just NOT RIGHT.

Kara paused and pushed her glasses back up her nose, smiling up at her date and tried to let that feeling float away, not wanting to think about it now. Not when the date was going relatively well. Kara tried to focus instead on the physicality of Mon-El’s muscles flexing and flowing beneath her fingertips, as they gently swayed together in time to the music. It didn’t take long for her to admit it
was no use. Mon-El was everything Kara knew that she should want, and yet all she could think of was her.

Kara glanced over Mon-El’s shoulder, her eyes moving towards the bar of their own accord, the familiar flash of dark hair catching her eye. She quickly looked away, she was not going to do it.

Kara was not going to think about the dark jeans Alex was wearing that clung to her hips in just the right way. Or the enticing scent of the leather jacket she wore like a second skin, the soft material flexing beneath her fingertips feeling so right. How the sound of her laughter rippled through her like a twinkling wave of joy, doing things to Kara that felt so natural and so DAMN RIGHT.

Kara closed her eyes and leaned into Mon-El. Despite her best efforts Kara’s thoughts drifted stubbornly to her foster sister, drawn to the one who was always more than a sibling, more than a best friend, confidante or protector. Drawn to the woman who was all these things and more, rolled into one amazing package.

Oh, hell. Who was she kidding? Maybe it was the alcohol, maybe it was the song, whatever it was, Kara finally relented and decided to stop fighting it. She smiled softly, letting herself fall into an old favourite memory, Alex teaching her how to slow dance in their bedroom as teens. Sunshine spilled in through the window, as she tried so hard to not to step on Alex’s toes or crush her hand as she focused on the beat of the song on the radio. Any stumbles or mistakes just caused fits of giggling together, and then begin again, figure it out and get it right the next time. It wasn’t long and they were in sync, as if they had been dancing together forever, their hearts thudding in time.

Mostly though, Kara remembered feeling safe. She was secure in Alex’s arms, able to face anything while wrapped in her bond mate’s embrace. *El mayarah.* Kara almost wished she could go back in time.

“Mind if I cut in?”
Well, this shit show just kept getting better and better.

Alex stiffened, her drink all but forgotten half way to her lips, watching as one of the regulars tried to cut in on Kara and Mon-El on the dance floor. It was bad enough watching Mon-El stumble and bumble around the small dance floor with Kara. Now she was going to have to endure a scene in the middle of the bar, because she was sure the big lug wasn’t going to give up his dancing partner without some fuss.

Sure enough, a shoving match had begun as other dancers stopped and moved away, not wanting to be a part of whatever was going on. Alex put down her drink and half stood, just able to make out offended grumbling going on. Kara was gamely trying to smooth ruffled feathers, apologizing profusely while glaring at Mon-El, moving to reposition herself between the two men. Mon-El ignored her completely, all but growling at the other alien as Kara yanked him away. Finally things seemed to settle down and Kara let out a long sigh. She hesitantly glanced over towards Alex, adjusting her glasses as their eyes locked.

Crisis averted, no harm no foul.

Alex let out a long slow breath, and eased her alien disrupter back into the waistband of her jeans before settling once more into her seat. She didn’t even remember reaching for the weapon, she just knew Kara might have been in danger and she was ready to fly into action if needed. Alex smiled encouragingly at Kara across the room before turning her attention back to her friends.

Specifically, registering Maggie’s stare and annoyingly knowing grin.

“Fuck Danvers, she can’t keep her eyes off you.” Maggie murmured as she leaned close to Alex’s ear, the puff of her breath warm against her cheek. Alex closed her eyes, praying that the detective would just let it drop.

No such luck.

“And apparently neither can you.” Maggie leaned back and grinned over the rim of her pint of beer, taking in the growing flush of her friend’s face. Alex couldn’t stop watching the dance floor any more than Kara could stop scanning the crowded bar area.

Alex’s eyes snapped open and she glared before glancing away and taking a long swallow of her drink, pointedly ignoring Maggie and the comment completely.

“Well, hell.” Maggie said softly to herself, clearly seeing the signs that the other woman refused to acknowledge. The ‘Big Sister’ protector act only went so far, these longing looks across the room were far more than that. Anyone with eyes could see there was more there than sisterly affection.

“They’ve always been like this,” Vasquez said quietly, taking a slow pull on her bottle of beer. “The whole bonded angle to their story explains a LOT.” Alex finally turned her attention back to her friends and fixed them both with her most intimidating glare. The two women just rolled their eyes at her.

“I told you our relationship was complicated.” Alex sighed, taking another sip of her whiskey. She leaned back as Lucy appeared, finally making her way back from the bar, her drink sloshing and just missing her as the petite brunette reached her destination.
“So, I’ve been thinking about your bonded status with Kara,” Lucy plunked down beside Alex, still a little shocked at what they had been discussing before she had left for a fresh drink. She shifted uncomfortably for a moment before finally finding her words again. “It’s just…Lois said bonding is for life for Kryptonians. How is it just suddenly okay for you and Kara to both be seeing others? Did Lois get it wrong or what the hell is going on?”

The entire table seemed to turn and stare at Alex at this new tidbit of information. Alex blinked, her mouth opening slightly as she thought about her next words. Technically Alex wasn’t dating anyone, hadn’t for like two years, and even then it had been a horrible blind date she didn’t even want to try to recall. And Kara had that year of crushing on James, but they didn’t really date that long before she ended it. Alex focused back on the question at hand.

“Well, for full bond mates that’s true, and I understand that now but we didn’t at the time. Besides it wasn’t the full ceremony, it was more like the merging of our houses.” Alex took another swallow of whiskey and winced at the burn as it went down, ignoring the twinge of hurt feelings that always flared at not being Kara’s full bond mate. “Kara was freaking out when she first arrived and both Superman and my parents thought it would help her adjust.”

“So they just decided to marry you off? Jeez, Danvers.” Maggie shook her head, the situation too good to not yank her friend’s chain “An arranged marriage with an alien child bride. And I thought I had a weird childhood.” She grinned wider as Alex’s eyes narrowed in further annoyance.

“Shut up, it’s not like that with Kara.” Alex growled. She didn’t like how Maggie made it sound so…tawdry.

“What’s it like then, Danvers?” Maggie cocked an eyebrow and waited to see what the other woman would say. Luckily Alex was saved by Susan’s almost as annoying observance.

“Well, hell. No wonder Supergirl keeps giving Maggie dirty looks. She didn’t want her hitting on her girl.” Susan took another swig of her beer and watched Alex squirm.

“See! I told you it’s not my imagination.” Maggie said, vindicated that she was not paranoid. “I could have been flambéed!” She turned to Vasquez, before both of them began to laugh.

Alex rolled her eyes and took another sip of her drink. She was beginning to wonder if she would rather be on a date with Mon-El compared to this torment with her so called friends. Time to tease back in self-defence if nothing else.

“So… tell me more about your own up close and personal friendship with Batwoman back in Gotham City.” Alex smiled, waggling her eyebrows, pleased to find a relatively equal point to poke back at Sawyer with.

“Don’t change the subject.” Maggie blushed, glancing away under Alex’s shrewd gaze. Vasquez and Lucy simply shared a look of curiosity. They were learning a lot of secrets tonight.

“I think the subjects might be related…” Alex cocked her head and smirked, beginning to enjoy herself now.

“No, that would be you and your wife, Kara.” Maggie couldn’t stop the smartass remark, her beer sloshing as Alex elbowed her. “Or was that sister? I get mixed up.”

“Shut it, Sawyer.” Alex snapped back, but Maggie and Vasquez just laughed harder, well aware there was no bite in their friend’s bark. Lucy shook her head at the two across the table and patted Alex’s arm in solidarity.
“Dude, seriously though, you know Batwoman?” Vasquez asked Maggie, slightly awestruck. “Do you know Batman too?”

Alex tuned out their conversation as it swirled around her. She glanced instead back to the dance floor just in time to see Mon-El twirl Kara, grinding her teeth as he bumped and banged her into those around them. Kara met her gaze briefly, a small smile gracing her lips before she was all but launched into a large man next to them. Alex needed to do something and soon.

“God, he’s like a bull in a china shop…” Lucy muttered under her breath to Vasquez. “Kara can do so much better than him.” Susan sighed and sipped her drink in silent agreement.

“Alex, be brave and ask her to dance.” Maggie said softly, easily reading the situation. Alex looked like she was going to explode. “Go fight for your girl.”
“Hey, is that sexy smile all for me?” Mon-El murmured, all too sure of himself as he tugged Kara close. A powerful scent of something all Daxamite washed over Kara and she exhaled quickly trying to clear it from her nose. Pushing her glasses higher on her nose, Kara looked away, avoiding an answer. She didn’t want to admit that her brief glance of commiseration with Alex across the room had conjured up her smile.

Mon-El chuckled, his ego jumping to all the wrong conclusions, irritating her more than anything else. Kara sighed and moved back from his tight embrace, as he continued to jerk her haphazardly around the dance floor. Glancing over his shoulder, Kara’s gaze moved to the bar area once again, where Alex and Vasquez were chatting, catching up and comparing notes on the new DEO tower facility. Maggie was sitting there, laughing with them, joking with Lucy, clearly at ease. Kara rolled her eyes; of course the detective was fitting in just fine with the DEO agents.

Kara blinked as Alex turned, as if sensing she was being watched, and then their gaze met and locked. Moments passed slowly and everything else seemed to fall away, the thundering of her heart drowning out the rest of the bar noise. Kara felt herself settle, a genuine smile once more spreading across her lips.

Alex smiled back, but Kara realized that it didn’t quite reach her eyes.

No, instead there was an obvious longing and sadness glittering there, beneath the calm surface. It seemed to echo her own strong desire to be there on the dance floor, together, with her. Kara quickly turned back to Mon-El as he stumbled over her foot for the millionth time. Wincing, she repositioned herself and once again let her mind drift.

What would it be like to dance with Alex again? Her earlier memory had been bittersweet, but what it would be like here and now?

Kara was sure their bodies would flow seamlessly together, Alex’s sweet curves soft beneath strong hands, her smile lighting up the room. Dark eyes would never leave Kara’s as she hummed so softly, the pleasure of the moment would make her feel floaty, unlike the drinks she had downed to get to the same point with Mon-El. Kara imagined her gaze moving lower, watching full lips twitch up into a gentle smile. Then she would, oh so slowly, lower her head and…

…and Kara’s thoughts skidded to a sudden stop.

Whoa. Kara blinked, swallowing hard. Maybe she should have passed on that last shot of Orion ale Mon-El had given her after all. Or maybe there were bigger things going on here than she wanted to admit.

A movement caught her eye, as Maggie dropped down next to Alex, leaning closer to speak with her. Alex’s eyes stayed focused on the dance floor, as if in silent communication with Kara from across the bar. Kara’s steps slowed and she pulled back from Mon-El’s lumbering form trying to stay in her sight line.

A flash of something hot sliced through Kara’s guts, searing pinpricks of heat itching behind her eyes. She had felt it before, a few times now, in anger normally or strong emotions. Kara had always
just pushed it down, didn’t want to look at it too closely.

Maggie’s hand reached out to squeeze Alex’s arm, drawing her attention away from Kara’s gaze. A blessing in disguise as the burning itch grew stronger, a soft glow starting around the edges of her vision.

*Oh shit shit shit shit shit!*

Kara slammed her eyes shut and took a deep breath to calm down, before anyone noticed them glowing. That was new. And unsettling. For once she was glad of Mon-El’s total self-absorption, as she took a moment to get herself and her rampant emotions under control.

Maybe it was time to deal with this, whatever this really was, before it was too late. Before Maggie came to her senses and took what Alex had offered to her. Before Kara lost the best thing to come into her life, slipping through her fingers like sand. And yet she was torn. She didn’t want to lose her family because of her misguided feelings. She had lost too much already and if it meant losing her family now, well there was no way she could risk it.

On the other hand, Mon-El was certainly not the answer to any of this. Oh, he meant well, of that she was sure. He just wanted more from her than Kara was able to give him. Feeling like she was back under control, Kara opened her eyes and glanced up at him, knowing she had to put an end this charade now before he got his hopes up more than he already did. Deep inside, Kara knew that what infatuation she might have ever felt for him wasn’t nearly enough. Just like James before him.

“Hey, are you okay?” Mon-El frowned, as if sensing on some level the shift in her mood.

No, she was anything but okay. Kara almost laughed, almost cried. Beyond letting Mon-El know her true feelings, she also needed to stop whatever this was with Alex, before she became too accustomed to having a true bond mate. Alex deserved to be free to love as she wished. If you love something set them free, right? Kara frowned knowing it was the right thing to do. It was the honourable thing to do.

Then why did it hurt so damned much?

Kara opened her mouth to respond when a very familiar voice interrupted.

“I believe this is our song, :zrhueiao:.”

Chapter End Notes

:zrhueiao = beautiful
The Dance

Well, so far so good.

Alex refused to fidget while waiting for her answer. Instead she watched Kara turn her head in surprise at the endearment and Mon-El’s head nearly explode with jealousy. That made her genuinely smile. Clearly dusting off her Kryptonese had been a good plan. Usually Alex stuck to swear words, but she knew enough of the alien language to make Kara laugh or to embarrass Clark whenever she got a chance.

Alex lifted her chin and stared the tall Daxamite down, standing confidently beside them on the dance floor. She was all but daring him to refuse her very clear claim on his dance partner.

“Oh…” Mon-El frowned, definitely not wanting to step away, but not sure that he could intimidate Alex the same way he had the earlier bar patron either. For all his bluster about courting Kara, he did recognize that Alex as her betrothed, real or otherwise, had the point of privilege in this suddenly awkward situation.

“Sure!” Kara happily jumped in, a wave of relief, or something like it, washing over her. Alex cocked her head and smirked up at Mon-El, who finally took the hint and left them, making his way over to the bar to find a fresh drink. He steadfastly ignored the table of Alex’s friends, all giving various degrees of high fives and thumbs up to her victory on the dance floor.

“Rao, thank you so much for the rescue.” Kara visibly relaxed as Alex smoothly began to sway to the music. The tempo had changed, slowing down. Kara slid her arms up to rest on Alex’s shoulders, long fingers tangling into her dark hair, their bodies moving together effortlessly to the new beat.

“You know I’ve always got your back.” Alex swallowed hard, hesitating a moment before shifting her hands to Kara’s hips, pulling her closer. Trying to erase the image of Mon-El’s meaty paws touching Kara there too was proving harder than she thought. She closed her eyes for a moment and inhaled, enjoying the familiar warmth and scent of the woman in her arms.

“So, how’s the date going?” Alex finally asked, not really wanting to know. This whole evening had pretty much sucked, until this very moment on the dance floor. She sighed softly and tried to soak up the warmth that Kara always seemed to radiate.

“Ok, I guess,” Kara murmured into the nearest ear, enjoying the closeness. “I kind of wish I was
“Yeah, me too.” Alex grinned, expertly turning them to avoid a couple behind them. “I was surprised to see you here actually. I thought for sure Mon-El would take you out somewhere to show off.”

“I thought you were going to O’Finn’s near the DEO?” Kara’s fingers tickled along the base of Alex’s skull, momentarily distracting her train of thought.

“Oh, well, Winn had mentioned the alien bar to Vasquez at lunch the other day,” Alex swallowed hard and refocused. “And she was curious about it, so Maggie suggested it might be a good place to go tonight for drinks.”

Kara grumbled something under her breath before stumbling and stepping on Alex’s toes.

“Oh, Alex, sorry!” Kara moved away, glancing down at their feet. “Are you okay? I guess I had one too many drinks.”

“No worries,” Alex frowned and rolled her left foot. She was fine, but glared over at a sulking Mon-El nursing his drink back in his booth. She noticed several empty glasses on the table as well. “Has he been trying to get you drunk, Kara?”

“Drunk? Pshhh…no, Mon-El just wanted me to try some new drink combinations with him.” Kara didn’t want to mention that it was helping her pass the evening with him as well. “He’s actually pretty knowledgeable about mixing drinks. I wonder if he could get a job here. Maybe I could find out about some bartending classes…” Kara bit her lower lip in thought. Mon-El didn’t seem too interested in anything she had suggested as a potential job. He said he had it all under control, but she still worried.

Alex turned her attention back to her dance partner and tried to relax, enjoying the moment. They moved gracefully through the small group on the dance floor, with Alex easily communicating her intentions by moving herself and at the same time subtly inviting Kara to follow along. Her eyes stayed alert to their surroundings, scanning the floor ahead of them, watching traffic flow around them and yet tuned in to what was happening right in the circle of her arms.

It was like a dream, Kara moving in perfect harmony, feeling Alex’s warmth, the familiar thump of her heartbeat was music to her ears. Alex kept her eyes focused on Kara and yet every thing seemed planned in advance. Nothing was forced or awkward, she simply had to trust and follow Alex’s
every movement. If she missed a step Alex simply adjusted, reinterpreting the dance slightly differently than intended, adapting instead of forcing Kara to change.

Kara felt safe and secure in Alex’s arms, knowing she could depend on her to lead her anywhere. And she would gladly follow. The dance was going so smoothly in fact that Kara had to double check that she wasn’t indeed floating. Kara glanced up and realized that there were a lot of eyes on them.

“Alex,” Kara exhaled, her heart suddenly beating faster. “Everyone is looking at us.”

“Really?” Alex smiled gently, squeezing her hand a little and not bothering to look around. She didn’t really care, just wanted to hang onto this moment with Kara for a little while longer. “I hadn’t noticed.”

Kara smiled, closing her eyes and just relaxed, adapting to Alex’s movements, letting herself just feel where they were and what they were doing. She was happy just to let Alex take command, trusting her explicitly, with her safety and well-being on the bar’s dance floor. She finally decided to just let everything go, to be in the moment and follow Alex where ever she pleased to take them on the dance floor. She could feel Alex relax in her arms as well. The moment was perfect.

At least until her cell phone chimed.

“Who the…” Kara pulled the offending device from her back pocket and checked the text. She sighed and met Alex’s worried gaze. “Sorry, it’s CatCo. I gotta take this.” She moved away from Alex’s warmth and stepped from the dance floor with one last regretful glance before heading to the relative quiet of the alley outside.

Alex just watched her go, disappointed their dance had been interrupted. Even more disappointed when Mon-El appeared beside her.

“What did you say to her to make her leave?” Mon-El demanded.

“I didn’t do anything.” Alex all but growled back. “Which is more than I can say about you and your steady stream of drinks. Were you trying to get her drunk and take advantage?” Alex poked an accusing finger into his chest. If he wanted a fight she would be happy to oblige.
Two phones vibrated almost simultaneously. Mon-El and Alex both glanced down at their devices.

*Sorry but I have to cut the date short. Heading into work. Snapper is being a jerk. TTYL :(*

Mon-El sighed and shoved his phone back into his pocket. So much for his big romantic plans with a bottle of off-world wine back at Kara’s place. He had even worn underwear for the occasion. He glanced over as Alex scrolled through her messages.

*The dance was awesome, sorry I have to head into work. Snapper is having a melt down. I’ll call you later xo*

“Well, it would seem that I win the dancing portion of this competition, big guy. I hope you got this silly courting thing out of your system, because I don’t share well.” Alex winked at the glowering man, before making her way back to her table of friends.

Mon-El watched her go, took in the laughter at the table, most likely at his expense. It didn’t matter. None of it would matter in the end.

“You may have won this battle, Alex Danvers,” Mon-El grumbled under his breath. “But I’m determined to win the war.”

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“Danvers, what is going on inside that big brain of yours, hm?” Maggie asked gently, after their drinks had been refilled and the laughter of their group had died down once again.

“I need to step things up, protect Kara.” Alex took a deep swallow of her whiskey and tried to drown the thoughts swirling around her head.

“Protect her?” Maggie leaned forward and lowered her voice. “She’s freakin’ Supergirl. I’m pretty sure she can handle herself just fine.”

“You know what I mean.” Alex took another sip of her drink. Maggie just stared at her for a long minute, silently calling bullshit on her motives, until Alex finally looked away. Maggie sighed and
reached out, squeezing her friend’s arm.

“Hey, I want you to think about what is going on with you. What are you really feeling?” Maggie squeezed her arm is support once more before shifting away and grabbing her own drink. “Remember, no more stuffing your emotions down, Alex. You’re in a brave new world now, right?”

Alex swirled the amber liquid in her glass and sighed. As much as she hated to admit it, Maggie was right. It was time to admit some stuff that she had been ignoring, to herself if no one else. Her crush on Vicki back in high school was not the only thing she had been avoiding thinking too deeply about over the years. Feeling Kara in her arms tonight had been…amazing. And terrifying. This whole courtship fiasco could be her chance to spend time with Kara romantically and put this whole thing to rest. To get whatever was going on out of her system and prove that there is no chemistry there between them.

Or prove that there was.

Alex closed her eyes and slammed back the rest of her drink, decision made.

“Interested in coming to a game night, Sawyer?” Alex smiled as she focused her attention back to her friends and set her glass down gently onto the table top.

“Like, board games? Or more like poker?” Maggie blinked, a little taken aback by the sudden change in topic. Their conversation was not over, but for now she would stop poking at Alex and let it rest.

“Yes. To both. Plus usually copious amounts of alcohol and laughter.” Lucy leaned over and cocked an eyebrow at the police detective, smiling at the thought of fresh meat. “I think it must be my turn to host one of these shindigs, right Alex?”

Alex simply nodded as Lucy continued to fill in some of the details for Maggie. Game night would be a perfect opportunity, a good non-violent way to showcase what a loser Mon-El was and to spend some quality time with Kara. Alex smiled to herself.

Let the games begin.
“What the heck is taking so long?”

Kara grumbled to herself, glancing at her watch for the umpteenth time before pushing her glasses higher on her nose. The dark rainy sky outside reflected her mood perfectly. It didn’t help that she hadn’t eaten since flying out of National City that morning, the text from Kal-El inviting her to brunch a nice surprise that she had quickly accepted.

Shifting in her chair, she sipped her glass of water and sighed softly. The Catco snafu with Snapper had taken far too long to sort out. Then she hadn’t slept very well, tossing and turning as her mind kept replaying her evening out. When Kara finally did drift off, it was to dreams of dancing among the clouds, spinning and looping while held securely in strong arms, a familiar leather jacket warm beneath her fingers. No face in the dream, but Kara didn’t need to see one to know exactly who the mystery woman in her arms was.

Kara’s cell phone chimed another notification at her. She glanced down at it, hoping that it was Alex checking in. She sighed with disappointment and slid the phone away from her. Mon-El had texted a few times now, just some cute little emoji faces which were easy to ignore. She was more concerned with the curt text she had received that morning from Alex, telling her that she had been called in to the desert facility to deal with a small crisis. Kara chewed at her lower lip, resisting the urge to check in with J’onn, but it was hard. After all she hadn’t been asked to help, so she tried not to worry and trusted that the DEO team knew what they were doing.

She decided instead to look around the room and tried to remember the last time they had frequented this tiny hole in the wall diner in Metropolis, one of her cousin Kal-El’s favourite spots. She knew it had been in the summer, she had sat near this same window. Alex and Lois had joined them, both women sporting tank tops and shorts. The conversation had been stilted, Alex steadfastly defending Lucy to whatever snarky comment Lois had made. Kara smiled softly with the memory, Kal-El had been late that time too. As if her wayward thoughts had conjured him, a familiar dark head was suddenly dashing past the window, followed by a cheery bell ringing as the diner door opened.

“Hi, Kara, sorry I’m late. There was a pile up on the bridge that needed some help.” Kal-El suddenly sank down onto the chair across from her, his whole body settling with seeming relief at being able to stop. He grinned up at her and all of her annoyance evaporated with his boyish antics. “You know what it’s like.”

Kara smiled back and just nodded. Their waitress arrived quickly and obviously knew Clark Kent, as she asked if he wanted the usual. After taking their orders, they both sat back and finally could relax.

“Kal, how could you take up this challenge from Mon-El?” Kara sighed, cutting to the chase. Kal-El at least had the decency to look ashamed, ducking his head and running a hand through his messy dark hair.

“I’m sorry that happened, I was just trying to be helpful to meet with him while you were off world. Then he took me by surprise with the request.” Kal-El glanced up and held Kara’s gaze with his own steady determined one. “But I’m not going to apologize for trying to get you and Alex to finally get yourselves sorted out.”

“Oh, my Rao, seriously?” Kara leaned back in her chair and blinked at her cousin in disbelief. The waitress appeared with their drinks, giving her a moment to gather her thoughts as Kal shifted uncomfortably under her stare. What the hell was he playing at?
“Kara, after you turned 18, Eliza called and tore a strip off of me, making me very aware of my lack of knowledge around basic Kryptonian rituals. So, I made a point of researching the Age of Ascension, the politics of merging Houses, and pair bonding with a lot more interest than I had before.” Kal took a sip of his coffee and grimaced at the bitter taste, taking a moment to stir in more sugar.

“There is no rush—” Kara began, fidgeting with her straw, swirling the ice in her soda water, hoping that her cheeks weren’t as bright pink as the heat from the blush might indicate.

“Kara, come on.” Kal-El cocked his head and locked her with an appraising stare. “I’ve researched this at the Fortress. If we were on Krypton you would be considered a spinster. And as head of the House it would be my fault. Hell, for that matter if we were still there we both would be matched with a mate by the Matrix and it would be done.” Kal shook his head, thinking that it didn’t sound very appealing to him either. “But here, we have a choice. And even though we didn’t know what we were doing when you arrived, I can’t help but think that Alex and you are a good match.”

Kara looked out the window at his words. He wasn’t wrong. Alex was a great match, a perfect match. Better than he and Lois if she really thought about it. They both looked up as their lunch arrived. Digging into their food, Kara decided to bite the bullet and admit what was niggling at her, deep down.

“I’m worried that Alex will be used as a pawn against me.” Kara all but whispered, knowing he would hear it anyway. Tears stung at the back of her eyes, the familiar grip of fear biting at her gut.

“I get it. I do! I was too, with Lois, and we both know that it’s a valid concern.” Kal-El smiled gently, recognizing the look on his cousin’s face. He leaned forward slightly, his finger tapping on the table top as he made his point. “Lois seems to go looking for trouble, but Alex…well she has chosen to be part of that world with you. She took steps to become highly trained and can take care of herself and then some. She has dedicated her life to helping you, to protecting you. Alex has dedicated herself to YOU. If that isn’t a bond mate, I don’t know what is.” Kal leaned back his point made. “What are you waiting for?”

“I guess, I’m…” Kara hesitated, looking down at her crumpled napkin on the table. “Kal, I’m scared. What if she doesn’t feel the same and just feels obligated? Like it’s her duty or something because of our betrothal ceremony? Alex was so devastated by Maggie’s rejection of her feelings, I don’t want to stand in her way if that is who she’s meant to be with.”

“Oh, Kara,” Kal-El reached forward, his big hand covering hers and giving a quick sympathetic squeeze. “Alex is on her own path. Trust that Alex can figure out what, and who, she wants.”

“Ugh, I hate it when you’re right.” Kara groaned, running a hand through her long hair and glaring at her grinning cousin. “I need to get this sorted out, I guess now is as good a time as any.”

Kal-El nodded and polished off his sandwich, reaching out to steal some fries from Kara’s plate. A little flash of laser from Kara quickly made him pull his fingers away, chuckling as he claimed his greasy prize and popped them into his mouth.

“Okay, so the first step is to set up the official challenge. According to the history accounts I read, we will need to choose three elders to judge the challenge. As your eldest family member, I am automatically one of them.”

“I think I’d also like J’onn,” Kara sipped her drink thoughtfully. “He is fair and honest, and I consider him to be a father figure to me now.”
“He could be considered biased to Alex.” Kal-El countered. “But, if we chose someone neutral who would be favourable towards Mon-El then that would balance out.”

Kara pinched the bridge of her nose. Who would be neutral to the newcomer that they could trust with the truth of their identities. Who could be a fair judge?

“I know!” Kara looked up as inspiration hit. “What about the AI of my mother? Alura is programmed to work in my favour but has no emotions attached to it. And she would be unfailingly by the book and fair, adhering strictly to the Kryptonian traditions and rules, whether I liked it or not.”

As a former Kryptonian judge she would make an excellent choice. Kal-El swirled the black coffee in his mug, staring down into the depths as his mind whirled. The question was whether Mon-El would agree. Their options were rather limited.

“Ok. I will contact J’onn and arrange things.” Kal-El smiled, pleased that the decision was made. “Then we will arrange the challenges according to the tīv girod and the eleven Kryptonian virtues. In the meantime, you should talk to Alex.”

Kara ducked her head but nodded. It was time. One way or another this would be resolved.

A beeping alarm went off and Kal-El glanced down at his watch. Someone needed his help. He swore under his breath and stood. Looked like brunch was over. Kara stood too, realizing that duty called, and moved into his big arms, hugging him.

“Kal, I just want her to be happy.” Kara murmured into his strong shoulder, soaking up the comfort. She needed all of it that she could get and prayed to Rao that she wasn’t making the biggest mistake of her life.

“I know,” Kal-El sighed and held her tighter, knowing there were no words that would help. He just wanted Kara to be happy too. And he would move heaven and earth to make it happen.
“Alpha Leader in position.”

Alex hissed into her headset, sliding down the rough hewn rock wall into a crouch before glancing across the walkway to the small band of DEO agents waiting for her command. An unholy howl reverberated through the desert facility hallways, echoing deep down in her chest and drowning out the insistent alarm that had been going non-stop.

“Fucking Hermalgamites.” Alex growled under her breath. Of all the aliens to escape their cell during the power outage on Sunday it had to be that one. Always loud, always vicious. Always a stomach-turning stench. The four-inch scar on her left thigh didn’t help change her opinion of the alien race much either, simply serving to remind her of their last exchange of pleasantries.

“Copy that, Agent Danvers.” Vasquez’ amused voice crackled through her earpiece. It calmed Alex down hearing her friend’s voice on the other side of the comm. “Hold while Beta Team secures their location.”

“Standing by.” Alex signaled her team and they hunkered down to wait. This was going to be a tough fight, with a dangerous and wily captive. She hoped her team would come out of this unscathed, but was realistic enough to know it wasn’t likely. She checked her gear one last time when the orders finally came through.

“Alpha Leader, you are good to go.” Director Lane’s voice broke in over the headset this time. No hesitation on the command, Alex began to move forward, more than ready to get this show on the road.

“Roger that, Director.” Alex flipped the safety off her blaster and felt her body settle, combat muscle memory taking hold. This insurrection had been dragging out for two days now and she had had enough. It was time to kick some ass. With two hand signals and a curt nod of her head, her team launched into action.

***

A trickle of sweat ran down between her shoulder blades as Alex sank into a squat and caught her breath. Three long, harrowing hours of crawling through the dark dank underbelly of the DEO facility and they still hadn’t captured their target. It was getting damn embarrassing.
Alex lifted her head, the smell of the Hermalgamite unmistakable. It was close, really close. That’s when she heard the first scream.

“Shit.”

Alex raced out of her limited cover and dashed down the hallway, rolling for cover inside the entrance way to the small hanger on the right that Beta Team had been searching. She easily assessed that all hell was breaking loose. She heard the rest of her Alpha Team fall in behind her, moving to surround the furious alien, and try to take some of the heat off their comrades.

The Hermalgamite lunged for the hallway door, but not before slicing open one of her men, grabbing the blaster from his limp hand as the agent bled out at it’s feet. The alien turned and met Alex’s gaze straight on, pointing the weapon right at her. It all happened so fast, she moved on instinct. Alex twisted and flung herself to the left, her body armour and flack jacket absorbing the energy blast that had been aimed at her head. Her own weapon was raised and before she hit the ground she was returning fire, the Hermalgamite roaring in pain and dropping like a stone.

The stench of it’s burning flesh was almost an improvement.

***

Water ran over Alex’s aching body, washing away the grit and grime of the day, but not the bitter memories. Those would be burned into her psyche for a good long while. She winced as a muscle in her back twinged. There would be plenty of bruises showing up before long too. Three dead, six wounded, and her own near brush with death. The whine of the energy blast and the Hermalgamite’s roar still echoed in her ears. No amount of water would wash that away.

“Hey, Danvers,” Vasquez’ called out from the locker room. “You melting in there?”

Alex snorted, gladly pulled from the memory of her close call. Too close if she was honest. It wasn’t good to dwell on it too long though, or she would never want to come out of the shower, let alone get back in the field. She turned the water off and grabbed her towel, heading for her locker.

“Just trying to get that stench out of my hair,” Alex answered as she towelled off, tugging on fresh underwear from her locker. It felt good to be clean again, almost whole. Taking her cargo pants and black t-shirt out, she sat on the bench behind her and began to dress. Vasquez wandered over from
where her locker was situated, the concerned look in her eyes saying more than words ever would.

They didn’t talk about it. No one usually did. It was just part of the job. Risking your life, just another day at the office, right? Vasquez sat down next to her on the bench and nodded her understanding, the need to not dwell on the ‘what ifs’. Alex was still here, so it was a good day.

“So, I was wondering if you were up for some target practice before you head out. Take the edge off the day?” Vasquez ran a hand through her short hair and waited. It had been a really close call, having watched the whole firefight as it had unfolded. She knew how much adrenalin was probably still running through the senior agent’s veins. “Give me some Hermalgamite whoopass pointers for the next time that ugly fucker breaks out.”

Alex grinned at that and nodded at the invitation. Standing up she followed her friend out to the gun range. A little practice would settle her nerves. And it was a better offer than the bottle of whiskey calling her name.

***

The DEO desert facility gun range was state of the art, with a wide assortment of human weapons and alien technology to choose from. Alex was certified on all of them, her current favourite was the alien energy blaster which had just saved her life.

“I think it’s dead, Danvers.” Vasquez sassed from the cubicle to her left, pulling her safety earmuffs off. The last half hour of target shooting had helped, but Alex still had some pent up aggression going on. And Vasquez didn’t think it all had to do with the escapee situation.

Alex lowered her gun, tugged her own earmuffs off and hit the retrieval button, bringing her decimated paper target towards her. There was a huge hole taking out the torso of her target man, the paper smouldering and still burning around the edges. She sighed and bit the inside of her lip.

“I may have been imagining a certain annoying alien.” Alex smiled over at her friend before placing her weapon down, and studying her target handiwork.

“Somehow I don’t think you mean our stinky friend recuperating in his cell below.” Vasquez squeezed off a few more rounds.
“No, my annoying alien isn’t as smart,” Alex yanked her target from the conveyor line. “But I will admit he smells better. Somewhat. I don’t know what Kara sees in him.” She noticed that she was still pulling to the left with the disruptor, she’d have to work on that. Luckily it didn’t come back to bite her earlier today.

“You know your sister, always taking in strays, seeing the best in people,” Vasquez paused, realizing what she had said. “Sorry, I suppose sister isn’t the right word anymore.” She glanced over at Alex, trying to gauge the mood. She didn’t want to piss her off, but this change in relationship status was a new minefield to navigate.

“Yeah, no. Maybe? I’m not even sure anymore,” Alex shoved her charred target into the garbage can behind them and sighed. “Mom and Dad thought they were helping, calling us sisters. But we were more than sisters, more than best friends. We always have been.” Alex ran a hand through her hair, feeling the truth of her own words. Today’s close call had been a bit of a wake up call. Who knew how long any of them had, especially in this line of work.

Alex couldn’t get that damn dance out of her head either. Whatever little sleep she had managed to get the night before had been filled with dreams of spinning and looping among the clouds, strong arms holding her close, keeping her safe.

“You should talk to Kara.” Vasquez said gently, kindly. Maybe this thing with Mon-El was a blessing in disguise.

“I know,” Alex stared down at her booted toe, kicking at the dirt. “I guess I’m just worried that I might lose everything if I admit it to her. It was bad enough when Maggie...” Alex swallowed down her words, stuffing her hands into her back pockets. They had worked through the awkwardness to friendship, but the rejection still hurt. If she finally got the guts to say something to Kara and was rebuffed, Alex wasn’t sure how she would deal with it.

“Yeah, I hear you. I’ve got my eye on someone too, have for a while. But I don’t know if she’s even interested. At least Kara is your betrothed.” Vasquez levelled her weapon and focused her aim.

“That was a stupid ritual from her past and has no real bearing on what she wants now or who she might want to be with some day.” Alex let her spike of frustration flare before she cocked her head and turned, picking up her gun again and settling back into her firing stance, taking a breath to steady herself. “Of course, you know that fraternizing with superior officers is frowned upon in the DEO, Vaz,” Alex lined up her shot with an easy precision and squeezed the trigger. “Mind you, Lucy would totally be worth it.”
Vazquez’ shot missed the target completely, causing Alex to smirk. Bullseye on that one.

“I—I…” Vasquez sputtered. She was saved by a young man making his way towards them.

“Commander.” The new recruit appeared at her elbow, an envelope in the young man’s hand. Grabbing it and dismissing him with a curt nod, Alex tore open the document,

“That looks fancy.” Vasquez said, moving closer to take in the dark red seal and alien text.

“Yeah,” Alex ran her fingers reverently along the parchment, knowing that it wasn’t of this planet. The wax holding it closed was pressed with a familiar crest, one she would know anywhere. “It’s the House of El seal on the front of it.” Alex bit her lower lip. She knew it would be coming but it was still unnerving to get it. Alex glanced down at the ancient paper, recognizing the Kryptonian script but automatically skipped down to the English translation. “The challenge has been accepted, the date has been set.”

“You okay, Alex?” Vazquez put her weapon down, concerned that this was one too many surprises for the day. Alex nodded, her eyes calm, settled. Determined.

“I will be, Vaz.” Alex knew the time had finally come. The official challenge was real. She would fight for Kara’s freedom from Mon-El’s claim. She would honour her house and defend their family. Now if she could just figure out what she really wanted.

Vasquez patted her shoulder and they headed out of the gun range. It had been a long couple of days and it was more than time to stop. Saying their goodbyes, Alex made her way towards the parking lot, glancing down to her hip as her phone chimed several times. It had to be Kara. Pulling it from her pocket, she thumbed her security code into her cell, smiling at the messages from Kara that soon popped up.

  Hey! You finished playing in the desert yet? It’s been two days!

Alex nodded, two long days with only a few hours sleep on a lumpy cot in the barracks. Her big bed in her quiet apartment was waiting for her and she was looking forward to a good night’s rest. She scrolled to the next message.

  Come over when you can, I have pizza and beer.
Alex sighed and glanced at the time. God, was it only 7:20 p.m.? It felt like midnight. Still, decompressing with Kara before crashing for the night was appealing. Her stomach took the opportunity to voice its grumbling opinion as well.

You can even pick the movie, nothing scary tho...

Alex snorted and shook her head. Some big superhero, afraid of a little spooky movie. She bit her lip and quickly typed back that she was on her way.

Decision made, Alex slid her helmet on and mounted her motorbike, kick starting it to growling life. She knew there was really only one way to figure out what she wanted, what Kara wanted, what their next steps should be, and that was by talking it out. Regardless of the outcome, they always were stronger together, and this would be no different.

Alex turned her bike onto the open highway and headed home, to Kara.
Trouble.

The scent hung in the air like sour perfume before Kara even got to her apartment the door. She couldn’t have missed it if she had tried. Dried blood, antiseptic, gunshot residue, add the x-ray view of Alex slumped wearily against her door frame, and it all added up to the same thing. Trouble. And Alex had been clearly fighting it without her.

“Oh, my Rao,” Kara muttered as she pulled open her apartment door and took in the exhausted woman before her. Kara knew she should have called J’onn, listened to her gut that there was something more dangerous going on out in that desert facility. She took another sniff and exhaled just as quickly. Hermalgamites, if she had identified the underlying stench still clinging to Alex’s skin correctly.

“Hey, Kar.” Alex’s battle weary eyes filled in the rest. Kara gently tugged the other woman into her arms and held her close, her nose snuffling into the baby fine hair at Alex’s temple. A moment of stiff awkwardness and self consciousness quickly bled away as Alex let herself just relax into Kara’s strong arms.

“Are you okay?” Kara murmured, waiting for a gentle nod. She slowly stepped back, their fingers tangling as she drew Alex deeper into the apartment, closing the door behind them. Kara glanced behind her, trying to do a subtle body scan for injuries. Alex rolled her eyes, but held her arms out and turned a complete circle.

“I’m fine,” Alex cocked an eyebrow, tolerating the scanning for only so long. Kara gave her a look but smiled, having determined that everything was indeed fine for herself. “I’m just tired.”

“I bet. Hermalgamites?” Kara smirked and waved her hand in front of her nose to clear some of the smell. It was heavier in the air now that Alex was gingerly slipping out of her leather jacket. Had she rolled on the aliens? “They’re a nasty species on a good day.”

“Sorry, I thought I’d got it all off me.” Alex grimaced and sniffed, but knew she was probably nose blind to it by now. Kara had a better sense of smell than the average dog, so it was probably overpowering to her. She sighed, maybe it would have been better if she had just gone to her apartment.
“Hang on, let me run a hot bath,” Kara zipped away and back in a blink, water suddenly running in
the bathroom. She tossed Alex some flannel jammie pants and a t-shirt. “Put this on when you’re
done. In the meantime I can drop your clothes into the wash. It’ll be dry by the time our movie is
done.” Kara smiled, it felt good to take care of Alex, to pamper the girl who pretended to be so tough
all the time. It would be nice to do it more often actually. Kara didn’t want to analyse that thought too
deeply.

Alex looked down at the soft material in her hands and nodded. The scent of lavender emanating
from Kara’s bathroom was calling her name. Showers were good, but nothing beat a long hot soak to
get that deep ache out of her bones. She’d be a fool to pass it up.

“Ok, deal.”

Kara’s smile grew wider, and she fluttered out of existence and was back again before Alex had
even moved, a full glass of red wine in hand.

“I have beer, but merlot always mellows you out.” Kara handed the glass over, which Alex
gratefully accepted. “Get in the tub, pizza when you get out.”

“Thank you,” Alex pulled Kara into a loose one armed hug. “You are the best.”

Kara beamed as Alex shuffled towards her bedroom and the bathroom beyond. She noticed that
Alex was stretching out her right shoulder and seemed to be favouring that side. She’d have to see if
she had any healing oil left from last time she solar flared. Kara went to go look as the bathroom
door clicked shut.

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Tealights flickered in a row along the vanity in the small bathroom, casting long streams of light up
the white subway tiles. Another row was lit on the edge of the deep tub, with only one or two
drowned out by an occasional sploosh of water. Scented bath salts and foamy bubbles complemented
the incense burning in a holder safely housed in the sink. One thing about Kryptonians, they took
their bathing seriously.

Alex inhaled deeply and let out a long sigh. It was heaven after such a hellish couple of days. She
could hear Kara rooting around in the the bedroom.
“Hey, Kara, what’s that scent? Lavender and something I can’t place.” Alex lifted a foot out of the water and rotated her ankle, feeling the stiffness slowly releasing. She dropped it back under the surface, the heat of the water so good on her tired body.

“Hmm, oh, just a little iboga bark,” Kara’s voice floated back as she moved closer to the bathroom door, fidgeting with the hem of her t-shirt. “I picked some up in Africa last time I flew nearby. I find it soothing, especially if I burn strips of it, kinda like incense.”

“Didn’t you used to drink iboga tea?” Alex sank down a bit deeper, watching the bubbles rise higher along the edge of the porcelain tub. It was a pretty disgusting brew as she recalled, causing hallucinations and visions in humans. It seemed to calm edgy Kryptonians down though.

“Yeah, Clark likes it as tea and suggested I try it.” Kara folded her arms and leaned back against the doorframe, looking out the large glass windows of her apartment. She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply, the slightly bitter woody scent filling her lungs as she sent a familiar centering prayer to Rao for strength and courage. “I prefer this though, the scent reminds me of Krypton.”

Dealing with her z h’em hadahr since the age of Ascension had taken a bit of effort, but worth it in the end. The biological call to take a mate was strong, but Kara’s relationship with Alex would always take priority, she never wanted to jeopardize her family for anything. That’s why talking about her growing feelings was so scary and felt selfish. Kara chewed her lower lip. Maybe tonight wasn’t the time to bring it up after all.

“Incoming towel drop,” Kara shoved her troubling thoughts to the side for now. Turning, she opened the bathroom door wide enough to toss in some fresh, dryer warmed towels onto the closed toilet seat. “I’ll go warm up the pizza. Think about what you want to watch.” Kara closed the door again and headed for the kitchen.

Alex stretched one last time, feeling the tightness of her body mostly gone. Her right shoulder was still pretty sore from absorbing that blast, even with the body armour taking the brunt of the shot. If she had been a second slower…

Alex stood, water streaming off her body in little rivulets, taking her dark thoughts with it. Enough dwelling on the past events for one day. She would just be better prepared next time. She wrapped the fluffy blue towel around her body, bringing a bit up to her face and inhaling. So warm and inviting, like falling into a hug. It was perfect.

God, she didn’t deserve Kara.
Kara pulled Alex’s damp clothes out of the wash and popped it into the dryer, getting it going quickly. She made her way towards the familiar leather jacket, draped haphazardly on the back of the chair Alex always dropped it on when she came by. She lifted it up, the butter soft leather pressed to her nose, aired out by now of any alien smells. Just the solid scent of it’s owner, permeated deep into every pour of fabric.

“Rao, she smells so good.” Kara muttered under her breath, placing the jacket back down on the chair. She frowned slightly, wondering just how long it had been since her last cycle, and started counting back in her head. Zh’em Hadahr was always such a pain in the ass. She glanced over at the cosy nest on the couch, duvet, pizza and tv remote at the ready. Regular movie nights had certainly helped keep her on an even keel, but Kara had a sinking feeling that timing was not going to be in her favour…

*Zh’em Hadahr* A biological urge to find and take a mate that all unbonded Kryptonians must endure. Not that knowing this made it any easier.

“Fuck!” Kara felt like she was burning up, aching all over. She wiped her brow and kept chewing the iboga bark that Kal-El had gathered in Africa for her, but it wasn’t helping. He said he usually would drink it like a tea, when he needed it. The bitter taste reminded her of the brew that Alura and her aunt would often indulge in before heading off to the communal baths.

Ok, really? This was getting too much. Kara sighed knowing she couldn’t concentrate on her math homework feeling like this. Flipping her textbook closed, she pulled out her cell phone. There was no choice really, she had to contact Alex. She was her *zrhemin nim*, or would be if this was Krypton, damn it. It wasn’t right, but she was getting desperate, and she missed her dearly. One ring. A second ring.

“Pick up, pick up, pick up…” Kara chewed her thumbnail and paced back and forth between her bed and Alex’s old one, finally sitting down on the unused bed. She missed watching the older girl sleep, deep calm breaths, kicking her blankets off as she would get warm in the early morning light, her sleep shirt riding up to reveal a strip of tummy...

“Hey!” Alex sounded tired but glad to hear from her. “What’s up?”
“Uh, well…” Kara fidgeted, another aching wave starting to wash over her at the sound of Alex’ voice. She needed to see her in person, this was becoming very clear. “Can I stop by to see you?” Kara swallowed, afraid she would be turned away. Alex was busy with school, she shouldn’t be so needy, surely there was another way to deal with…

“Uh, sure. This weekend?” Alex said, confused but not unwilling. Kara sighed with relief, which turned into a bout of shivers. Ok, maybe sooner would be better.

“Actually, I was thinking tonight.” Kara blurted out and winced at her damned awkwardness, and the silence on the other side. She should just explain what was happening, but wasn’t quite sure the best way to put it.

“Kara, you know Mom doesn’t want you using your --” Alex warned. Kara knew Eliza would be pissed if she took off, but this was becoming too hard, too much. She was only Kryptonian after all.

“Alex, I wouldn’t if it wasn’t important.” Kara interrupted, smiling softly when she heard the resigned sigh at the other end of the line.

“Ok, but be careful. If Mom finds out…” Alex relented. She knew she would! Bless, Rao!

Kara was out the window in a flash, skimming the treetops, following the coastline, staying low to avoid radar detection, but determined to make to Alex as soon as possible. It wasn’t long and she saw the light from Alex’s residence room window and then she was tapping on the glass.

“…we will be in such…” Alex glanced over to the window and frowned, then ended the call.

Finally! Kara could smell her even through the glass pane. Opening it up, Kara zipped inside before she was spotted from below. Suddenly she was all but wrapped around Alex, needing the contact. Needing her.

“Well, hi! I missed you too!” Alex chuckled and wrapped her strong arms around her, squeezing tight, so Kara could feel it, really feel it. Something was up, but she didn’t want to push. Kara felt warm to the touch, well, warmer than usual. Kara felt herself settle, nuzzling into the soft patch of skin below Alex’s ear, inhaling the scent of her *zrhemin nim*, her betrothed. It eased the ache in her body, slowed her racing heart.
It wasn’t long and they were snuggled on the small couch, watching a dvd of The Wizard of Oz. Alex knew it was one of Kara’s favourites, and she wanted to soothe the slightly freaked out girl. Something was up and she wanted to get to the bottom of it.

“We should do this more often,” Alex said softly, her breath warm against Kara’s temple. “Just hang out together and watch movies. Like when you first arrived.” Her fingers stroked through the long blonde hair, the rhythmic movement almost hypnotic.

Kara could feel the tension leaving her body as she began to fall asleep. Just being here had helped her immensely. She should just tell Alex about the Zh’em Hadahr and the bond, but she didn’t want to mess up what they already had. How do you have that conversation anyway? Oh, by the way, we’re married, sort of and I need to jump your bones now, okay? Thanks.

Kara shivered, her libido immediately latching onto the jump your bones portion of her thoughts, pulling the duvet around her. Flying monkeys, watch the flying monkeys...

“Hey, are you okay?” Alex leaned back, noticing that Kara was holding her stomach, like she was in pain. Her eyebrows raised as she put together her observations. “Oh, my God, are you finally getting your period?” It had always been most annoying that Kara did not have a menstrual cycle like humans. Another benefit of their weird baby matrix on Krypton.

Kara stilled. Well, it was similar she supposed. Raging hormones, body aches, chills, fever and killer mood swings. She wasn’t sure the need to touch and practically inhale your potential mate really fit, but still.

“Maybe?” Kara looked away, not wanting to really lie, but it was a convenient excuse. “No blood though. I am built differently...uh...down there.” Kara didn’t think she could be more embarrassed, but if she couldn’t share this with Alex, then she didn’t know who else.

“Oh, sweetie, come here,” Alex opened her arms and held her closer, feeling a full body shiver. Alex reached back and tugged another blanket over their legs. “I have some chocolate around here somewhere. Chocolate fixes everything, trust me.”

Kara snuggled closer, and inhaled deeply, something shifting and settling deep inside. Alex fixes everything, she always has and she always will. But that conversation is for another day. For now, Kara had everything she needed right here beside her. However, she wouldn’t say no to food either.
“Chocolate sounds perfect.”
“Are you trying to kill me?”

Alex halfheartedly protested. Kara simply slid the last slice of pizza onto the empty plate, and focused her gaze, giving it an extra little zap to heat it up just that much more.

“Seriously, Kara, I won’t be able to move off this couch if I eat all that.” Alex rubbed her full belly. “At least help me. Take half.” Kara hesitated, she was still a little peckish, if she was honest.

“Alright, if you insist.” Kara jumped at the offer, tore the piece and then stuffed her half into her mouth, ignoring Alex’s knowing grin. “Shut up and pick your show, you goof.” Kara tossed the remote at the now chuckling woman before glancing down at her vibrating phone. “Susan wants to know how you’re feeling?” Kara said, smiling at the thoughtful message. She really needed to spend more time out at the desert facility. It wasn’t the same without Lucy and Susan around the DEO downtown facility on a regular basis.

Kara looked up at the prolonged silence, noticing that Alex had stilled with her words and then had gingerly leaned back on the couch, trying to act nonchalant. Alex was moving slowly, and even after a good soak was still favouring her shoulder. Vasquez’ text merely confirmed her suspicion that things had gotten pretty rough at the desert facility.

“Then Vasquez ought to text me herself.” Alex finally spoke, before blowing on the hot slice, slightly irritated and yet touched at the same time. She ignored Kara’s pointed stare. There was no need to worry her after the fact.

“Do I want to know how bad the mission was?” Kara quietly asked. She watched as Alex took a big swallow of wine and abruptly stood, gathered their plates, and made her way towards the kitchen sink. “That bad?” Kara frowned, a small wrinkle of worry forming between her brows. Alex shrugged and topped up her wine glass. She grabbed a mug from the cupboard and turned the kettle on, watching the water start to boil before finally turning to glance back at her.

“I got lucky yesterday, Kara. A few seconds slower and…” Alex shivered at the memory. It had never mattered before, just serve and protect and damn the consequences. But now…well, now she had so much to live for. A life she was finally learning to live, becoming comfortable in her own skin for the first time. “I took a blast to my right shoulder, the body armour absorbed a lot of it, but that’s why I am so stiff.” Alex looked away and sighed. “It was close, Kara. Really close.”

Kara let out a long breath she didn’t realize she had been holding. She knew she should have checked in before she took off for Metropolis. “Next time, will you just call me in?”

Alex looked up and met her concerned gaze with a nod. Kara wasn’t sure she’d follow through but it was the best she was going to get. Damn stubborn woman. Kara bit her lower lip and wondered how she would be able to handle Alex being in constant danger if they really were bond mates. She’d never really have to worry about Mon-El jumping into the line of fire. Being a hero didn’t seem to be in his make-up despite her trying to train him to be more so. At least he wasn’t yet anyway, maybe with more time and more maturity. And if Alex didn’t slug him to the moon for being an ass.

Kara’s thoughts were broken as Alex returned to the couch and handed over a steaming cup of her favourite herbal tea. With her soft smile of thanks, Alex settled back under the comforter, before flipping through the Netflix menu. Soon they were engrossed in The Great British Baking Show.

Kara recognized the subtle apology for what it was. Alex had even picked bread week, her perennial
favourite episode of any season of the show. After the first challenge round, Kara glanced over as Alex once again stretched and rubbed at her neck.

“At least let me help loosen your shoulder,” Kara offered, putting her mug down on the coffee table. “I could tell something was wrong, you’ve been favouring it all night. I found some healing oil, it works wonders. It will limber up that shoulder of yours.” She waited as Alex hesitated and then scooted forward, making room for her.

Kara zipped off to get the oil and then slid behind Alex on the couch, a little shuffling and they were both comfortable. Kara squeezed a dollop of the oil out and began rubbing her hands together to warm it. She slid her hands under the back of the t-shirt, her fingers pressing into aching muscles, gently pulling and rolling the muscles and skin. Kara’s naturally warmer body helped keep Alex pliant and soft, long fingers chasing aches and pains away as it smoothed and rolled along Alex’s right shoulder and back. The soft moan of pleasure made her smile wider.

It wasn’t the first time Kara had massaged the aches and pains from sore muscles. Or wiped blood from scraped knuckles. It was all part of looking after her personal human protector, had been since she had arrived. It was very sweet, and if she had only been able to show her own strength, unnecessary. In the end it was often the least Kara could do to thank Alex for defending her.

It had taken Kara years of practice to learn how much pressure to add without hurting a human. In the end it was the sound that the human body, the muscles and flesh itself, made when it was compressed to a specific point. That and the sound Alex made, kind of like the one she was making right now. The one that did funny things to Kara’s stomach.

“Oh God, yessss…right there,” Alex sighed, shifting under her strong fingers, unable to resist the pull and slide along her bruised and battered muscles of her right shoulder. Kara inched nearer, the heat from her body warming Alex, keeping her close. Alex’s head fell forward as long fingers worked their way along the column of her neck, chasing aches and pains away as she went.

Kara couldn’t help herself, and carefully nuzzled into still slightly damp dark hair, inhaling deeply. Alex was wearing her clothes, smelling of Krypton and lavender, oil slicked skin soft and pliant beneath her touch. She wanted desperately to slide her fingertips along more skin, further under the t-shirt and across the hills and valleys of Alex’s stomach, feeling taut abs twitch. Running the pad of her thumb around the delicate hollow of her bellybutton, listening for the telltale hitch in Alex’s breath, giving permission in the subtle invitation to keep moving, keep exploring. Dipping lower still, into uncharted territory, to claim what was hers, her *zrhemin nim*

Kara Zor-El wanted.

She wanted so much more, but Kara Danvers didn’t know how to ask for it. So instead of pressing soft lips to tender flesh, Kara took a ragged breath and leaned back. Slowly she ran her fingers from Alex’s shoulder, up the long tendons of her neck and into thick dark auburn hair. Alex shivered at the touch and sighed, content, almost purring. It would be so easy to take her like this, make sweet love on the couch, completely relaxing into her intimate touches. Kara’s heart ached for the beauty before her, trusting her, letting her guard down. Kara would do anything to protect this moment, to protect its fragile perfection. Slowly her movements stilled, and Alex leaned back, into her arms. They snuggled together, enjoying the comfort and the peace.

“I got the fancy challenge notice this afternoon.” Alex finally sighed into the silence. They needed to talk about it, plan for it. Kara’s arms wrapped around her tighter, holding her close. Alex sank into the warmth, her eyes drooping, and taking comfort there. She knew they would figure this out together.
“The invitation?” Kara nuzzled and inhaled quietly. “Yes, Kal-El said he would get working on that right away. J’onn and my mother’s AI will be the other judges with him.” Long fingers once again began to comb through the soft hair, enjoying the feeling of the strands falling between them. Kara swallowed, loath to do so, but knowing that she had to offer an exit. What if Alex didn’t want to take the risk? She just had a close call of some sort, the challenge wouldn’t be easy either. She closed her eyes and did the honourable thing. “Alex, you know you don’t have to do this. There is still time to stop this.”

“No!” Alex jerked in her arms at the words, turning to look at her, to meet her eyes. “We are betrothed. Besides, I said I would. I want to defend your House, your honour. Unless...” Alex swallowed hard, almost choking on the words as they left her mouth. “Unless you want to be with Mon-El?”

“Dear Rao, no!” Kara reached out and pulled Alex back into a hug, before sliding down lower onto the couch and tugging the comforter around them. “No, I just don’t want you to get hurt.”

“Don’t worry about that. I can take care of myself,” Alex all but growled. Kara grinned and held her closer, her tough human. "Mon-El will only get so far with his charm and good looks. Besides I think your mother's AI likes me." Alex waggled her eyebrows, earning a chuckle from Kara before they settled down to watch the end of the show. They watched the rest of the episode in relative silence, enjoying the closeness and the warmth. Kara liked the weight of Alex on her, safe in her arms. She liked all of it if she was honest, and she wanted more. Before she knew it the credits were rolling and the countdown started for the next episode. Kara knew it was time to admit it all to Alex, if she was just brave enough to do it. Suddenly she was talking, words pouring from her heart, Rao only knowing how it would turn out.

“I’ve been meaning to tell you something, for a while now actually.” Kara kept stroking through the soft hair, the steady movement helping her anxiety. Not waiting for a comment, she carried on before she chickened out. “I’m not sure when things began to change, Alex. It just seems like it’s always been there, below the surface. And deep in my bones, I know that I’m meant to be wherever you are, with you standing there right next to me. No matter where I am or what I am doing, at the end of the day, all I want to do is come running home,” Kara bit her lower lip and finished her thought. “To you, Alex. I want to be with you.”

The silence was deafening.

Kara closed her eyes, bowing her head, sure she had just ruined everything. Why had she even thought Alex would be interested in her? See her as anything more than an annoying little sister. Who would want an alien girlfriend anyway, with all the trouble that would bring in this challenging political climate. The rejection rushed through her like lightning, searing and just as painful. And then she heard it. A light snore.

“Alex?” Kara glanced down and realized that Alex was out like a light. Tears welled in her eyes ever so briefly, relief and frustration fighting for dominance. Kara wiped at her eyes as she let out a long breath and then pinched the bridge of her nose. So close, and yet so far.

Then Kara moved, gently floating from the couch to her feet, keeping the sleeping woman in her arms and making her way to the comfort of her bed. Alex barely shifted as she was placed on the mattress before snuggling down into the duvet pulled over her. Then once Kara slid in beside her, she rolled as if magnetically drawn, and settled back down, as if knowing in her sleep where she belonged.

Kara smiled and tucked Alex’s dark head under her chin, holding her close once again. They stayed like that for a long time, entwined and warm, Kara watching over Alex, listening to the steady thump
of her heart, until sleep finally claimed her as well.

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